

# SOCIO-CULTURAL TRANSFORMATION FROM TRADITIONAL TO MODERN ARCHITECTURE IN NIGERIA, 1915- 2015

By

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## **Abstract:**

*Traditional ways of building houses have been the order of the day since 1915 - 1950 through the period of transformation from traditional to the contemporary housing 1960 - 2015 in the history of Nigerian architecture. Through this period of traditional housing provision, Nigerians with the use of locally sourced building materials have devised a traditional method of self-help, whereby people came together with the spirit of mutual co-operation and communal participation to help others to acquire houses of their own at affordable means. Modern architecture appeared in Nigeria from 1950 to date as result of European influence that geared the interest of many Nigerians to copy such style of architecture. This paper x-rays the socio-cultural effects of changing from the traditional to modern buildings and proffers ways of encouraging traditional architecture. The research design employed was descriptive and historical research, adopting qualitative approach data collection through observation and in-depth oral interview in the three geopolitical zones namely Southeast, Southwest and Northern Nigeria. The research found that modern architectural style brought rapid increase of urban and rural development but also has its numerous effects in Nigerian architecture such as fading away of housing identity, loss of traditional architectural elements and material culture, building form, change in aesthetics, loss of cultural environmental setting and environmental degradation. It concludes that Architects in Nigeria should design houses taking into cognisance the culture and communal lifestyle of the people through specification of traditional materials, planning and other architectural elements that are acceptable in such region.*

**Key words:** *architecture, modern, socio-cultural, traditional, transformation.*

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION:

Socio-cultural factors are customs, lifestyle and values that characterizes a society or group. It encompasses cultural aspects that include concepts of beauty, education, language, law and politics, religion, social organizations, technology and materials culture, values and attitudes. Ekhaese (2011) described housing as a symbol of the socio-cultural heritage of a populace, whereby the people's ways of life exercises a strong control over the form and type of residence. According to Sanchez *et al.*, 2009, culture influences how different people interpret and evaluate their social interactions. Traditional ways of constructing houses that portray the lifestyle, values and cultural heritage of the many nations has transformed to modern housing.

Globally, modern architecture in housing provision has journeyed so far into the twenty-first century with its clear ideas of standardization, simplicity, use of invented materials and repetitiveness. This greatly influenced the character of most cities of Europe and America by the beginning of the Second World War. The expression was found in the abstract qualities of materials, design motives, and expressive power of design (Qurix, 2007). The features of modern architecture had become established from America to Japan and from Russia to Italy with a common background, which sought to give meaning to the mechanical process of using steel, concrete, asbestos and aluminium.

Modern Architecture was later extended to other parts of the world including Africa as international style that concerns itself with abstract qualities of materials. At a point in time in the seventies, there was a re-examination of the achievements of modern architecture by many architects and the result of their works roughly influenced the framing of the phrase "post-modernism" (Qurix, 2007). In Nigeria, there is evidence that some buildings mostly offices were already constructed with the features of modern architecture in the sixties. Some of these buildings include Post Office Building, Marina-Lagos; Cocoa House, Ibadan; Ahmed Talib Building, Kaduna.

In the traditional architecture, the idea of housing came as an objective of fulfilling one of the important needs of a man which are principally to provide shelter, security and comfort. In the actual planning of these homes, the planning and construction takes a pattern or forms which varies from society to society. Moreover, these forms of housing chosen or built offer a direct insight of various cultures and societies of the people. Olotuah and Ajenifujah (2009) attested that housing, a subset of traditional architecture, evolves from the culture of the community in accordance with the lifestyle of its people, the materials of construction available, and technical possibilities open to them. For instance, Nigeria nation is a heterogeneous society consisting of ethno-geographical regions like the north, middle belt (north central), east, west and south. Each of these regions has its own peculiar housing form. Consequently, the housing and spatial form in Nigerian traditional architecture changes from one period to another as a result of civilization, cultural infiltration and technological advancement (Rikko & Gwatau 2011). Nevertheless, the result of these changes has some socio-cultural effect to the people of Nigeria.

During the early times, primitive man after securing daily food had to seek for the provision of a reasonable shelter for protection against the impulse of his environment. The traditional builders (house owners) made use of their available local building materials and self-help effort to provide sustainable and affordable houses for their habitation with ease (Uji & Okonkwo 2007). No one expected any payment because it was predicated on the spirit of mutual cooperation and communal participation. Thus compensation sometimes was in form of meals. This system works well in rural areas and may be small cities that grew slowly, or in old villages incorporated into the urban area. The Igbo traditional houses in the South-East, Yoruba houses in the South-West, the Hausa houses in the North-east, North-central and the Tiv, Nupe, Gwari, Jukun and Idoma houses in the Middle Belt of Nigeria are not exempted. The traditional housing in Nigeria since 1915 has no problem of land acquisition; there were also available building materials and unskilled labour; this made building at the time more affordable (Ahianba, 2009).

Generally, Nigerian housing at the traditional period from 1915 to 1950 were made of huts with high pitched thatch roofs on circular, oval, square or rectangular plan. This was later improved to metal roofing sheets, building extensions such as walls and posts, and panels such as doors, were considered as architectural elements. The basic fact is that the structure, facade and placement of buildings can tell much about the social status of their owners, as well as the balance of power in the society that produces them (Nsude 1987).

The vision of affordable housing for all is yet unattainable especially to the poor individuals in the community. Nigeria traditional housing has been devised as a means of solving housing problem earlier before the modern style came on board. The traditional architecture of Nigeria is gradually being lost to contemporary architecture owing to new technology in building construction and influence of European style. Despite all the advantages of traditional architecture which include conducive environment, cheap materials and labour, feeling of nature and conforming to cultural life style, many architects have decided to copy European architecture thereby losing some of the elements of Nigerian traditional housing (Osasona, 2007).

This research is geared towards identifying the socio-cultural effects of changing from traditional to modern architecture in Nigeria. Therefore, the aim of this study is to evaluate the socio-cultural effects of changing from traditional to modern housing in order to retain the Nigerian traditional housing identity.

## **2.1 Culture, Human Behaviour and Architecture**

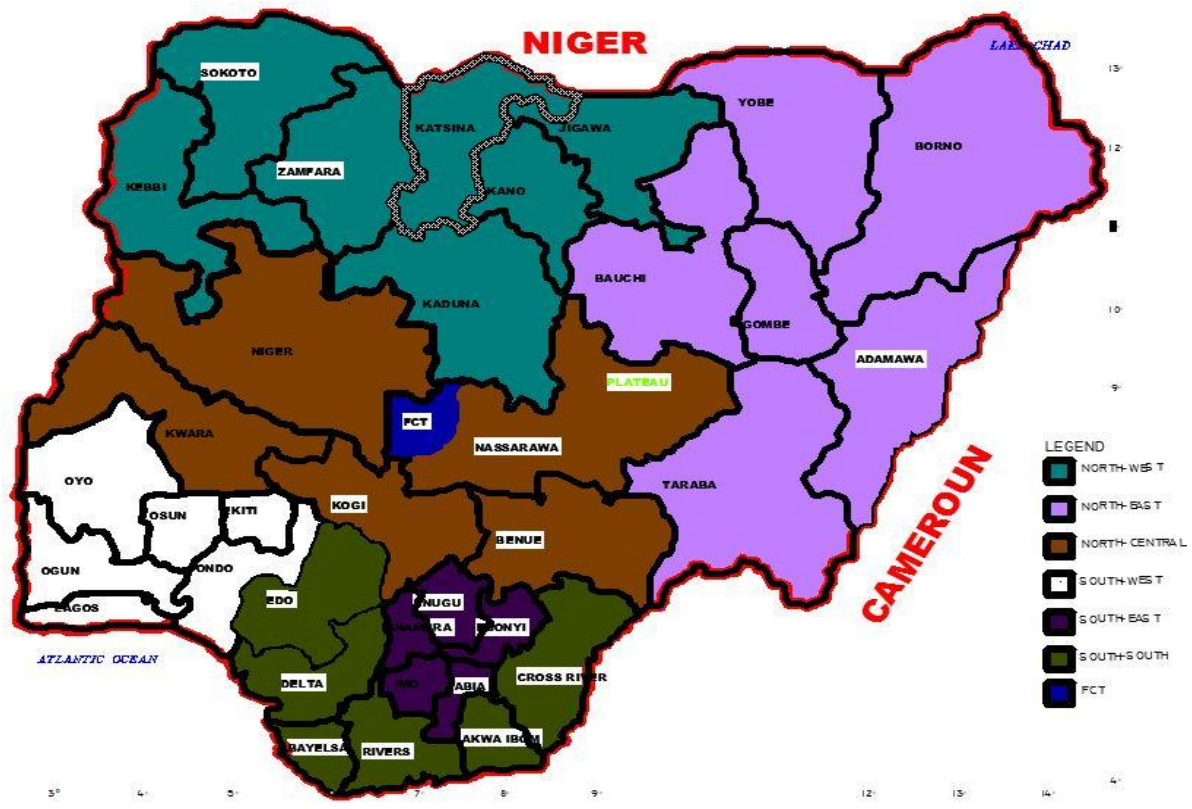
The beliefs, cultures, and traditions of a people reflect in the architecture of such place. This condition works well in a traditional residential housing setting or environment where there is high regard for cultural values (Hou and Li, 2006). The difference in culture determines how individuals experience and perform in the workplace interactions (Lipi *et al.*, 2010). The essence of traditional

building style is to portray its unique regional cultural features, which reflect the social history and culture of the people. Architecture and culture are always together and interdependent. The architecture of ancient times developed from the culture and available technology to modern technology of the people. Hence, Ahianba (2009) citing Gbotosho (1996) asserted that architecture is dynamic and consistent with man's development. This is an indication that architecture is always current with the socio-cultural and technological development of the whole universe.

## **2.2 Nigerian Traditional House-Forms**

Traditional house forms are the integral part of the traditional architecture among the various ethnic groups in Nigeria. These houses are constructed within the context of communities, in conformity with their available materials, biological and spiritual needs and the lifestyles of the people. According to Olotuah (2002); and Olotuah (2005), houses made of earthen walls and roofs are found dominantly in villages and small towns, while only few may be found in the cities. This is to say that in this new trend of housing delivery, most traditional houses made of locally sourced building materials are seen in the villages and small towns while few are found in the Nigerian cities. The implication is that traditional housing are getting lost in cities and even in the Nigerian villages.

There are three basic forms of Nigerian traditional architecture in earth construction. These house forms and their construction techniques are dependent on the regions in Nigeria and are influenced by people's culture, religion, climate, urbanization and recently professionalism (Rikko and Gwatau, 2011). The three basic forms of traditional earth construction that are used in Nigeria include: Mud obtained by swish-pudding, sun-dried mud bricks and fired or baked clay bricks. These basic forms of traditional earth construction techniques are discussed under these sub-headings of 2.2.1: Southern, Northern and Middle Belt regions of Nigeria. The map of Nigeria in Figure 2.1 shows the geopolitical zones or regions.



**Figure 2.1:** Nigeria showing the geopolitical zones or regions and FCT, Source: <http://csrwestafrica.com>

**2.2.1 Traditional House-Forms in Southern Nigeria**

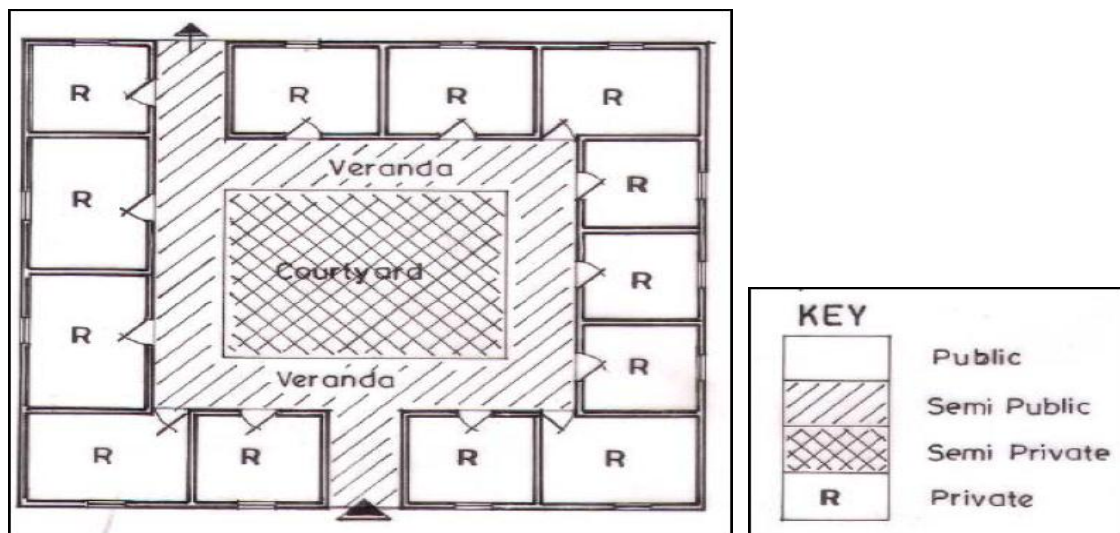
The building form is a determinant of the culture and available sourced construction materials in a region. According to Cornell (1997) traditional architecture is a material manifestation of culture. In the Southern States where argillaceous clay that is very grainy is most common, mud obtained by swish-pudding is mainly used in building construction. The southern states of Nigeria comprises of the South-west and South-east.

**(a) South-West Traditional House-Forms**

In the South-west Nigeria, there are two house forms indigenous to the Yoruba’s culture. The first form of houses is built around one or more courtyards, more often as four rectangular units facing one another. Other characteristics of south-west Nigerian houses include a single main entrance with rooms opening into a wide veranda which run round a courtyard.

The second type of house form of the Yoruba people is much smaller than the first, which based on simply arrangement of rooms on two rows facing a common hall. This hall serves several domestic purposes and is usually wide enough to accommodate people. There are also out-houses usually built at the back to serve as toilets and kitchens. In comparison, these types of structures are more airy which allow cross ventilation in and out of the rooms; unlike modern houses, that have little or no courtyard. More so, the socio-cultural effect of not being together is much felt in modern buildings where each compound is fenced unlike in the traditional buildings. For instance, Olotuah and Ajenifujah (2009) attested that the house forms of the Edo tribes (Bini, Ishan/Esan, Etsako, Itshekiri) and Urhobo of south-south Nigeria are very similar to those of the Yoruba. This is illustrated in Figures 2.2

The Figure 2.2 shows a typical plan of Yoruba Traditional Compound Layout in Western Nigeria with single Courtyard. Rooms (private areas) were arranged round the courtyard (semi-private area), while the veranda form the semi-public area. The Figure 2.3 is a typical elevation of Yoruba Traditional Compound consisting of multiple courtyards within Ogbomosho, Western Nigeria.



**Figure 2.2:** A Typical Yoruba Traditional Compound Layout in Western Nigeria with single Courtyard.

**Source:** (Osasona 2007)



**Figure 2.3:** A Typical view of Yoruba Traditional Compound consisting of multiple courtyards within in Ogbomosho, Western Nigeria.

**Source:** (Rikko and Gwatau, 2011)

#### **(b) South-East Traditional House-Forms**

In the Southeast Nigeria, the houses of the Igbo are grouped together within a walled compound. The compound usually has a single entrance with a covered porch. Sometimes defensive devices are strongly built on the fence or compound walls. Dmochowski (1990) observed that two or three storey semi-defensive buildings called *Obuna Enu* were also available in some compound.

Other characteristics of Igbo compound include the following: Buildings within the compounds do not have courtyards inside them but rather they are built facing one another thereby creating a common courtyard. There is provision of meeting and shrines houses. The traditional Igbo buildings are usually one or two roomed houses. Normally, the men's section is separated from the women, while the children section is grouped together. The materials used in construction in Igbo land are mud, hardwood timber, palm leaves and midribs, bush twines and pawpaw trunks for constructing a drain for the local tank called impluvium (Rikko and Gwatau, 2011).



The traditional Igbo community social welfare services were generally provided informally as part of the people's routine and normal way of life, which satisfy its intention of provision of the basic human needs of the citizens who lived most of their lives in the relatively self-sufficient community (Eteng, 2002).



**Plate I:** Traditional Building in Anambra State, Showing Thatch-roof on Load-bearing wall system. **Source:** Tropenmuseum, 1967.



**Plate II:** Traditional Buildings in the South-East, Nigeria showing Wall Decoration and Carved Doors. **Source:** Dmochowski, 1990.

### **2.2.2 The Northern Traditional House-Forms**

A round hut with thatch roof or flat tops is the commonest type of house form of the Hausa, Fulani and Kanuri. Their house form called homestead are built as compounds, which are usually divided in two areas: the inner women restricted area and the outer males' visitor reception area. The division of spaces is as a result of Islamic religious belief that the two sexes should be separated. In Hausa traditional architecture, the outer areas have the reception rooms which serve as elements of security. This boiled down to Rikko and Gwatau (2011) assertion that the housing form has been influenced by climatic, religions and socio-cultural factors of the environment.

### **2.2.3 The North-Central (Middle Belt) Traditional House-Forms**

The former Middle belt architecture, though with their individual unique cultural attributes comprises of Tiv, Nupe, Gwari, Jukun, the Taroks, Beroms and Idoma house forms which is usually of circular plan may be regarded as one ethnic group in this research. The middle belt –housing plan generally assumes a concentric pattern and the outer ring forms the base for the load bearing timber columns while the inner circle is for the wall. The structure is a free standing with equal or greater diameter of the buildings than its height.

Other building characteristics include: that Verandahs have common features with the buildings, which often running round the entire building (Olotuah and Ajenifujah, 2009). Walls are constructed with mud and hipped roof with thatch. The north central buildings has cluster of buildings arrangement around a compound.



**Plate III:** A typical Gbagyi (Gwari) Traditional Building (Middle Belt, Nigeria).  
**Source:** Tripdownmemory (2013)

### **2.3 Overview of the Origin of Contemporary Housing around the World**

Contemporary housing could be simply described as Modern housing that is in conformity with the modern way of life. At this period of housing, many architects with strands of ideas wanted to break away from the past architecture through the introduction of foreign architecture. A clear grasp of the term was realized after the League of Nations Competition in 1927. The leading architects (Walter Gropius in Bauhaus, Mies Van de Rohe and Le Corbusier) from their strands of ideas of what was to be done, declared that the architecture of the Bauhaus had enough of the arbitrary imitation of historic styles in a continuous development away from architectural whim and slander, and toward the dictates of a constructive logic, learnt in expressing the life of the people in more easy forms (Qurix, 2007).

The League of Nations Competition provided a new dialectic forum on the future of architecture. Its consequences also created an interesting shocking revelation whereby different architects were moulded in experiments that led to a conscious break from the past and with mutually commensurable methods, even if with different points of departure. During the League of Nations Competition, some new methods of design which include low-income housing, recreation and aesthetics among others were discovered and discussed. Finally, the congresses ultimately formed 5

major principles on which the new architecture should be based. The principles are standardization or repetitiveness, space appropriation, simplicity, use of materials and economy.

Precisely, from 1928 – 1960's, these principles literally acted as a "Catechism of Modernism" that created admiration in the minds of architects that embraced them in whose hands the caprice of the style radiated like the crystal symbols of a new faith. Modern architecture proved to have matured in the sixties and its echoes were felt in many parts of the world including Africa.

Other few countries around the world where contemporary houses started include Taiwan (Asia), Brazil (South America), Japan (Asia) and Egypt (Africa).

### **3.0 Research Methodology**

A descriptive research method was employed in this work, which includes conduction of oral interviews and through observation in the three geopolitical zones in Nigeria namely South-East, South-West and Northern. The choice of study area is based on the fact that the geopolitical zones in Nigeria are grouped into three major ethnic groups namely: Igbo (South-East), Yoruba (South-West) and Hausa (North).

#### **3.1 Method of Data Collection**

The research examined the various effects as a result of changing from traditional to modern architecture in Nigeria. This was done through conduction of oral interviews and observation in order to have firsthand information. Information was collected from the rural and urban cities of the selected three geopolitical zones in Nigeria (namely: South-east, South-west and Northern areas) which had a lot of colonial influences and from the peri-urban areas regarding their development and forces that shaped them overtime.

During the fieldwork at Anambra, Imo, and Ebonyi States representing Southeast, Lagos, Kwara and Oyo States representing South-west and Niger, Kano and Benue States representing Northern areas, 12 selected research assistants consisting practising architects and students on Industrial Training

from reputable construction and architectural firms were selected and trained as research assistants. A stratified sample method was employed. According to Chike-Okoli (2004) the reason for using this 2-stages of stratified sampling techniques is to examine each region separately especially to identify their unique differences in materials and elements that exist in population in form of strata. Pictures were taken of buildings or housing units and documented only where the housing owner grants approval.

### **3.2.1 Transformation in Nigerian Traditional Architecture**

Traditional housing in Nigeria from its inception has experienced a great change from what it used to be to modern architecture. This is owing to the entrance of European style of architecture and new technology in Nigeria (Oluwagbemiga & Modi, 2014). A case study to the Southern (South-West and South-East), North- West and North- Central (Middle Belt) part of the country show that some construction materials have changed over time. For example, zinc has replaced thatched roof while in some areas, traditional materials like mud, loam and clay walls are now being covered with plaster cement (Nsude, 1987). The Tables 1- 6 are data from personal observation schedule and interview on the traditional building materials and elements found in the sampled study area. Some of these material are similar in some of the regions while some have transformed.

The plates IV, V, VI, VII and VIII give an insight to the remains of traditional houses in various part of the country, while Plates IX , X and XI are modern houses in some geopolitical zones in Nigeria (Researcher Fieldwork 2015).

**Table 1: Data from Personal Observation Schedule on the Traditional Building Materials Used in South East, Nigeria**

Locations	Traditional Building Materials Used				
	Wall	Floor	Ceiling	Roof	Bedroom Window and Area
<b>Anambra</b>	Mud & Laterite	Mud & Laterite	Use of raffia palm stem, while majority of houses are without ceiling	Zinc has replaced thatch roof owing to modernization, while separate kitchen and few houses are still covered with raffia-palm thatch.	Timber window ranging from 0.36m <sup>2</sup> to 0.54m <sup>2</sup>
<b>Ebonyi</b>	Laterite	Laterite, while some have changed to sand/cement screed	No ceiling were found in most of the houses. Few houses are with strips of timbers ceiling.	Houses are covered with grass-thatched roof. Zinc are now replacing thatch roof on few houses owing to modernization.	Timber window ranging from 0.36m <sup>2</sup> to 0.9m <sup>2</sup>
<b>Imo</b>	Mud & Laterite	Mud & Laterite	Wooden/timbers are used for ceiling, while majority of the houses have no ceiling.	Houses covered with raffia-palm-thatched roof. Zinc has replaced thatch roof owing to modernization in some of the areas	Wooden/ timber window ranging from 0.36m <sup>2</sup> to 0.54m <sup>2</sup>

**Source:** Author's Fieldwork, 2015

**Table 2: Data from Personal Observation Schedule on the Traditional Building Materials Used in North Central, Nigeria**

Locations	Traditional Building Materials Used				
	Wall	Floor	Ceiling	Roof	Bedroom Window and Area
<b>Niger</b>	Mud	Mud	Use of aesbeto, while majority of houses are without ceiling	Zinc has replaced thatch roof owing to modernization, while separate kitchen and few houses are still covered with grass thatch.	Timber window ranging from 0.36m <sup>2</sup> to 0.54m <sup>2</sup>
<b>Kaduna</b>	Mud	Mud and sand/cement screed	No ceiling were found in most of the houses. Few houses are with strips of timbers ceiling.	Houses are covered with grass-thatched roof. Zinc are now replacing thatch roof on few houses owing to modernization.	Timber window ranging from 0.36m <sup>2</sup> to 0.9m <sup>2</sup>
<b>Benue</b>	Mud & Laterite	Mud & Laterite	Wooden/timbers are used for ceiling, while majority of the houses have no ceiling.	Houses covered with grass-thatched roof. Zinc has replaced thatch roof owing to modernization	Wooden/ timber window ranging from 0.36m <sup>2</sup> to 0.54m <sup>2</sup>

**Source:** Author's Fieldwork, 2015

**Table 3: Data from Personal Observation Schedule on the Traditional Building Materials Used in Northern Nigeria**

Locations	Traditional Building Materials Used				
	Wall	Floor	Ceiling	Roof	Bedroom Window and Area
<b>Kano</b>	Mud	Mud	Ceiling were not found in most of the houses. Few houses are with strips of timbers ceiling.	Zinc has replaced thatch roof owing to modernization. While few houses are still covered with grass thatch.	Timber window ranging from 0.36m <sup>2</sup> to 0.54m <sup>2</sup>
<b>Yobe</b>	Mud	Mud	Majority of the houses have no ceiling.	Zinc are now replacing thatch roof on most houses as a result of modernization.	Timber window ranging from 0.36m <sup>2</sup> to 0.10m <sup>2</sup>
<b>Plateau</b>	Mud	Mud	Wooden/timbers are used for ceiling, while majority of the houses have no ceiling.	Houses are covered with grass-thatched roof. Zinc has replaced thatch roof owing to modernization in some of the areas	Wooden/ timber window ranging from 0.36m <sup>2</sup> to 0.54m <sup>2</sup>

**Source:** Author's Fieldwork, 2015

**Table 4: Data from Personal Observation Schedule on the Traditional Building Materials Used in South West, Nigeria**

Locations	Traditional Building Materials Used				
	Wall	Floor	Ceiling	Roof	Bedroom Window and Area
<b>Lagos</b>	Mud	Mud/cement	Ceiling were not found in most of the houses. Few houses are with strips of timbers ceiling.	Zinc has replaced thatch roof owing to modernization.	Timber window ranging from 0.36m <sup>2</sup> to 0.81m <sup>2</sup>
<b>Kwara</b>	Mud	Mud	Majority of the houses are without ceiling.	Houses are covered with grass-thatched roof. Zinc has replaced thatch roof owing to modernization in some of the areas.	Timber window ranging from 0.36m <sup>2</sup> to 0.10m <sup>2</sup>
<b>Oyo</b>	Mud	Mud	Wooden/timbers are used for ceiling, while majority of the houses have no ceiling.	Zinc are now replacing thatch roof on most houses as a result of modernization	Wooden/ timber window ranging from 0.36m <sup>2</sup> to 0.54m <sup>2</sup>

**Source:** Author's Fieldwork, 2015

**Table 5: Data from Personal Observation Schedule on Traditional Building Elements Used in South East, Nigeria**

Locations	Traditional Building Elements Used				
	House Form	Courtyard	Placement of <i>Obi</i>	Wall Finishes/ Decoration	Door/Finishes
<b>Anambra</b>	Rectangle	Majority (95%) of houses are without courtyard	<i>Obi</i> exist in few compounds	Few houses were finished with mud, laterite, some plastered with cement, while few were decorated with <i>Uli</i>	Use of timber doors without carving
<b>Ebonyi</b>	Square and rectangle	No courtyard	No longer in existence	Few houses were finished with laterite walls, some are partly plastered with cement, while few houses were decorated with <i>Uli</i>	Timber doors without carving
<b>Imo</b>	Rectangle	Majority (95%) of houses are without courtyard	<i>Obi</i> exist in few compounds	Few houses were finished with laterite walls, some are partly plastered with cement.	Timber doors without carving

**Source:** Author's Fieldwork, 2015

**Table 6: Summary of Data obtained from Interview on Traditional and Contemporary Housing in South, North Central and Northern Nigeria**

S/No	Survey Statement	Traditional Housing Occupants	Contemporary Housing Occupants
1.	Sources of Building Materials	Locally sourced e.g. mud, clay, Laterite	Conventional /Imported building materials
2.	Method of Construction	Self-help Method	Use of paid workers and professionals.
3.	Cost of Building materials	Very cheap	Very expensive
4.	Types of Toilet facilities	Latrine facilities outside the main building	Wc and bath facilities within the main building
5.	Advantages of Traditional and Contemporary houses respectively	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Very cheap</li> <li>ii. Cultural value</li> <li>iii. Regional housing identity</li> <li>iv. Feeling of nature</li> <li>v. Accessibility of construction materials.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Good aesthetics</li> <li>ii. Does not require regular maintenance</li> <li>iii. Moves along technological development.</li> </ul>
6.	Housing duration	Between 5-70 years	Between 3 months - 45 years
7.	Existence of <i>Obi</i>	Found in many compounds in Southeast region only.	Not found in the other regions but very rare in Southeast region.
8.	Nature of Courtyard	Different buildings forms courtyard in the Southeast. Courtyard found within the structure in the other region.	Courtyard found within the building structure
9.	Nature of wall decoration	Geometric motif inscription found in few building	Few houses have moulded decoration on the wall of the buildings, while other walls are finished with paints

**Source:** Author's Fieldwork, 2015



### 3.2.2 Samples of Transformation in Some Existing Traditional Housing in Nigeria



**Plate IV:** Traditional Residential House at Ihite-oha Orsumoghu, Ihiala L. G. A, Anambra State.  
Source: Researcher Fieldwork (2015).



**Plate V:** Traditional Residential House at Ezem village Lilu, Ihiala L. G. A., Anambra State,  
Source: Researcher Fieldwork (2015).



**Plate VI:** Traditional Residential House at Umuoba-Anam Otuocha in Anambra North L. G. A. of Anambra State;  
Source: Author's Fieldwork (2015).



**Plate VII:** Traditional Building at Zaria, Nigeria.

**Source:** <http://www.virtualtourist.com/travel/Africa/Nigeria/Zaria-2157752/TravelGuide-Zaria.html>



**Plate VIII:** A typical Gbagyi (Gwari) Traditional Building at Abuja, Nigeria: **Source:** Tripdownmemory (2013)

Plates IV, V, VI, VII, and VIII are some traditional buildings found in some geopolitical areas of Nigeria namely: South-east and North. The traditional building elements such as wall decoration, forms, carved doors and the use of traditional building materials (such as mud wall, wattle and daub that were replaced block wall , thatch roof that suddenly replaced with zinc and aluminium) were highlighted in these buildings while some are undergoing transformation. This transformation finally led to construction of what is now called modern houses. The data obtained from oral interview and observation, indicates that the socio-cultural aspects of what the inhabitants cherished were as well

affected in such areas like environmental conduciveness, cheap materials and labour, feeling of nature and conforming to cultural life style.



**Plate IX:** A four- Bedroom modern detached duplex at Lagos in the Yoruba land, South-west Nigeria. Source: Author, 2015.

Plate IX is a sample of a four- Bedroom modern detached duplex at Lagos in the Yoruba land as a result of European influence on the traditional building. Modern materials like glass, step tiles aluminium, plaster of Paris (POP), paints, burglary proof, marbles and tiles are used. Other modern buildings found in the South-east Nigeria and North Central Nigeria is shown in plates X and XI respectively.



**Plate X:** Modern housing of the South-east Nigeria built in the year 2000s. Source: Author's Fieldwork (2015)



**Plate XI:** 2-Bedroom Semi detached Modern residential House in Minna, Niger State (North Central Nigeria). Source: Author's fieldwork (2015).

#### **4.0 Discussion of Findings:**

Many factors may be responsible for socio-cultural effect for changing from traditional to modern architecture in Nigeria. The researcher after random sampling of opinions and interviews from the three geopolitical zones in Nigeria namely South-East, South-West and North-Central, came out with the following findings:

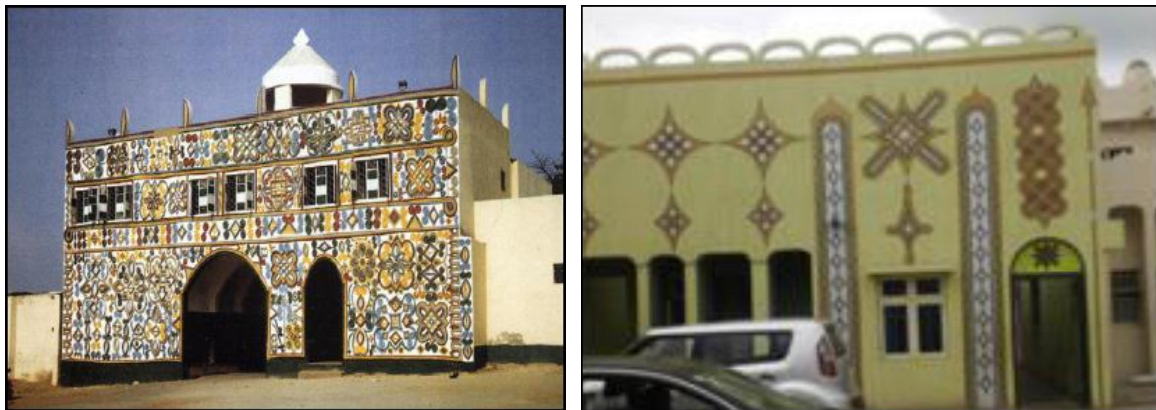
**4.1 Loss of Traditional Architecture:** The coming of modern housing due to copying of European style of architecture has wiped away many traditional housing in virtually rural areas in Nigeria. This is because some of traditional building elements such as wall decoration, forms, carved doors and the use of traditional building materials are no longer found in the modern houses. The fear is that if care is not taken the architectural aspect found in the culture of the people will soon get lost completely.

**4.2 Loss of Community Participation in Housing Delivery:** From 1915 to about 1950, houses were constructed traditionally with the available local building materials through communal effort. The women cleared the bush, swept the floor and fetched water for the construction while the men cut timbers, gathered mud or clay and kneaded them ready for use. The men were responsible for erecting the house to a completion. According to Skinner and Rodell (1983) in Uji (2004) and Uji & Okonkwo (2007), a traditional method of self-help with

reference to housing has always been understood to mean housing for the low income families constructed with their own unpaid labour. This made housing available and affordable. The changing from traditional to contemporary housing has automatically done away with such community caring and assisting one another

- 4.3 Unaffordable Housing:** The cost implication for the construction of contemporary housing is quite high owing to invented and imported building materials when compared with traditional housing. This makes it unaffordable to people in the rural areas.
- 4.4 Loss of Socio-Cultural Environment and Housing Identity:** The traditional housing setting promotes the socio-cultural environment. Due to its openness and conducive environment, moonlight play, tales, and other socio-cultural ways of life are achieved. The culture which is the people's way of life is an attribute of traditional housing; such attribute help one to identify housing with respect to its environmental origin. Therefore, one of the effects of changing from traditional to contemporary housing is that the cultural and housing identity will definitely get loss. This is more ramparts in the south-eastern Nigeria.
- 4.5 Housing Aesthetics:** There is a saying that beauty is in eye of the beholders. Many people believed that the geometric motif, *Zanko* and mural decoration or painting on the facade of the wall of traditional housing add to its beauty. From the oral interview, people believes that that the traditional housing has lost its beauty owing to housing transformation to modern housing, while few argue that modern housing have better aesthetics.
- 4.6 Identification of Traditional and Modern building elements and materials that can be combined:** It was observed that there are some traditional building elements and materials that can be combined to modern housing to enable houses to be easily identifiable, affordable and acceptable to the people. Some of these traditional building elements include: wall

decoration, forms, carved doors and use of locally sourced building materials (like mud, bricks, bamboo). A typical wall decoration in the northern Nigeria is illustrated in the Plate XII. This decoration makes houses easily more identifiable in any localities especially in the north.



**Plate XII** Northern Building in Nigeria Showing: "Zanko" and Mural decoration or painting on the facade of the wall. Source: Oluwagbemiga and Modi, (2014)

## **5.0 Recommendations:**

Since housing is a subset of traditional architecture that evolves from the culture of the community in accordance with the lifestyle of its people, moving away totally from the culture of the community in building construction may be disastrous. The research therefore recommend as follows:

- (i) Housing for a particular set of people in a separate community or region should be in accordance to the culture of the people and their lifestyle or a hybrid of traditional and contemporary housing should be evolved.
- (ii) Housing should be made affordable to people by encouraging construction with their available building materials.
- (iii) A good socio-cultural environment should always be maintained, whereby people will continue to relate to one another through good planning of housing units and not living a separate or isolated compounds.

- (iv) Housing for a particular community should be easily identified through the use of local available building materials as well as unique characteristic elements acceptable by such community.

## **6.0 Conclusion:**

Since people are identified by their culture, likewise their housing style should be identified. The copying of European architecture by Nigerians has immensely affected the culture of the people. This as well has changed the architecture of Nigeria in such a way that traditional architecture is being lost. The survey of the three geopolitical zones in Nigeria namely South-East, South-West and North-Central shows that the use of thatch roof, mud and clay walls, motif and other decorations are no longer in existence in some regions. In some areas where it appears to be available, it is very meagre, while some of the remains are combination of traditional and contemporary styles. Therefore, Nigerian architecture should not be left to deteriorate as a result of influence by European architectural style, whereby some of the traditional building elements and culture of the people are being eroded. Architects in Nigeria should design houses taking into cognisance the culture and lifestyle of the people. Traditional materials should be encouraged as much as possible in the design of houses. It concludes that architects in Nigeria through amalgamation of traditional and modern building materials during design and construction stage should not allow the Nigeria culture to be eroded.

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