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Examination of Hausa Cultural Identity in Architectural Design

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Abstract

This paper examines the phenomenon of expressing cultural identity in architectural design. It examines the phenomenon in the context of Hausa land. Different cultural groups have different styles of architecture; as such designers need to make sure they try as much as possible to reflect the sense of cultural group to which their designs are to be sited in. The paper focuses on the designers, their perceptions, and the approaches they use in conveying national identity. The research aims to provide a basis for the reflection of Hausa cultural identity in architectural design. Thus it examines current efforts use to identify the Hausa architectural identity in this dispensation, many studies show how the identity of architecture characteristics was based on elements use to express the culture and traditions of a particular place or people. A survey of four case studies was conducted and the level of cultural identity reflection was assessed and the views of seven architects and custodians of culture were conducted using interviews. Visual survey and checklist methods were used in conducting the case study surveys in the different facilities visited. Deductions were made on how to reflect different cultural identity principles and elements in the design to express the culture of a particular cultural group. The research established that architects and designers used numerous approaches to express a cultural identity in their designs.

Keywords: *Architecture, Cultural-Identity, Design, Examination, Hausa*

INTRODUCTION

Culture is one element that makes a community persist as a distinct entity. It is also defined as the way of life of a group of people. Rapoport, (2006), opined that in essence, culture comprises of all the unique beliefs and attitudes which give shape to lifestyle, identity, arts and

intellectual achievements of a group of people or community. Charith and Nickeeninettalls (2011) inferred that; cultural identity is the influence one gains by belonging to a certain culture or group. Collective cultural identity tends to influence an individual via the group they identify with (Salihu, 2012).

Over the years, many research works have been carried out on culture, traditional identity, national heritage and their integration in contemporary designs. These studies were geared towards creating buildings that bear the identity of their region as the daily challenges in the social, economic and political environment of man dictates that for a community to persist as a distinct entity, it must make a conscious effort towards preserving its unique beliefs and attitudes which give shape to its lifestyle. These studies include; (Salihu 2012; Mahgoub, 2007 and a host of others) these studies gave less emphasis to the impression this employed cultural elements or strategies have on such contemporary designs and how they are perceived. Nevertheless, many researchers postulated that the entire concept of cultural identities remains imperfect. Moreover, the research also looked at the need to re-discover the cultural heritage of the people of Hausa land and how architecture will help promote and develop the culture of the region in question as a solution to the societal problem of wasted cultural talents of traditional dances, drama, arts and festival, language and other.

Globalization and technology are moving us into one culture, thereby abstracting the traditional style (Wang, 2007). Rich cultural heritage is being eroded, traditional architecture is giving way to modern and contemporary architecture, and cultural arts and crafts are replaced by modern design, leaving a future generation without knowledge of their roots (Falola, 2003). As such designers need to make sure they try as much as possible to bear the sense of cultural group to which their designs are to be sited thereby satisfying the contemporary social needs and also at the same time attractions by reminding people of their origins. In an attempt to assess the level of the cultural revival of architecture student coming from various regions of the world, there is a need for cultural identity expression is of paramount importance.

CULTURAL IDENTITY EXPRESSION AND ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN

The acknowledgement of the cultural identity in the city and architecture has been an increasing subject of discussion in the last decades. (Wang, 2007). Cultural expressions are the communication of culture through some kind of means. Architecture is one of the means of cultural expression. Culture is expressed through architecture by designing buildings that have cultural elements reflected on them (Mahgoub, 2007b).

1. Reflection of traditional architectural style

Traditional architecture, as a witness of the history and built cultural heritage, gives information about the identity of the location. Today, cultural identity expressed through the use of traditional style is viewed as a defence mechanism against the domination of the sweeping identity of globalization (Mahgoub, 2007).

The architectural style is the classification of architecture in terms of the use of forms, techniques, materials, period, region and other stylistic influences (Silva, 2001).

Traditional architectural style can be reflected through;

- I. Use of indigenous building materials.
- II. Use of local building techniques.
- III. Use of local building forms

2. Reflection of lifestyle

Architecture is essentially a reflection of habits, modes of life and traditions as fundamental determinants of human activities. Architects enthusiastically embraced changed and incorporated customs to reveal modern dashes realism evolving tradition of a people (Mahgoub, 2007b).

3. Reflection of local spatial organization

The pattern by which certain groups of people arrange spaces and buildings within their environment is a reflection of their culture. The building style is also one of the major ingredients of cultural identity as different cultural groups have their unique manner of organizing and arranging spaces with a building (Kelbaugh, 2005).

4. Use of local Decorative elements

They are shapes of elements derived directly from the culture and building tradition of a place. The expression of local culture and heritage in architecture involves the adoption of prominent traditional features incorporated into the design (Kelbaugh, 2005).

SURVEY RESULT

The visual survey, checklists and interviews were used in the study of different facilities like the Katsina emir's palace, Old Katsina Teachers College (now Katsina museum), *Gidan Dan-Hausa* cultural centre in Kano state, *Gidan Makama* Museum in Kano state. This was meant to determine the extent to which the architectural design of the facilities reflected the cultural identity of their region. Below are the results of the survey.

SPATIAL ORGANISATION

The visual survey conducted at *Gidan Korau* (Katsina emir's palace) showed that the designer attempted to reflect the local cultural setting of the region. This can be seen in the spatial organization of buildings in the palace. Such buildings include the rectilinear plans of the *Soro* (private section of the palace), the round, curvilinear huts and rectilinear courtyard plans in the *Barga* (where the emir's royal stables, slaves and house servants live), the round and curvilinear huts in the *Gidan Ganye* (the royal garden and the emir's guest house).

In Katsina museum (Old Katsina Teachers College), the functional units are connected to central and rear courtyards. The spatial organization is based on rectilinear plans around a central courtyard.

In *Gidan Dan-Hausa*, the spatial arrangement here doesn't show much of harmony with the local setting as all other facilities were later built to serve for the main *Gidan Dan Hausa*. The characteristics of the local spatial organization cannot be seen in this facility (see figures 1-3 below).

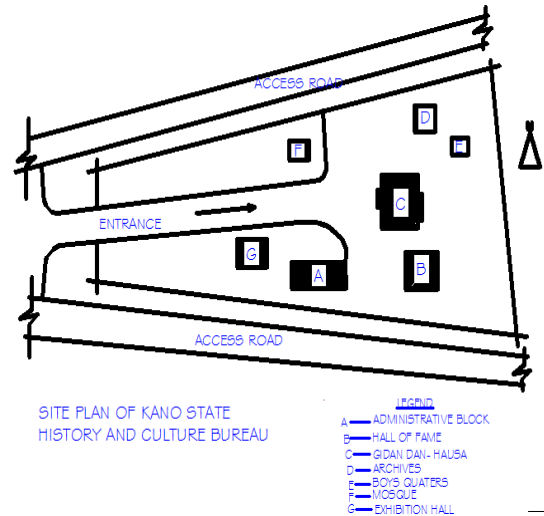


Figure 1: Site plan of the Gidan Dan-Hausa showing the different buildings on the premises source: authors fieldwork

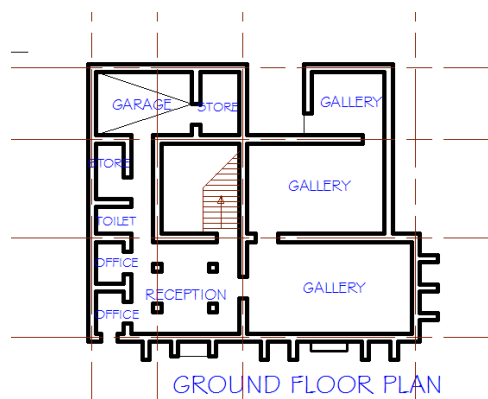


Figure 2: Ground floor plan of the *Gidan Dan-Hausa* residential section source: authors fieldwork

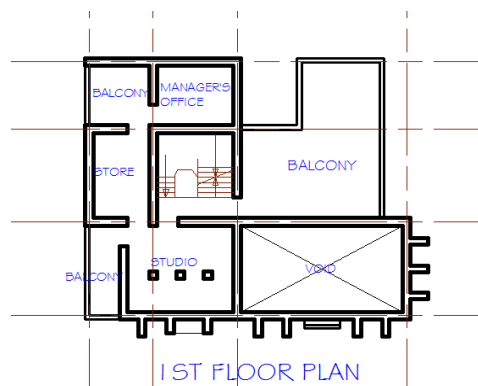


Figure 3: First-floor plan of the *Gidan Dan-Hausa* residential section, source: authors fieldwork

In *Gidan Makama* museum Kano, the design achieved harmony with its setting as the spatial organization of the buildings in the facility reflects the cultural identity of the people of Kano. Such buildings include the ‘Round’ Huts of the security post, 8, 10th and 11th gallery rooms,

the curvilinear plan of the pavilion, rectilinear plans of the offices and other gallery rooms and courtyard plan enclosing the curvilinear huts (see figure 4 below).

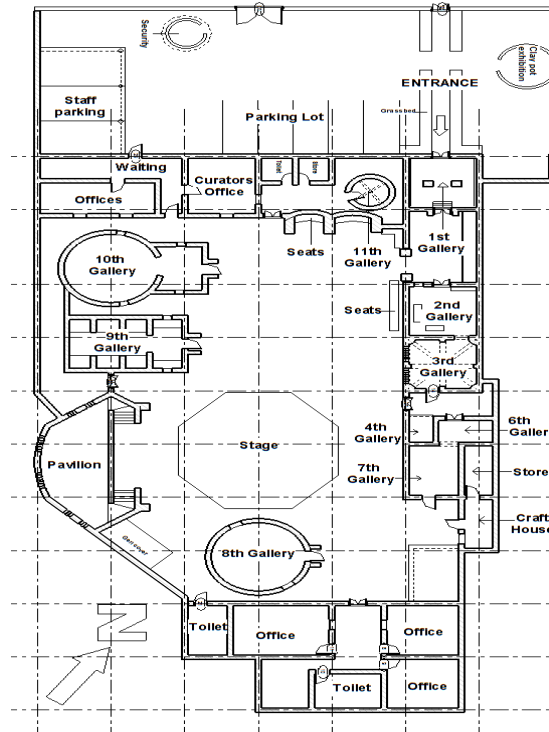


Figure 4: Floor plan of *Gidan Makama* museum showing the spatial organization source: authors fieldwork

BUILDING FORM AND EXPRESSION

Katsina royal palace is a large building complex that consists of different traditional building forms ranging from cubic, cuboidal, cylindrical and also curvy-linear building forms. The building features most of the traditional *Hausa* architectural forms peculiar to the Katsina region (see plate I below).



Plate I: Exterior decoration at the entrance to the residential quarter of the Emirs Palace Katsina (Historical Swords and shield represented as decoration at the entrance); authors fieldwork

In Katsina museum Katsina, the building form employed is purely from the Sudanese/ Islamic architecture, as the entire design was brought from Timbuktu in Mali. The facility consists of cuboidal blocks of buildings arranged around an open courtyard which serves as the central point the entire facility (see plate II).



Plate II: Side view from the courtyard of the Katsina collage showing elements of Islamic and Hausa traditional architectural style; author's fieldwork

The building form concept of the main *Gidan Dan-Hausa* building is cubic as it tries to blend with the traditional building forms common around Hausaland as the plan was brought from abroad (see plate III).



Plate III: Approach view of Gidan Dan-Hausa, Kano featuring different Hausa architectural elements; authors' fieldwork

The *Gidan Makama museum* complex consists of different traditional building forms ranging from cubic, cuboidal, cylindrical and also curvy-linear building forms. All the buildings in the facility are arranged around a central court-yard (see plate IV below).



Plate IV: Side view of the gallery from the courtyard showing different traditional architectural elements like the pinnacles, motifs, sprouts, mud walls and others; authors fieldwork

BUILDING MATERIALS AND CONSTRUCTION

The *Gidan Korau* (Katsina emir's palace), the *Kofa uku* (Old Katsina collage) and the *Gidan Makama* museum are purely constructed using the traditional building materials, methods and techniques. They are all constructed of conical-shaped, sun-dried clay bricks (*Tubali*), mud (*Kwababbiyar kasa*) and rafters (*Kyami*). Other construction materials used include; Iron doors and windows, red soil (*Jangargari*), the finishes are of Loda and colourants (*Makuba*).

The *Gidan Dan-Hausa* is also purely constructed using the traditional building materials, methods and techniques. Windows are casement type, a combination of wood frame and glass while the doors are complete of wood. Other supporting facilities were constructed of conventional building materials; Sand Crete block, concrete, steel, glass, wood and others.

PROMOTION OF LOCAL CULTURAL ACTIVITIES

Cultural activities in the Katsina Emir's palace includes; traditional horse racing, Sallah ceremonies like horse riding (Durba). In Katsina museum (old Katsina Teachers college), the major activity is visitation by the locals and visitors to see the Katsina artefacts and other historic items of the state. In *Gidan Dan-Hausa* in Kano houses cultural activities of the state, the major activities are based on the culture of the residents of Kano like traditional sports, traditional dance (*Koroso*), performance (drama) and other cultural activities (Dmochowski, 1990). In *Gidan Makama* Museum in Kano, the major activities are like any other museum, visitations by the locals and foreigners to see the artefacts and historic items of the people of Kano and also to host Sallah ceremonies (Dmochowski, 1990).

Checklists were used to evaluate and record the level of expression of cultural identity elements. These elements were categorized into traditional architectural style, lifestyle, spatial organization, building forms, local building techniques and local decorative elements. The results are shown in Tables 1 to 4 below;

Table 1: Checklist of Cultural Identity elements in Katsina Emir's palace (*Gidan Korau*)

S/N	VARIABLE	ABSENT	LOW	MEDIUM	HIGH	REMARK
Reflection of traditional architectural style						
1.	Use of traditional building materials				✓	
2.	Use of local building forms				✓	
3.	Use of local building techniques				✓	
Reflection of lifestyle						
1.	Gender segregation				✓	
2.	Local craft		✓			
3.	Privacy				✓	
Reflection of local spatial organization						
1.	Free organic plan				✓	
2.	Compact cellular plan			✓		
3.	Hypo-style hall		✓			
Reflection of local buildings form						
1.	Cubic forms				✓	
2.	Cylindrical forms				✓	
3.	Curvy-linear forms		✓			

4.	Cuboidal form		✓
Use of local building techniques			
1.	Buttresses	✓	
2.	Hausa- vaults ‘ <i>Bakan-gizo</i> ’		✓
3.	Curvaceous beams		✓
4.	Thatch reinforced massive mud columns		✓
5.	Spouts		✓
6.	Lamp alcoves		✓
7.	Parapets (<i>Rawani</i>)		✓
8.	Mud roofs		✓
9.	Thatch-mud roof	✓	
Use of local Decorative elements			
1.	Pinnacles (<i>Zanko</i>)		✓
2.	Decorative Motifs		✓
3.	Domes	✓	
4.	Arches		✓
5.	Carved doorways		✓

Source: Authors field work, 2018.

Table 2: Checklist of Cultural identity elements in Katsina museum (Old Katsina teachers college, Katsina)

S/N	VARIABLE	ABSENT	LOW	MEDIUM	HIGH	REMARK
Reflection of traditional architectural style						
1.	Use of traditional building materials				✓	
2.	Use of local building forms		✓			
3.	Use of local building techniques				✓	
Reflection of lifestyle						
1.	Gender segregation	✓				
2.	Local craft		✓			
3.	Privacy			✓		
Reflection of local spatial organization						
1.	Free organic plan			✓		
2.	Compact cellular plan	✓				
3.	Hypo-style hall	✓				
Reflection of local buildings form						
1.	Cubic forms	✓				
2.	Cylindrical forms	✓				
3.	Curvy-linear forms	✓				
4.	Cuboidal form				✓	
Use of local building techniques						
1.	Buttresses				✓	
2.	Hausa- vaults ‘ <i>Bakan-gizo</i> ’				✓	
3.	Curvaceous beams				✓	
4.	Thatch reinforced massive mud columns		✓			
5.	Spouts				✓	
6.	Lamp alcoves				✓	
7.	Parapets (<i>Rawani</i>)				✓	

8.	Mud roofs				✓
9.	Thatch-mud roof	✓			
Use of local Decorative elements					
1.	Pinnacles (<i>Zanko</i>)				✓
2.	Decorative Motifs			✓	
3.	Domes	✓			
4.	Arches		✓		
5.	Carved door ways				✓

Source: Authors fieldwork, 2018.

Table 3: Checklist of Cultural identity elements in *Gidan Dan-Hausa* cultural center, Kano

S/N	VARIABLE	ABSENT	LOW	MEDIUM	HIGH	REMARK
Reflection of traditional architectural style						
1.	Use of traditional building materials		✓			
2.	Use of local building forms			✓		
3.	Use of local building techniques		✓			
Reflection of lifestyle						
1.	Gender segregation	✓				
2.	Local craft		✓			
3.	Privacy		✓			
Reflection of local spatial organization						
1.	Free organic plan					✓
2.	Compact cellular plan	✓				
3.	Hypo-style hall	✓				
Reflection of local buildings form						
1.	Cubic forms			✓		
2.	Cylindrical forms	✓				
3.	Curvy-linear forms	✓				
4.	Cuboidal form					✓
Use of local building techniques						
1.	Buttresses					✓
2.	Hausa- vaults ' <i>Bakan-gizo</i> '			✓		
3.	Curvaceous beams					✓
4.	Thatch reinforced massive mud columns		✓			
5.	Spouts			✓		
6.	Lamp alcoves	✓				
7.	Parapets (<i>Rawani</i>)					✓
8.	Mud roofs		✓			
9.	Thatch-mud roof	✓				
Use of local Decorative elements						
1.	Pinnacles (<i>Zanko</i>)					✓
2.	Decorative Motifs					✓
3.	Domes			✓		
4.	Arches			✓		
5.	Carved doorways	✓				

Source: Authors fieldwork, 2018.

Table 4: Checklist of Cultural identity elements in *Gidan Makama* Museum, Kano

S/N	VARIABLE	ABSENT	LOW	MEDIUM	HIGH	REMARK
Reflection of traditional architectural style						
1.	Use of traditional building materials				✓	
2.	Use of local building forms				✓	
3.	Use of local building techniques				✓	
Reflection of lifestyle						
1.	Gender segregation				✓	
2.	Local craft			✓		
3.	Privacy				✓	
Reflection of local spatial organization						
1.	Free organic plan				✓	
2.	Compact cellular plan	✓				
3.	Hypo-style hall	✓				
Reflection of local buildings form						
1.	Cubic forms				✓	
2.	Cylindrical forms				✓	
3.	Curvy-linear forms		✓			
4.	Cuboidal form				✓	
Use of local building techniques						
1.	Buttresses	✓				
2.	Hausa- vaults ' <i>Bakan-gizo</i> '				✓	
3.	Curvaceous beams				✓	
4.	Thatch reinforced massive mud columns				✓	
5.	Spouts				✓	
6.	Lamp alcoves				✓	
7.	Parapets (<i>Rawani</i>)				✓	
8.	Mud roofs				✓	
9.	Thatch-mud roof			✓		
Use of local Decorative elements						
1.	Pinnacles (<i>Zanko</i>)				✓	
2.	Decorative Motifs				✓	
3.	Domes		✓			
4.	Arches			✓		
5.	Carved doorways				✓	

Source: Authors fieldwork, 2018.

INTERVIEWS OUTCOMES

The in-depth interviews were thematically analyzed to reveal the commonalities and differences in the views of the custodians of culture and architects around Hausa land.

The study revealed that there are commonalities and differences between the views of custodians of Katsina culture regarding the elements of Hausa cultural identity. The impact of

religion on culture is very significant, and essential for understanding the needs of the individual for privacy, family interaction, and space configuration and orientation. There is an agreement among architects and custodians of Hausa culture that there are elements, vocabularies, proportions, and materials that distinguish traditional Hausa architecture, but there is no agreement on whether they should be used again or not in the reflection of cultural identity in contemporary designs.

Some architects are in support of the motion that the reuse of these elements and vocabulary is essential to achieve a distinctive Hausa architectural identity that relates contemporary architecture to traditional architecture. Others believe that it is not necessary to use these elements and vocabularies but it is essential to respond to climatic conditions and the specific needs of Hausa land.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The research aimed at providing a basis for the reflection of Hausa cultural identity in architectural design. The result of the findings from the case studies carried out showed that the facilities tried to reflect the cultural identity of their regions by featuring different cultural identity elements through their spatial organization, building materials and techniques, building forms and decorative motifs. However, the *Gidan Dan-Hausa* cultural centre features only a few of the cultural identity elements, this is because the design of the main *Gidan Dan-Hausa* was brought from abroad and so it reflects foreign style adorned with some local elements. The study concluded that there were several strategies employed by architects to express cultural identity in their work. Their attempts influence the development of cultural identity expression in contemporary architecture. The use of 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 any 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.

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