

Studies of the Yorùbá Therapeutic System in Nigeria

Edited by

D. Michael Warren
Layi Egunjobi
Bolanle Wahab

Studies in Technology and Social Change, No. 28

Technology and Social Change Program
Iowa State University, Ames, Iowa 50011 U.S.A.

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For further information please contact:

Dr. D. Michael Warren, Director CIKARD

318 Curtiss Hall

Iowa State University

Ames, Iowa 50011, U.S.A.

Phone: (515) 294-0938

FAX: (515) 294-6058

E-mail: dmwarren@iastate.edu

Homepage: <http://www.iitap.iastate.edu/cikard/cikard.html>

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Iowa State University
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U.S.A.

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University of Leiden
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The Influence of Àlàáfíà on the Design and Development of Yorùbá Housing: A Case Study of Ibadan and Iseyin

by

Beverly Wiltgen, Iowa State University and Bolanle Wahab, The Polytechnic, Ibadan

Abstract

This study examines housing developments, both traditional and contemporary, in Yorùbá society, within the context of àlàáfíà, the concept of Yorùbá well-being. The evaluation ranges in scope from materiality and physical characteristics of a dwelling to the emotional and spiritual satisfaction gained by living there. All of these aspects of a dwelling relate in some way to àlàáfíà. Literature abounds on Yorùbá architecture yet the influence of well-being on the design and construction has not been addressed. This study fills that gap. The traditional compound (*agbo ilé*), as the oldest housing type, is researched in greater detail in order to understand basic Yorùbá cultural traits and to establish the relationships between a residence and àlàáfíà. Two types of self-contained housing (*ilé àdágbé*), and another communal-based type, the "Brazilian" (*kojúsími-kí-nkojúsíó*), were analyzed with the same parameters used in the evaluation of traditional compounds. This approach allows for a comparative study and exposes any stereotypes held by the Yorùbá about particular dwelling types and their residents.

The study draws similarities between the various types of housing. It also uncovers some of the changing values within àlàáfíà and Yorùbá culture. One's personal living space, its maintenance, ambiance and appearance are subjective issues. Personal preferences guide the prioritization of the traits of àlàáfíà. Although all parts of àlàáfíà may have been satisfied for an individual who lives in an apartment flat, this may not have been accomplished through traditional means. Instead of a shrine (*ojúbo*) in the home, he/she may go to church or the mosque. Instead of being without the wisdom and influence of older generations, a young couple might extend this responsibility towards an older couple also living in the building, or to the landlord. This relationship becomes a pseudo-extended family.

The influence of westernization in personal tastes as well as construction materials and methods are also addressed. The use of traditional materials has grown in popularity. This is due to the similarities in performance between modern and traditional materials, and the decreased cost of building with the latter. Recently, sustainability has become an issue in communities and town planning authorities. As a result there is rising support for building with natural/local materials to avoid half-financed, abandoned projects. The traditional compound (*agbo ilé*) plan is being resurrected in the contemporary courtyard house. Yet, the Brazilian type (*kojúsími-kí-nkojúsíó*) seems to be a closer match to traditional architectural types in terms of àlàáfíà, reflecting the physical and the social worlds of the Yorùbá people. Although the physical, economic, cultural and social environment is changing in Yorùbáland, the pursuit of àlàáfíà remains constant. The methods and ways that well-being is achieved have changed and impacted the architectural environment.

Introduction

The concept of a home or dwelling is a human universal. The need for an enclosed space or territory to raise one's family and form an economic, familial and social base is a primary need. The form and style of the dwelling vary from culture to culture. Form, material, construction methods, ecology and geographical setting are contributors to the determination of the nature of the dwelling. These determinants are also strongly influenced by the culture and social structure of the region. A dwelling type that both utilizes the natural surroundings and serves the culture and its established norms often becomes an icon of that culture (Moholy-Nagy 1976). Beyond the form, the cultural icon of the home reflects the structure of the social system. This system designates specific structures and spaces for sleeping, working, worship and play.

Included in this system are the methods for planning, construction and maintenance of a building. These physical and social aspects are part of an indigenous knowledge system (IKS) (Atteh 1992). The very formal and technical aspects of an IKS are very attainable in the form of knowledge. Within the realm of a particular culture, though, the rules that are derived from an IKS are very informal and sometimes intangible from an etic perspective. For the Yorùbá of southwestern Nigeria these rules permeate daily life disguised as stories, songs or other forms of verbal communication as well as social taboos. In this manner, the concept of the home is representative of both the individual and the culture. It is also the receptacle for tangible/physical knowledge and intangible/societal knowledge.

The link between cultural norms and the icon of the home places is at the forefront of cultural expression. Many eminent scholars have produced excellent works on housing in the Yorùbá society (Mabogunje 1962, 1974; Lloyd 1965; Lloyd et al. 1967; Ojo 1966, 1968; Schwerdtfeger 1982; Krapf-Askari 1969; Onibokun 1985; and Domchowski 1990). However, the influence of the concept of well-being (*àlàáfíà*) on the people, design, development and utilization of Yorùbá architecture has not been addressed. This is the gap being filled by this study. Various types of housing are currently in use in Yorùbá communities and satisfy the physical and cultural needs of the occupants in different ways to different degrees. The most traditional of these housing types is the compound, *agbo ilé* (see Fig. 1). *Agbo ilé* is a tangible product of the ingenuity of the Yorùbá people.

The construction is not only sustainable but is conducive to activities reflecting political and social organization as well. It promotes a sense of group spirit (*ibá sepò, àjùmò se*) (Wahab 1997). For the Yorùbá, the compound is more than structure and plan. It contains the family and lineage history, burial grounds, recreation, crafts, social activities and even spaces for worship. The *agbo ilé* is an indigenous architecture that transcends time (Wahab 1997). The building holds the embodied energy that the group puts forth to achieve and maintain *àlàáfíà*. *Àlàáfíà* is a part of the Yorùbá IKS. It is the concept of well-being, peace, and goodness, and again has both tangible and intangible aspects, with regards to knowledge and learning. Within its organization there are five main components: the physical, social, cultural, emotional and spiritual (Fairfax, Wahab, Egunjobi, Warren, editors 1996).

The modern dwelling types, self-contained houses (*ilé àdágbé*) and the "Brazilian" house (*kojúsími-kí-nkojúsíó*), also provide a sense of *àlàáfíà*. Since the materiality and the organization are different, the way that Yorùbá well-being is promoted is modified. By exploring housing needs and desires through the concepts of *àlàáfíà*, values or habits that remain relatively constant through changes in building trends can be determined. These become the basis of a user's guide for Yorùbá housing.



a.)
 Figure 1. a.) Front elevation of Iréfin compound, Ibadan. b.) Floor plan of Irefin compound, Ibadan. Source: Field Survey, June 1997

Methodology

Two Yorùbá cities, Ibadan and Iseyin, were the sites for investigation. Both were chosen for their significant cultural or historic contributions to Yorùbá society. As one of the largest cities in Africa, Ibadan has much to offer in terms of history. It began as a pre-colonial military encampment managed by military chiefs, (*olóri ogun* or *Balógun*) and civil chiefs (*Baálè*) (Bascom 1969). The portion of the city that is now deemed the traditional area is where these original rulers built their compounds. *Ojà Oba* (the *Oba's* market), *Beere*, *Ìdíkán*, *Òránmíyàn*, *Fòkò*, *Ayéyé*, *Ìréfin*, *Agbeni* and *Orítamérin* are just a few of the neighborhoods that comprise this region. The compounds here, *Ìréfin*, *Ògùnmólá*, *Ìbíkúnlé* and *Adébísí* in particular, have great historical significance; they are former palaces (*ààfin*), of the early *Baálè* in Ibadan. Iseyin is significantly smaller than Ibadan but is a growing community. It is also a pre-colonial settlement that exhibits many of the traditional features of Yorùbá architecture. Over the years, Iseyin has attracted the attention of scholars and researchers in anthropological and textile-related fields due to the Yorùbá traditional cloth, *aso okè*, that is woven there. The planning of buildings in Iseyin reflects the weavers' needs for space to set up a loom, or to stretch thread.

During this investigation three types of modern dwellings are investigated. The "Brazilian" or "face-me-I-face-you" (*kojúsími-kí-nkojúsíó*) type (see Fig. 2) is a building style that lend itself to communal living. The courtyard of the traditional compound (*agbo ilé*) is replaced with an extra-wide central hallway (*òdèdè*). A second contemporary design, the courtyard house (*il igràlódé*) is an adaptation of the traditional compound with less activity designated for the courtyard, but more activity assigned to the respective designated rooms (*yàrá*) surrounding the courtyard. The apartment flat (*ilé àdágbé*), dwelling type three, is a building of self-contained units, each one having its own facilities but sharing an access stair or hall. One of each of the dwelling types was chosen in both Ibadan and Iseyin to summarize data for contemporary design

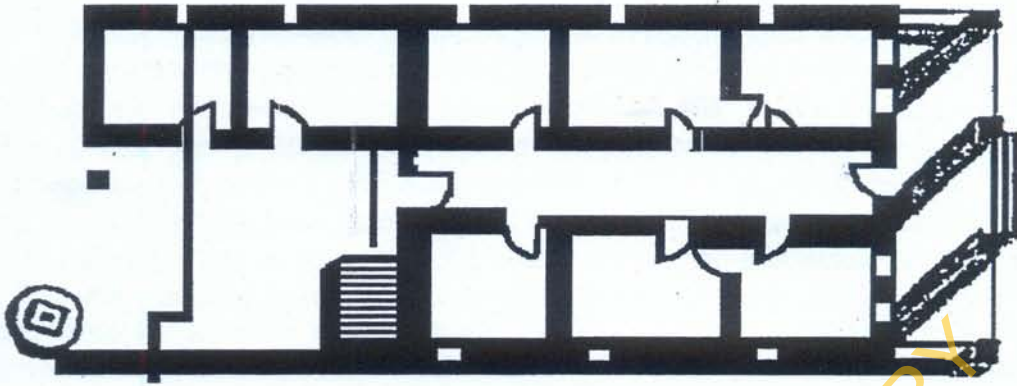


Figure 2. Example of a "Brazilian" style floor plan. Source: Field Survey, June 1997

Three traditional compounds (*agbò ilé*) were chosen in each city as well. The three compounds chosen in Ibadan have historical significance. *Ògunmólá*, *Ìréfìn* and *Adébísí* compounds were all influential in the establishment and growth of the city. Within the Iseyin site, *Agboró-Ode*, *Àrúwá* and *Gbèkó* compounds were selected for their significance in material quality and their display of changing building trends within the compound plan itself. The modern building types in both communities were selected for the quality of being most typical and for the degree of cooperation of all the residents. Each site included in the sample exhibits the principal architectural features and adequately represents their respective categories--traditional and modern. Individuals living inside the compound or unit were interviewed. A control group of the general populace was also interviewed. Builders specializing in both traditional and modern techniques were surveyed as well. The interview centered around discussion of the aspects of *àlàáfíà* displayed in the different building types. A conclusion was then based as to whether there was the presence or absence of an aspect of *àlàáfíà* in order to formulate a matrix.

Construction Materials and Methods

Concrete blocks and, in some cases, concrete are currently the building materials of choice for walls, partly due to their durability, low maintenance and potential for use even during the rainy season, but more significantly due to the forces of westernization, modern technology, changing tastes and foreign designs. The expense it adds to a project is its greatest drawback. Given the current difficult economy in Nigeria, interest in the use of traditional building materials has risen. These traditional materials are typically less expensive to construct and utilize locally-sourced materials (Wahab 1997). These materials are quite durable, adaptable to improvements when necessary, and more sustainable than contemporary products. In urban areas such as Ibadan most new construction is concrete block. When finances run out, projects are frequently abandoned or can take well over two years, the time allotted by planning permits, to complete. In developing areas like Iseyin when there is a need to build, mud core dwellings are usually the material of choice.

Construction of Traditional Compounds

Construction skills related to compounds have developed over a long period of time and were passed on from one generation to another. Compounds are built on a cooperative and communal basis (*òwè*), illustrating social and economic *àlàáfíà*. Land is bought or chosen. The site is then graded for drainage, and mapped for positioning of the dwelling and latrines. Traditional construction of the foundation begins with a trench of compacted soil. The trench is then filled with a clay (*amò*) and sand (*yanrìn*) mixture and allowed to dry. Successive layers of mud are then added. The clay gives a sticky consistency to the mix, while the sand contributes strength. The soil type used in construction is unsuitable for planting, thus its use in construction has no impact on the available land for farming (Wahab 1997). A stick test, done by placing a stick into a sample of the mud mixture and measuring the distance it falls from the vertical, lets a traditional builder know if the consistency is correct. (This is similar to the slump test techniques used in the United States to evaluate the potential strength of concrete before it is poured.) The swish mud is processed into a malleable mass by men and, on occasion, by women. This is done by working the soil with the feet. Water is supplied by women as needed to obtain the required quality, and mud balls are formed. The mix (*òrò*) is then left for three to four days to ferment before being used in construction. Each layer of the wall traces the complete floor plan and is approximately 2 feet (.7 m) high and builds to a height of 6 to 8 feet (1.8 m to 2.4 m). Wall thickness is usually around 12 to 16 inches and grows to 18 inches (35-45 cm) after plastering. This ensures a heat-protected building. Openings for doors and windows are left open as the walls are built up and spanned with timber, bamboo, or raffia lintels (see Fig. 3). The drying time between layers varies depending on the weather. Four to five days is normally sufficient.

Construction usually takes place in the dry season unless provisions can be made to protect the freshly-laid walls from monsoon rains. This is accomplished by covering the walls with corrugated metal roofing sheets. The traditional style window (*fèrèsé*) was 2 feet square, but sometimes smaller. Small dimensions were a way to prevent theft and have since been enlarged to facilitate more ventilation. Once the walls are completed, the roof frame and thatch are added. Thatch roofs are seldom used anymore, with the exception of farm huts, because of the fire hazard. Corrugated metal panels have since replaced them. The corrugation provides channels for water runoff and the modules are larger than the bulk of long grasses previously used, yet of similar weight. Thus, it requires fewer framing members to construct.

The roofing of a compound marks the completion of the construction. This calls for celebration by way of feasting and socializing. The roofing of a compound is announced to all relations and friends of the owner. This is a major occasion in which men, women and children participate. Sometimes a common dress (*aso ebi*) is commissioned for the occasion. This communal effort again promotes social and cultural well-being. The mud walls are plastered over and concrete floors are then poured to complete the process: The traditional floor is of smoothed mud with a cow dung and vegetal mixture finish (*bòtó/ ìgbòlè ajà*). *Bòtó* is applied every five days to the floor and lower portions of the wall. It reduces the quantity of dust and deters vermin (Foster et al. 1996). This is a way to maintain physical *àlàáfíà*. Various aesthetic finishes are then added to the plaster and beautifully carved or ornamented doors are added to express the family's status or background (Wahab 1997).

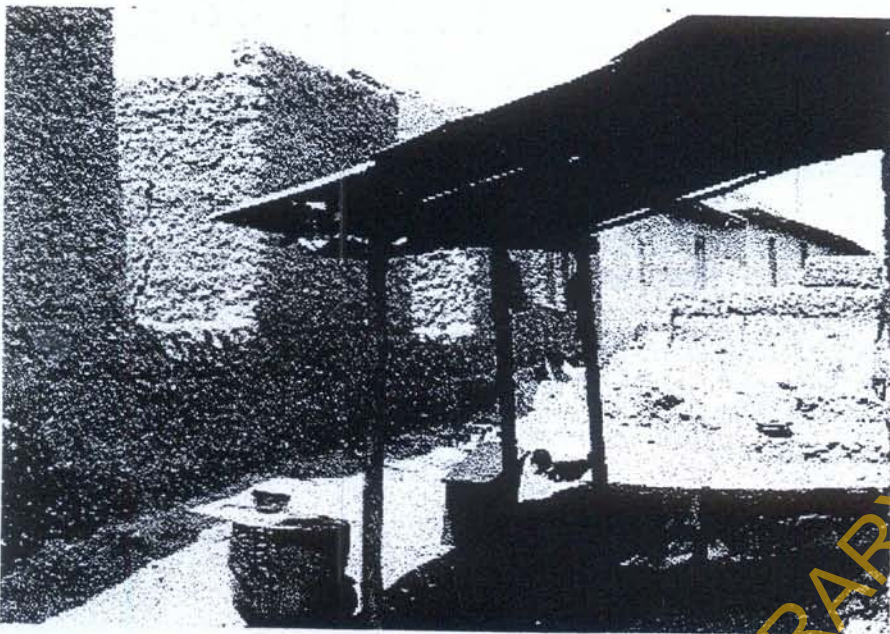


Figure 3. A mud house under construction in Àrúwá compound, Ijemba area, Iseyin. Source: Field Survey, June 1997

Molémolé or Olómo - The Yorùbá Traditional Builders

In every Yorùbá community traditional builders (**molémolé** or **olómo**) who are skilled in mud construction can be found. The skill has been developed and perfected through the years, and passed on from one generation to the next. The tools used by these builders to measure various components of the construction include their legs (**esè**) through pacing off the floor plan, and eye gauge (**àfojúdá**), which serves as a plumb to set walls straight. This is the employment of the anthropometric method, using human proportions (**èyà ara èniyèn**) to directly impact design decisions. An example of this would be using the tallest member of the family to determine the breadth (**ibú**) of the rooms and height (**giga**) of the ceilings (**àjà**). The width of a corridor (**òdèdè**) is determined by the height of the tallest person lying fully stretched added to ample space for two adults to walk or stand side by side (Wahab 1997). The most common tools used by the traditional builders in contemporary time are the square, plumb, tape measure and other carpentry tools. Much of this type of construction relies on style, experience and manual labor. The apprenticeship for this knowledge is six years due to the high degree of experience required to work with natural materials, as well as a means to establish reputation and trust within the community. Many traditionally-trained builders boast of their own techniques for plastering or specific traits that distinguish their buildings from others. Local guilds of licensed builders, separate from the professions of architect and town planner, manage certificates and apprenticeship issues.

Contemporary Dwellings

The construction of contemporary-style dwellings is primarily in concrete or concrete block. This provides for the potential to construct all year. The poured-in-place method follows a frame of structurally reinforced columns and slab floors. The walls are then built up with concrete blocks. Bamboo, being in greater availability and of less expense than hardwoods, is often used as a support during drying times. The walls are plastered with cement to finish the surfaces. This type of construction is managed predominantly by licensed or unlicensed contractors, architects or town planners. The bureaucratic process for contemporary dwellings is more complex due to the increased number of individuals involved. But the same planning approvals necessary in

traditional-style construction apply in this case as well. Planks (**pákó**) are used for the roof frame, and asbestos, cement, or fire board sheets are used for ceiling surfaces. Corrugated iron sheets are the standard roofing material for contemporary designs as well.

Material Analysis	Types of Materials				
	Mud		Mud Brick		Concrete Products
	plaster	w/o plaster	plaster	w/o plaster	
Structural Wear	cracking, lintel failure	failure of wall erosion	cracking, lintel failure	erosion	cracking, chipping and bowing
Structural Maintenance	medium	high	medium to high	medium	low
Expense and Availability	low if material is on or near site (N1600/room)		low to medium cost		medium to high cost (not available on site)
Construction Process	traditional builder or architect, dry season only		traditional builder or architect, all season with provisions		architect or contractor all season
Sanitation	good	poor	good	fair	good
		← variable →			

Table 1. Materials Matrix

Matrix Analysis and Cost

The materials matrix in Table 1 compares mud, mud brick, and cement products in a range of categories pertaining to material analysis. The most frequent structural wear in wall construction is cracking or stress fractures at lintels. If the core building element is exposed or unplastered, erosion takes its toll on the materials. This puts unplastered mud-based materials in a high maintenance category. In the case of cement products, failures or deformities usually occur during the pour. Cost decreases depending on the material and its accompanying construction process. In Iseyin, the walls of a six-room mud building could be completed for N1,600 (\$18.00) a room, whereas concrete block wall construction would cost N4,600 (\$54.40) per room. Mud is typically the most cost-effective as well as reusable once the wall has deteriorated and must be rebuilt. Mud is limited to use in single story constructions and up to two stories for mud brick. It was, however, observed in Iseyin that the first generation of two-story buildings (**ilé pètési**) in the town were built of mud. All types of construction, regardless of material, must be approved by the local government's town planning authority.

Ibadan Sites

Ògúnmólá Compound

Ògúnmólá compound, located in **Beere** area of Ibadan is home to approximately five hundred people, including children. It was built in the early 1800's and at one time was designated as **Ile Baálè**, the residence of a ward chief. The title of **Basòrun Ògúnmólá** was once bestowed on its headman. It has one large and four smaller courtyards and an area for women known as the **Káà**. A two story bungalow is also a part of the compound and serves as the headman's quarters. Multiple graves can be seen in the central courtyard and in the surrounding property (see Fig. 4). Two wells and a water faucet are present as well as four pit latrines. The founder of the compound was one of the founders of Ibadan during the time when it was solely a military encampment (**bùdó ogun**). It is said that during the construction of the compound, palm oil was added to the mud mixture to ensure the strength of the walls. Delicate cast iron grates cover many of the windows facing the main inner courtyards. The compound also boasts a



Figure 4. A view of the inner courtyard of Ògúnmólá compound in Ibadan. Note the graves and water faucet within the courtyard. Source: Field Survey, June 1997

strong room containing the weapons (**nkan ijagun, nkan osé**) and family heirlooms from the intratribal war period. There is also an **Ifá** shrine, a deity (**òrisà**) of the **Yorùbá** religion, as well as a shrine to **Ògúnmólá** himself. Because of its advantageous location on a main road, the rooms that line that road are opened to the outside and have been converted into shops. This illustrates a change in focus from the courtyard to the road. Economic exchange and social **àlàáfíà** now take place in a setting outside the courtyard.

Ìréfìn Compound

This compound, located in the **Ìréfìn** area of Ibadan, can also boast a strong historic presence in having once been a palace of a **Baálè** as well. Close to five hundred and fifty inhabitants occupy fifty-five rooms. It was built by one of the original warriors to have settled Ibadan. The compound is in very good structural condition and contains a shrine (**ojúbo**) to the founder that was once his sleeping quarters. A second story (**àjà**) was added to the portion of the

compound designated as the headman's. Carved house posts (*òpó*) are still present and mark the area where arbitration and conflict resolution takes place in instances of discord within the compound. These posts are complemented by the array of murals that decorate the interior walls of the courtyards (see Fig. 5). The compound has pipeborne water, electricity supplied by the National Electric and Power Authority (NEPA), three pit latrines, and a refuse dump off-site and on-site as well. The front verandah space is conducive to trading and is set up with shops. This avoids the necessity to devote rooms for that purpose.

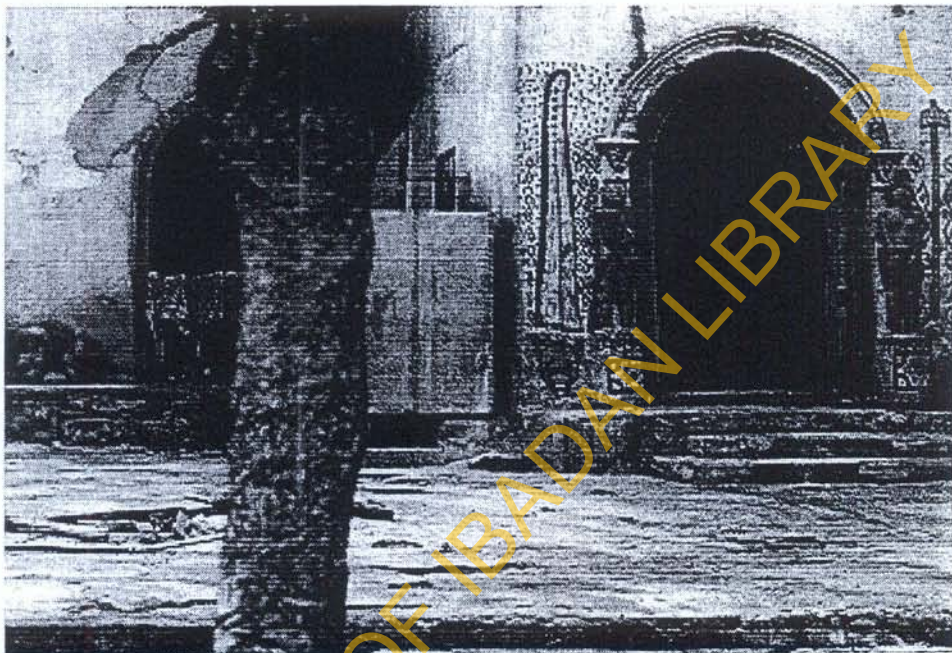


Figure 5. Part of the inner courtyard of Ìréfin compound showing the carved house posts. Source: Field survey, June 1997

Adébisi Compound

This compound has an interesting design history. It was modeled after the design of Mapo Hall by the same architect. It is home to nearly four hundred and has organized school sessions within the compound. A large family mausoleum was provided for in the original design with adequate space for the founder and his immediate brothers and sisters. The water supply is pipeborne with three shared taps and some facilities inside the structure itself. There is also one well and electricity supplied by NEPA. When electricity is not functioning, a frequent occurrence, the compound uses a backup generator. The front verandah space is used for social activities rather than for market or shop space. As in all compounds, someone is always on hand to interrogate unfamiliar visitors before crossing the threshold to the central courtyard. The maintenance (*àmójútó*) and repair (*àtúnse*) are financed through profits from other properties specifically designated for a maintenance fund. The occupants of the compound need only make contributions to host special occasions or extraordinary repairs.

Modern Dwellings

The modern units in Ibadan are scattered throughout newer portions of the city including **Bodija, Agodi, Jericho, Sango and Yemetu** (see Figs. 6,7,8). The Courtyard house presented here has twelve occupants and full indoor facilities. It is only thirty years old and was built to accommodate a small extended family. The residents wanted to maintain a traditional floor plan but give more defined designations to each room. The courtyard is used for plants, not habitation. There are now specific rooms for play, cooking and family interaction. In both the "Brazilian" style and modern flat apartments an interesting phenomenon has occurred. Most of the residents are not related, yet they have established a hierarchy among themselves for maintenance and conflict resolution. This hierarchy is maintained by the elder residents to ensure emotional, social and cultural *àlàáfíà*, and in the case of the flats the landlord is one and the same. The "Brazilian" has a shared kitchen, latrine and bath for twenty-four. The flat has self-contained facilities and houses forty. Although each family has its own unit most of the day is spent in a front yard space interacting and working. Maintenance of the facility in all of these dwelling types is the owner's responsibility. Environmental maintenance is shared between residents. This promotes physical and social *àlàáfíà* between residents

Figure 6. A portion of Justice Adeyemi's modern courtyard house in Yemetu area, Ibadan. Source: Field survey, June 1997

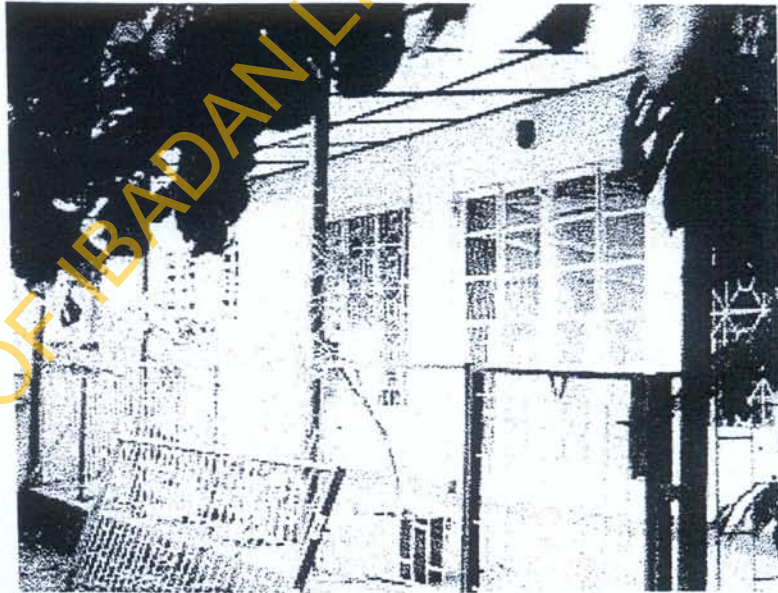


Figure 7. A "Brazilian" house in Sango, Ibadan. Source: Field survey, June 1997



Figure 8. A six-flat apartment building in Yemetu, Ibadan
 Source: Field survey, June 1997



Iseyin Sites
Agboró-Ode Compound

Built in 1920, **Agboró-Ode** is an example of a compound in transition (see Fig. 9). As portions of the compound have deteriorated they have been replaced by new structures, yet the plan of those structures does not follow the compound style. As space has become limited, and the family has grown, there is a need to utilize it more efficiently. Two "Brazilian" type (**kojúsími-kí-nkojúsíó**) units were added. These provided more rooms than the previous design. This phenomenon, the breakdown of the courtyard plan, is what Mabogunje (1962) referred to as "growth by fission." In this particular case much of the central courtyard was preserved for its original use rather than confiscated for inhabitation. There are fifteen to twenty residents sharing two latrines and one bathing space. There are six cooking spaces and a well within the center courtyard. A side or back courtyard is for washing and hanging clothes and where relatives are buried. The facilities are maintained by mutual assistance between residents.



Figure 9. The back courtyard of Agboró-Ode compound showing two graves, cloth drying and the bathing area. At the far right corner is the resident's pit latrine (**âgbàlá**). Source: Field survey, June 1997

Ariwá Compound

This compound is also in a state of fission/transition. The courtyard is maintained but is now more closely connected to the modern buildings on the site. Eighty-five years ago this compound was designed with the intention of mimicking a palace in the city of Abeokuta, a Yorùbá center known for its indigo dyed cloth. The interior walls of the compound still bear the designs of the times and encircle the doors and bases of the walls. Approximately sixteen people live in the traditional portion of the compound, consisting of nine rooms. An interior thatch ceiling is still being used. This practice was continued by the owner because it remains cooler and better ventilated than using asbestos sheets. The waste depot is off-site, waste being carried out by the children each evening. The children are also responsible for getting water from a communal standpipe across the street. Women in this compound spend most of the time on a back verandah watching the children and performing daily tasks. Cooking takes place here as well.

Gbèkó Compound

Gbèkó compound belongs to the current head of the weaver's cooperative, **Alhaj Shittu-Gbèkó**, the **Baba Alaari** of Iseyin. He is the designer and modeled it after a similar compound in Ibadan. It was built in 1945 and plastered in 1947. There are two each of bathing and latrine facilities. These are separated, one set for men and one set for women. The well is on one side of the compound and is a frequent gathering and conversation place for women. The front verandah space is frequently utilized for the cooperative's meetings (see Fig. 10). Vending stands for selling cloth are on the other side of the compound. The rear is enclosed and used for weaving and related tasks. A shaded portion of this backyard is reserved as a burial ground. There is a clear social hierarchy present in the architectural structure of this compound. The older generation appreciate having younger ones around to help send messages or run errands. The young students do not always appreciate the noise but enjoy the activity around them.

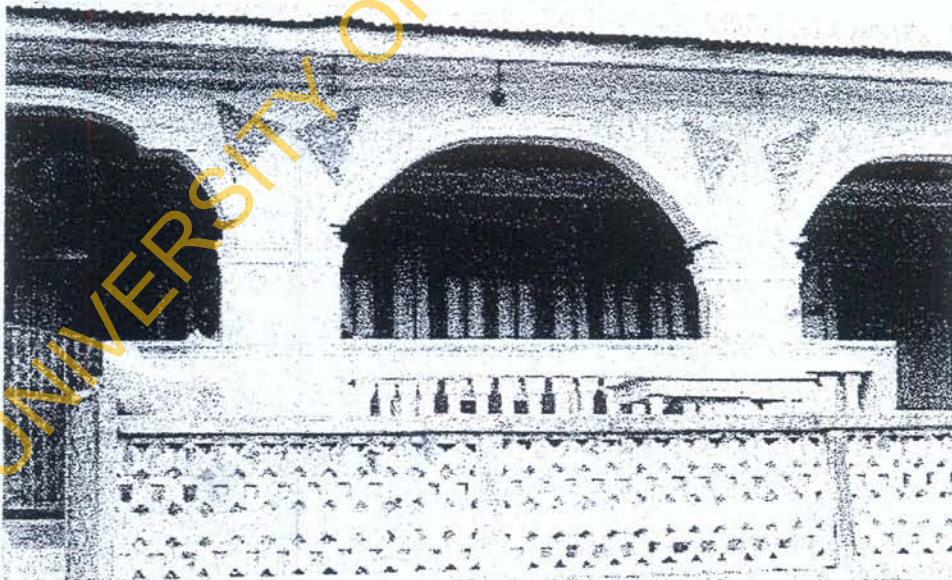


Figure 10. The front of Alhaj Shittu-Gbèkó's compound, Iseyin. Note the thickness of the plastered mud posts and the blocks that decorate the verandah entrance. Source: Field survey, June 1997

Modern dwellings

The modern units in Iseyin also establish a social hierarchy within the unit (see Figs. 11,12,13). The courtyard house (Fig. 11) is part of a larger walled compound of similar houses. Again the courtyard space is for flora and designated rooms provide for activities that traditionally took place within the courtyard. The kitchen is the busiest area where the people tend to gather. The "Brazilian" unit (Fig. 12) was not yet completed and only one set of the two proposed kitchens and latrines had been finished. This was shared by twenty-one inhabitants living in sixteen rooms. The verandah space on both floors is used for weaving-related activities. The flat apartments (Fig. 13) have a shared yard space and residents interact there frequently. In all these dwelling types there are rain tanks for collecting water and separate utility meters. All residents seemed to be pleased with the degree of social *alááfià*. They attributed this to the separation of facilities and utilities and to the yard space that gives opportunity for interaction.



Figure 11. Chief Adelabu's modern courtyard house in Maleta area, Iseyin.

Source: Field survey, June 1997



Figure 12. Alhaji Busari's "Brazilian" house, Ijemba, Iseyin.

Source: Field survey, June 1997

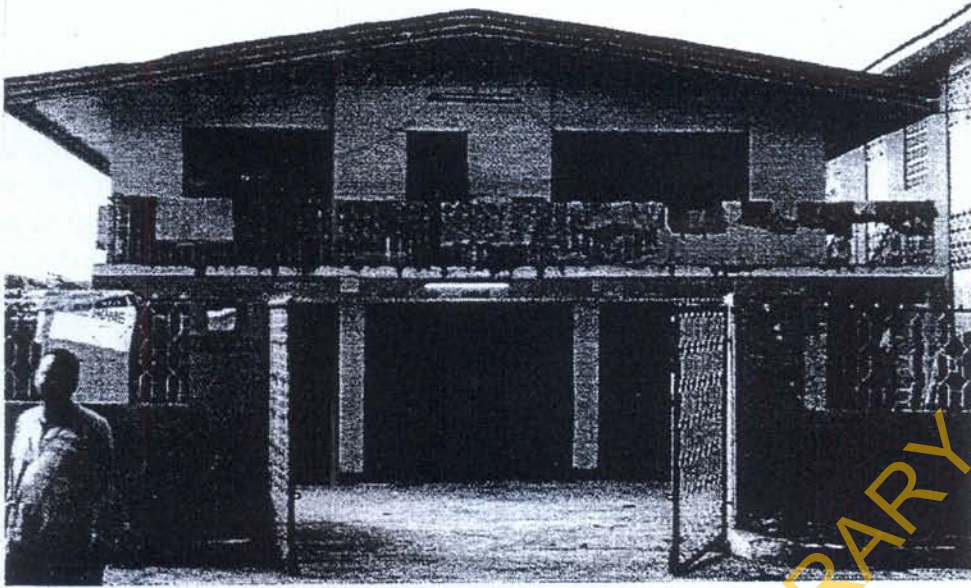


Figure 13. Modern self-contained apartment flats in Malete area, Iseyin.
Source: Field survey, June 1997

Àlàáfíà and Changing Priorities

In the evaluation of human environments, it is essential to recognize the subjectivity of the "human" factor. Every individual has a set of standards that they choose to live by. These standards reflect the issues addressed in this survey. The matrix in Table 2 summarizes the issues discussed during the interviews. The information reveals which elements of *àlàáfíà* the specific trait is related to. Some of these issues were more concerned with the physical, tangible aspect of living accommodations, while others were intangible and related to the more spiritual sides of *àlàáfíà*. If in 50% or more of the interviews the individual classified a trait as belonging to a particular aspect of *àlàáfíà* and felt it was present in their particular dwelling it was marked. These results were then compiled into a single survey, again using 50% as a cutoff for the total number of interviews conducted. This organization aids in the illustration of differences and similarities in the various dwelling types. Each conversation began with a general impression of the dwelling in question in comparison to where the individual used to live, or a dwelling type that other extended family members might have chosen to live in. This exposed the myths or stereotypes held about the kind of dwelling and the people who chose to live there.

In general, those who chose to live in a traditional compound setting had the impression that those who lived in flats were isolated or engaged in troublemaking that they may not want the rest of the family to know about. The impression of those who lived outside of a family compound was that the traditional compound was characterized by unsanitary conditions (*idòtí*), crowding (*òpò èniyèn*), and noise (*ariwo*). There were exceptions to these group opinions. Many individuals, although they may sleep elsewhere, return daily to contribute to the function and routine of the compound. Cleanliness (*imótótó*) is at the heart of Yorùbá well-being (Foster, Osunwole and Wahab 1996). Daily routines such as sweeping (*gbígbalè*), and social taboos, such as not sitting on the raised platform of the well in order not to get boils, or not to urinate (*tò*) by the wall of the compound in order not to develop genital disease, contribute to the maintenance of a sanitary environment (Wahab 1997). The latter is an example of physical *àláfia* promoted by a social or cultural mechanism, the taboo. The absence of flush toilets and use of pit latrines is the main characteristic of the compound that contributes to the perception of unsanitary conditions (Wahab 1997).

The most similar relationships can be drawn between the traditional compound and the "Brazilian" type. The modern courtyard house also has many similarities with its traditional counterpart. Because the floor plan is so similar to that of the traditional compound, it functions in similar ways. The courtyard plan increases the expense of building because of the quantity of materials, hence the overall size is reduced to accommodate only the nuclear, rather than the extended family. This is the point at which the modern courtyard house becomes increasingly related to the apartment flats and less like compound living. The "Brazilian" floor plan best accomplishes the preservation of a shared open space, the central corridor, and extended family living in the flanking rooms. In all the contemporary dwellings there is an absence of the strong spiritual links to the traditional religion (*èsin ibilè*) and ancestors (*bàbánlá, iyánlá*). This is due to the fact that religion has moved out of the home and into the church or mosque, and ancestors are buried in off-site places because there is not sufficient land space for gravesites within the modern dwelling design. When asked what could be improved, answers reinforced the issues that were of priority to the individual. Those living in accommodations with a better physical environment or facilities usually expressed a desire for more material goods to improve their living accommodations. Those that had a richer cultural, social or spiritual environment expressed a desire to improve their facilities, but would not do so if it required sacrificing any of those intangible spiritual and cultural attributes that were already a part of their living environment. Frequent complaints about sharing so much of one's own property were expressed in the compounds. Yet the same individuals would then mention the benefit of having the familial and group support system in case of illness or unemployment. Alongside the comments about the poor sanitary conditions of compound living, those who lived in apartment flats expressed sadness at the absence of cross generational interaction in situations of extended family living.

TRAITS/ISSUES	Traditional Compound					Brazilian (face to face)					Apartment Flats					Courtyard House				
	P	S	C	E	Sp	P	S	C	E	Sp	P	S	C	E	Sp	P	S	C	E	Sp
Extended Family		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Head Man		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X				X	X	X	X	X
Family Shrine		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X										
Burial Plots		X	X	X	X															
Text on Walls			X	X	X			X	X	X					X					X
Economic Sec.	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X										
Property Sec.	X		X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X		X	X	X
Social Inter.	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X			X	X	X		
Noise Control						X	X		X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X		X	X
Cooking Room						X	X	X			X	X	X			X	X	X		
Cooking Space	X	X	X			X	X	X												
Communal Life	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X								X	X	X
Generation Int.	X	X	X	X	X											X	X	X	X	X
Well Water	X					X					X					X				
Tap Water	X					X					X					X				
NEPA	X					X					X					X				
Shared Well	X	X	X																	
Refuse Depot						X	X				X	X				X	X			
Refuse on Site	X	X																		
Pest Resistance											X				X	X				
Pit Latrine	X					X														
Flush Toilet	X					X					X					X				
Rain Tanks						X					X					X				
Generator																X				
Adequate Storage	X	X				X	X				X	X				X	X			
Material Reuse	X	X	X			X	X	X												

Table 2. Àlàáfíà Matrix. (P: physical, S: social, C: cultural, E: emotional, Sp: spiritual)

Conclusions

From this evaluation it is evident that the question that persists is whether architecture impacts culture or culture impacts architecture. It is not necessary to choose which portion of that statement is true. Rather, it is more feasible to evaluate a case and determine which of the two forces have a greater impact on the decisions of the designer and choices of the residents. Within the framework of Yorùbá society, however, there is a third force. Àlàáfíà, the quest for happiness and well-being reflects in architecture both its physical/tangible and cultural/intangible aspects. The Yorùbá people not only utilize their indigenous knowledge to construct a suitable environment but to adapt to changes within those constructs by employing the concepts of àlàáfíà. Physical well-being, is met primarily by good environmental maintenance and proper facilities. Spiritual and emotional well-being is met by inviting religion into the home and providing space and opportunity for interaction between family members, such as a courtyard or communal space. Social well-being is achieved through the togetherness (àjose) expressed in reciprocal gestures in house construction and facility sharing. Although the architecture has changed, goals and values have not. The decline in building in general, due to economic conditions, has imposed a period of adaptation. This has prompted an increase in traditional materials and a period of rediscovery in the benefits of its use. The preservation of the physical world of the Yorùbá people contributes to these enduring cultural values. A system of mutual

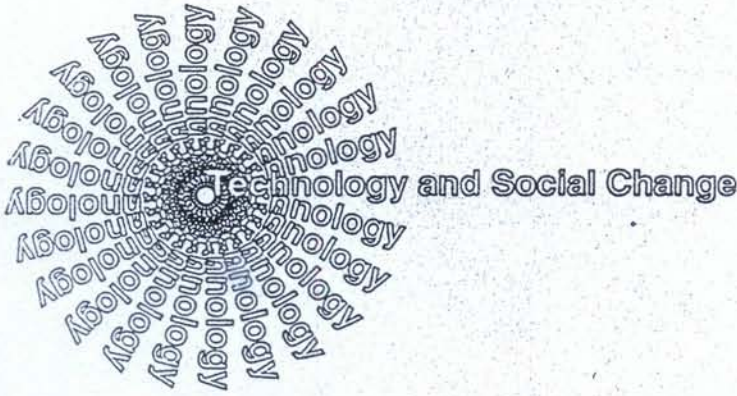
dependence and resource-pooling is still intact. Social hierarchies are maintained and practiced generation after generation.

The popularity of the "Brazilian" style dwelling has grown partially because the design lends itself to a traditional compound lifestyle. What remains to be preserved is the compound itself. The choice to build in this design style seldom occurs anymore. The desire to preserve it is a wish that both compound residents and contemporary housing residents share. This could occur through landmark status being bestowed on historically significant compounds such as the former palaces in Ibadan. Through this type of action a portion of Yorùbá culture will endure. The adaptations Yorùbá culture has made in light of growing urban zones like Ibadan and Iseyin have called for a revision in traditional design. The revisions have manifested themselves in different ways, appealing to different personal tastes. Where one type is lacking a degree of àlàáfíà, another type retains it. The resurrection of the courtyard house takes a similar physical environment and better distinguishes spaces and their uses. It also provides for better facilities. However, the extended family has been reduced significantly. The "Brazilian" style unit continues the tradition of communal living and uses land area more efficiently. There is not always room for burial space and therefore the tie between the family and the ancestors is weakened. Modern apartment flats contribute to privacy and better facilities but are sometimes lacking in opportunity for social interaction. The architecture does impact the well-being of Yorùbá society. Yet, where the desire exists, the important aspects of àlàáfíà become paramount in the choices made by both designer and resident.

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D. Michael Warren
Layi Egunjobi
Bolanle Wahab

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