

Proverbial Expressions in Contextual Definition of Káà and its Postproverbial Imagination

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Abstract

Káà is an architectural term widely used by the Yoruba to describe designative points in a radius of curvature for a building complex *agbo-ilé*. The general idea of this time-honored complex has based on combining apartments into a congruous unit to give central area/courtyard *aya-ilé*, strewn with sand for open-air entertainments, contests, spectacles and judicatory. As significant as this architectural term and design is to Yoruba social history, discourse that surrounds the conception *vis-à-vis* the proverbial and post proverbial expressions in terms of usages have not been studied to give in detail, the set of facts and circumstances that prompts their context of use. Structures and styles of diverse Yorùbá historical architectures with their constituent parts demand contextual examination in order to make clear definitions of each section in the complex and explicate its signification to the value system. An in-depth study of Yorùbá architectural designs will provide sectional scrutiny of each spatial location in their building complexes and unveil the social group's time-honored customs. The paper, therefore, studies spatial attributes, styles, and designative units in diverse Yorùbá architectural structures for historical values and denotations of customary beliefs and practices. In-depth interviews and historical review methodologies were used for age-long structures of this style; pictures were taken for value orientation discussions and detailed analysis of each unit to ethical codes. Findings revealed the methodical and efficient sectional arrangement of the structures and affirmed that moral principles and cultural

values are preserved in this social unit. However, the architectural styles have been a virile preservation of Yorùbá cultural heritage as a gregarious ethnic group who avoids solitude.

Keywords: Contextual Definition, Káà, Native Intelligence, Postproverbial, Value-System, Yorùbá,

Introduction

The Yorùbá are a patrilineal social group with a distinctive mutual admiration society, unique cultural fluxion and architectural style practically designed for paternal social units' arrangements in a hierarchical classification system. Equity and open-minded impartiality, mutually intelligible language, and philosophical verbal expression are trenchant distinctions in Yoruba cultural heritage (Ajadi, 2021, Ajadi, 2022). Yorùbá urbanism is legendary and direct slap house (*ilé aláámò*) solely made with mud exemplified by their indigenous dwelling houses. The quest for advancement in the art and science of architecture against abrupt crevices and decrepitude of direct slap house prompted framed slap architectural design with mud (*ilé aláàbàrà*) and brick architectural design with mud (*ilé oníbíríki*). Mud bricks joined with mud-mortar in brick architectural structures while slap architectural structures are built with termite - resistant wood as rafter, *eké*, structurally framed and sandwiched as skeleton to hold mud uprightly and for leaf-roofed covers. Arrowroot leaves, *gbògòdì*, (*sacrophrynium arnoldianum*) and thick pile of dry grass, *beere*, are laid and fastened immediately with creepers.

An extract from *Odù-Méji* of the *ifá* divination corpus established the indigenous style of Yoruba architectural building, and the practice could be traced to the Yoruba arch deity, *Obàtálá*, as explicated thus:

*A kó 'lé róbótó a ní kí Òrìsà ó gbà...
 Àwon ló di 'fá fun Àsamò
 Won a bu fun Òdimò
 Won a bu fun Òdimòndímò*

We gifted a roundish shanty to the deity ...
 It was they who divined for *Àsamò*
 They fetched for *Òdimò*
 They fetched for *Òdimòndímò* (Kalilu, Ayodele & Akintonde, 2006)

The above *Ifá* literary corpus narrates how the deity, *Obàtálá*, the custodian of clay, *Alámò*, conjointly with his gifted and intelligent allies, *Àsamò*, *Òdimò* and *Òdimòndímò*, who were exceptionally skilled in clay's usages, built a

small and circular shack with clay for divinity. The excerpt of this poesy substantiates the extreme oldness of mud house, *ilé aláamò*, and professional co-action of builders in architectural construction, *òwè*, by Yoruba social group.

Yoruba architectural designs are rectilinear in structures for agnatic amity of at least the ternary coevals in order to uphold family tradition, preserve commonage cultural root, for the sustenance of the social group and their value-system. The main buildings of Yoruba architectural complex are often designed for lineage head (*Mógàjí ilé*), projected with colonnade in hierarchical structure of headships for members of the clan. The idea is to give sub-structures that are consisted of rows of evenly spaced verandahs and to provide generational attachment of building apartments in the concept of annexes for the conjugal units within the line of descent. This concept from the most styles forms an enclosed building complex/compound *agbo-ilé* to offer patrilineal living arrangement.

The enclosed compound, *agbo-ilé*, however, often domiciled series of socio-cultural activities, philosophical theory of knowledge that are applicable to social conducts, and values of social living that give prerogative for individuals and the whole social unit. The interior sections of some of these compounds comprise living apartments, *ilé ìgbé* for different family units, relaxation centre, *sarè*, harvest home, *akòdì*, store, *sàsà*, judicatory's center, *gbòngàn ìgbéjò àti ìdájó*, sacred or circumscribed unit for the ancestral deity and religious rite, *ilédi/ìgbàlè*, and open central area/courtyard, *aya-ilé* for collection of rainwater with pots from the roof (Plate 1).



Plate 1: Exterior and Interior Structures with Drawing plan of Yorùbá Architectural Compound
 Town: Ara,
 Year of Photographs: 2021
 Arrangement and Drawing: Ajadi Michael Olaniyi

The concept of communal settlement in Yorùbá enclosed compound is based on methodical and efficient ways of upholding the lineage customs and as a gregarious ethnic group who avoids solitude. The designative point to a conjugal unit from consanguine patrilineal-sibs within the congruous structures that formed an enclosed residence referred to as *Káà*. It is an architectural unit in Yorùbá patrilineal compound. As significant as this architectural term and design is to Yoruba social history, discourse that surrounds the conception *vis-à-vis* the proverbial and postproverbial expressions in terms of usages have not been studied to give in details, the set of facts and circumstances that prompts their context of use. Structures and styles of diverse Yorùbá historical architectures with their constituent parts demand contextual examination in order to make clear definitions of all sections in the complex/compound and explicate their significations to value-system.

In spite of the fact that many scholars from fields of history, archaeology, ethnography, anthropology and art history have given comprehensive accounts of architectural styles in Africa and the world at large, contextual connection and conception of *Káà* in Yorùbá traditional architecture is still lacking in-depth information. Likewise, the impacts of this architectural style on the preservation of moral intelligence, ethical principles and restoration of Yorùbá cultural heritage have not received scholastic attention. In evidence, Prussin (1974), Hull (1976), Denyer (1978), Elleh (1997) and Asojo (2011) studied construction styles in African traditional architecture from antiquity to post-colonial styles such as shanties, tents, hive-style houses, Sudanese-style and explications are given to their evolutions and transformations before and after the European conquest to present time. Olaniyan and Adebayo (1998) give accounts on Yorùbá intergroup relations and diplomacy with an emphasis on behavioral attributes of state and non-state actors to the peacetime economic and diplomatic contacts.

Andaz (1992) submits that the Yorùbá urban areas consist of different compounds, constructed around open central arena with diverse rooms connections and their courtyards are often comprise clay wares to collect rainwater from rooftop. Elleh (1997) affirms that line of descent and lineage affectionate closeness are what prescribes Yorùbá compound and triple heritages in terms of generational differences can be noticed in their architectural styles. Imokhuede (1991) describes courtyard as a building characterized by straight lines space for relaxation, work, food preparation and eating, serious deliberation, and any form of social and political activities. Talbot (1924) posits that Yorùbá compound commonly had angular shape with one entrance leading into an inner courtyard and different apartments which are occupied by patrilineal related families, ranked according to longevity in each social unit.

Denyer (1978) identifies Yorùbá architectural building as an impluvium style with peristyle to receive water from the roof and reduce erosion by rainwater.

Ajibade (2017) considers the cults, secret societies and fraternities in the culture and customs of the Yorùbá with avouchment that all religious cults have their specific shrines, priests or priestesses and distinctive dress and insignia. Symbolic paraphernalia of different Yoruba deities; òrìsà, with their well-known sacred motifs, symbols and usages were contextually explicated with a projective techniques of different divinities' pictures to tell the story about the diverse Yorùbá mythological deities (Dennis, 1974; Ajadi, 2014; Ajadi, 2017; Ajadi, 2021; Ajadi and Tiamiyu 2021; Ajadi, 2021; Ajadi, 2022). Asojo and Jaiyeoba (2017) present information about Yorùbá settlement patterns with explanation on precolonial, colonial and postcolonial towns and cities.

Asojo (2017) studies the Yorùbá architectural designs from a pre-colonial era when houses built around a series of open courtyards. In different sizes and traces, the cross-cultural influences of the West on the colonial period and postcolonial architectural patterns are striving in order to recapture principles in indigenous styles that have been lost from colonial rule for contemporary designs and practices. Amole and Folaranmi (2017) dwell on structural types of Yorùbá dwelling houses with underlines in decoration, processes and materials, religious centres change and continuity. Nevertheless, an in-depth study of *káà* in Yorùbá architectural designs will provide sectional scrutiny of each spatial location in the building complex and unveil the social group's time-honored customs. On these bases, however, the paper will provide avenues for the exploration of proverbial expressions in the contextual definition of *káà* and shed light on Yorùbá beliefs and norms that enrich people's native intelligences.

The paper, therefore, studies spatial attributes, styles and designative conjugal units (*káà*) in diverse Yorùbá architectural structures for historical values, ethical principles and denotations of customary beliefs and practices. It equally explores philosophical usage of moral expressions in Yorùbá architecture-related proverbs for contemporary activities and the import to value orientations. The objectives are: (1) to delve into contextual definitions of *káà* in Yoruba architectural designs in order to give in detail the historical circumstance that surrounds the conception of the term and the implication for moral principles. (2) To analyze ethical principles in philosophical expressions of Yorùbá architecture-related proverbs for moral values in a social unit and in an extended social group. (3) To explore contemporary activities and translations in post proverbial imagination of Yorùbá architecture-related proverbs (4) To discuss pictorially, materials, change, and continuity in Yorùbá architectural

designs and cross-cultural influences of Occident on their communal compound and living arrangement.

In-depth interviews and historical review methodologies used for this study. In-depth interview employed for the collation of varieties of Yorùbá oral literature and tradition that are characterized by imagination, the meaningfulness of expression, dictums and good form and technique from architecture-related expressions and proverbs. Historical review was used for detailed critical inspection of age-long structures of *kaa* style and the continuum of events as it was occurring in Yorùbá architectural designs leading from the past to the modern-day structures. Pictures of diverse Yorùbá time-honoured buildings of *kàà* style were taken for contextual explication of Yorùbá architectural-related proverbs and detailed analysis of each unit to ethical codes were discussed through pictorial perspective of the units. Write-ups which are of usefulness to this work were also consulted for careful survey and records. However, change and continuity together with building processes and materials focused on for the exploration of innovations and modifications in the continuous and connected period.

Contextual Definition of Kàà in Yorùbá Architectural Styles

As earlier reiterated, *kàà* is a dialectical term to describe architectural unit, *ikangun*, in a building compound of North-West Yorùbá (NWY), Central Yorùbá (CY), part of South-Western Yorùbá (SWY) and part of South-Eastern Yorùbá (SEY) as revealed in Yorùbá classification by Adetugbo (1967); Akinkugbe (1978); Adeniyi (2010); and Akinlabi and Adeniyi (2017) while Yorùbá in other areas refer to the term as *àkóká* (built-in-round). The term employed by Yorùbá to highlight the designative point for a patrilineal kin within the patrilineal social unit in a radius of curvature, rectilinear for a building compound, or complex, *agbo-ilé*. The general idea of this time-honoured complex amid Yorùbá based on converting an apartment into a congruous unit to give central area/courtyard, *aya-ilé*, strewn with sand for children's rearing, native intelligences', teachings, ethical principles' corrections, open-air entertainments, contests, spectacles and judicatory.

The dictum, *a kii fi gbogbo enu sòrò* indicates that the Yoruba appreciate the acquisition of native intelligence from oral literatures and traditions such as signs, proverbs, folklores, taboos, myths, dos and don'ts, legends and tales for contextual denotation of ethical and moral principles. These condensed traditions embody some important fact of experience taken as true mode of acquiring knowledge by Yorùbá and they are better learned in *kàà* for ethical codes in an extended social group. For example, statements like *ilé làà tí kó*

èsó ròde metaphorical meaning “Charity begins at home” and *ise ilé ní bá ni dé’ta*, substantiated the Yorùbá trust in homes as what determines dignified conducts. The collection of Yorùbá maxims recognizes that the moral state of compounds determines the well-being of the extended society: *bi òdòdè o òdìn bí igbé ni ilú rí*, metaphorical meaning “If peace eludes homes, the society becomes shambolic’. Yorùbá is known for well-coordinated settlements in units with inherited patterns of thoughts and actions. Their compounds are formed along patrilineal related family, ranked according to title and seniority. Each compound becomes a close-knit homogenous group that grows bigger as their male children become fully developed and matured for marriage.

In the process, a portion is assigned a to each male child for an apartment building within the compound and the distribution of space for buildings is done according to the peristylar style usually set apart for outlined purposes in order to ensure hierarchical continuity in the family. Traditionally, a mature man expected to erect his building in the adjacent apartment to the last erected room from the main building once he is ready to set a new home among his kin group. This is one of the social responsibilities anticipated from male children in order to enlarge the family space amidst the extended social group. The attached apartments are thus designed along impluvia patterns, particularly the atrium, which must be put into consideration during construction for passageways and verandahs for unit-to-unit amity and peristyles for collection of water from the roof. The impluvium design adopted to pinpoint the conjugal family unit, *káà*, within the extended family group. This is in line with the view of Amole and Folaranmi (2017) who say:

The importance of Yorùbá courtyard space is to express the dualism of an individual conjugal family unit, separate but still part of the extended family group, a socio-economic unit whose resources are based on the land.

With this architectural style and living arrangement, the concise explanation of the word *káà* and the set of facts that surround the term can arguably be defined as expression to differentiate conjugal family unit within the extended family group and to trace the origin of ethical principles of individuals. From these summations, the word *káà* is used to ascertain the origination of individual traditions and to accept their ideologies and philosophies on the premises of family unit’s orientations in the larger society.

Philosophical Expression in Yorùbá Architecture-related Proverbs

The ideology and philosophy of each society influence the people of that society and equally play a vital role in their gregarious development (Omorogbe,

2001). Oladipo (1998) submits that to understand a people through their cultural expressions, one must judge each culture through the basic assumptions about reality and goals. Indeed, philosophical expressions in Yorùbá architecture-related proverbs are very rich in context to draw a study. The Yorùbá culture embraced diverse beliefs and norms that shape people's value system coupled with proverbial expressions that impel moral conduct in terms of ethical principles that enrich native intelligence. No wonder, the Yorùbá will say Òwe lesin òrò, òrò lesin òwe; bórò bá sonù, òwe la ó fi wa; meaning "Proverbs are the horses on which words ride; when words are lost, proverbs come to their rescue." This proverb reinforces the importance of proverbs to communication in Yorùbá language.

The roles of Yorùbá oral literature and traditions in their social conduct is enormous and the trait of being answerable to the social unit for behavioral attributes in an extended group exemplifies Yorùbá's dignified conduct. This is rightly pointed out in this admonitive proverb: *Bí ará ilé eni bá n jé kòkòrò kí kòkòrò, bí a ò bá r' ení so fun, hùrù-hèrè ònà òfun rè, kò ní jé ká sùn l' óru* (If one fails to caution a relative against engaging in varied insidious acts, one may not be immune from their unpalatable consequences). Contextually, this adage explicates the importance of family orientation and the mode of fosterage to altruistic instincts and moral values (*iwà omólúàbí*). Yorùbá mythology acknowledges lineage compound as what pictures the complex of all the attributes; behavioral, temperamental, emotional and mental that characterize individuals in an extended social group. And these lineaments are colligated to the family's traits to be interpreted either positively or negatively.

To portray the principles of right and wrong, or conformity or non-conformity to family standards, individuals are admonished and reprimanded in agreement with certain accepted standards. At the same time, to justify inherited customs, newborn babies are christened according to the traditions of their lineage compounds as enounced in these two Yorùbá proverbs:

Ilé là á wò kí á tó somo lórúko

(A child is named in line with his/her lineage).

Bí ilé sunwòn, bí ilé ó sunwòn, àwò la ó ti mò

(The true situation of a home, good or bad, is made manifest in the skin).

Literarily, the above proverbs acknowledge the centrality of lineage to the christening of a child, and the revelation of a person's reputation *vis-a-vis* the value system of a lineage in a larger society through his/her assigned name. The implication is that lineage plays prominent roles in the process of assigning a specified name to a newborn baby and the worthiness or unworthiness

of a lineage will be unveiled at the extended social group through the dignified conduct of members in the family. In conformance with Yorùbá principles, every right implies a responsibility, and every demeanor suggests the family's dignity. And from these two excerpts, the deportment of an individual in a social group can easily be linked to his lineage and a form of trustworthiness for one's conduct.

Yorùbá residential designs are embedded with interconnected and related structures in circumferential and perceptual patterns, enclosed with thick walls that are sandwiched with rafters, *eké*, as structural support to prevent crevices, *lila enu*, against the intruders on one hand and to forestall disconnected dilapidation of wall, *àlàpà*, against the rain on the other hand as enunciated in these three Yorùbá bywords:

Igba eké ní fowó ti lé; igba àlààmò ní fowó tògiri

(Several beams support a building; several lizards crawl on walls.)

An analysis of the above adage reveals how worthy of note the unity amongst beams, *eké*, in their provision of structural frame and support for a building. The beams help professional builders to properly clamp the mud walls to forestall sudden crannies and decrepitude. In building a mud house, the professional builders, while processing and clamping compounded clay on the wall, sandwich dovetailed termite-resistant beams, *eké*, are structured to support the walls for structural strength. In the context of use, this axiom illumine on the strength of unity as well as the power of harmony in people's opinions, actions or characters and how unwavering efforts can produce unswerving commitment.

Yorùbá's disposition toward secrecy and reticence about divulging information is expressed in this byword:

Bí ògiri 'ò bá la 'nu, alángbá kò lè wo 'bè

(If a wall is not creviced, lizards won't gain entry into it.)

The import of the above byword is that, crevices in the wall predispose a house to environmental hazards such as intrusion of lacertilian wall reptiles and a strengthened house will prevent the invasion of any hostile group of people. On the other hand, the adage emphasizes the efficacy of unity in acquainting Yorùbá virtues and vices, customs, traditions, native intelligences, moral orientations and ethical principles. This is highly sensitive to Yorùbá living styles as it has been a means of concealing the vital belief system and tradition within the social unit. Similarly, reinforced wall keep top secrets, inventions, innovations, traditions, established customs and inherited skills

within the lineage from non-members while members warned as regards volunteering information more than necessary. However, a cracked wall may ensue in a dilapidated wall and a dilapidated wall may become hunting ground for interlopers as clearly stated in this proverb:

Òjò p' àlàpà, ó dànúgùn fèwúré

(It is the rain that crumbled a mud wall that makes it a playing ground for goats)

The above proverb pictures jeering and derisive actions of goats on cracked and dilapidated mud wall after it has been crumbled by rain. This explicates the import of uprightness to Yorùbá ethical standards and failure to uphold the standards may call for derisive scorns. An upright wall with structural strength cannot be mounted by goats for derisions. In context, this byword is a shared notion to establish the fact that, disappointment or situation may necessitate mockery and derision and equally shed light on Yorùbá's perspective towards the act of deriding or treating people with contempt. In essence, the bywords illustrate what becomes of an architectural wall as a barricade to impede the advancement of enemy and environmental hazard when results of expectation are not realized. Some of these architecture-related axioms and bywords have significant epistemological references for understanding the nature of the Yorùbá belief system in the preservation of cultural heritage. However, some of these proverbs have incurred new-interpretation to accommodate contemporary socio-cultural activities. This new version of the proverb has suggested a reflection of post proverbial ingenuity in stylistic expressions of ideological and pragmatic underpinnings.

Postproverbial Imagination in Contemporary Architecture-related Proverbs

Yoruba is a unique culture with mutually graspable expressions that imply a common cultural explication of indigenous contexts with contemporary discourses. Ideological proverbs characterize and reinforce Yoruba's logical expressions. Many of these indigenous proverbs, however, twisted to have new concepts through literary interpretations, pretermitted metaphorical meanings in order to fit the purposive usages and goal-directed visions while some are adjusted through misrepresentation of their conceptions. Also, traditional activities that suggested these facts of experiences are no longer practiced and the sources of inspirations for these memorable sayings are not wholly explored anymore. Many of these adages have been twisted to colligate Yoruba indigenous ideologies with contemporary activities and for goal-directed

usages. For example, introduction of cement and ceramic tile has brought in glossy surface to modern-day wall which informed this postproverbial imagination:

Proverb: *Bí ògiri 'ò bá la 'nu, alángbá kò lè wo 'bè*
(If a wall is not creviced, lizards won't gain entry into it.)

Proverb: *...igba àláàmò ní fowó ti ògiri*
(...several lizards crawl on walls.)

Postproverb by researcher: *Alángbá tí yóò pòn ògiri aláwo, yóò pé lésè ilé*
(Lizard that will crawl on the glazed wall, will mill around the building floor, Ajadi, 2022)

The above post proverbial expression is synonymously connected to this proverb *eni tí ó n wá iséjú akàn, yóò pé léti omi* “he who is seeking for nic-titation of crab, will mill around the river” both in literary and metaphorical contexts. In these times, most walls of buildings are glazed tiles with glossy ceramic that usually forestall abrupt crevices and prevent reptiles from crawling/climbing because of slipperiness from the smoothness. This slippery effect-oriented above post proverb towards the perspective that, a lizard that will climb the glossy wall with lustrous ceramic, will lollygag around the wall's floor with several falls. The new architectural style has equally accommodated backyard structures for bachelor apartments, with backyard outlets aside from the main exit to the compound's passageways. The concept of a backyard exit in the new architectural design prompted this post proverbial expression with literary interpretation:

Proverb: *Bi òdòdè o dùn bí ìgbé ni ilú rí*
(If peace eludes homes, the society becomes shambolic)

Postproverb by researcher: *Bi òdòdè o dùn, á gbà èhìn-kùlé ròò de*
(If peace eludes passageways, we follow backyard to our destination, Ajadi, 2022)

The context of use of òdòdè in the traditional proverb is translated as “homes” but postproverbially represented as “passageways”, which informs this postproverbial usage “if peace eludes passageways to main exit, backyard outlet as an alternative can be followed to our destination”. While on the contrary, the contextual definition to the traditional proverb is “war in many homes will cause chaos in the society”. At the same time, the condition that

surrounds lend-lease of dwelling house and living apartment to tenant and eviction's possibility by landlord brought about this postproverb:

Proverb: *Ilé là á wò kí á tó somo lórúko*
(A child is named in line with his/her lineage)

Postproverb by researcher: *Ayálégbé tí ó somo rẹ̀ ní 'Kóláwolé' bí ó pé títi á kó olá rẹ̀ jáde*
(Tenant that named his/her child "bring in wealth" will later take the wealth out, Ajadi, 2022).

In the above proverb, the context of *ile* in the indigenous proverb is translated as *iran* "lineage" but translated as *ilé igbé* "dwelling house" in post proverbial imagination, and traditional onomastic concept of Yoruba name *Kóláwolé* "Wealth has arrived" is postproverbially interpreted as "bring in wealth" which is perceived as the unworthy name for a tenant. The above post proverbial adage sees wealth as what cannot be domiciled permanently in a rentable house because of peremptory request and future claim by owner that may necessitate the tenant's eviction.

Introduction of mechanical device that transmits energy to assist in the performance of human task brought new concept and interpretation to Yoruba expression in order to adjust to contemporary activities. Amidst the conceptions are enounced in these two postproverbial imaginations:

Proverb: *A kii fi gbogbo enu sòrò;*
(We shouldn't be talking with total mouth)

Postproverb by researcher: *Kòndó tí kò ke ohùn sòrò ní òwúró, á fii igbe ta lálé*
(Conductor that susurrates in the morning will give loud vociferation at remunerative hour, Ajadi, 2022).

In the above dictum, the indigenous context of *A kii fi gbogbo enu sòrò* "shouldn't be talking with total mouth" is postproverbially translated as *ohùn jéjé* "susurration". The line of work mentioned in the postproverbial adage (conductor) demands audibility for public conveyance and collection of fares. A soft susurration by conductor for passengers at conveyance period will induce tempestuous vociferation at remunerative period after work.

Proverb: *Bí ilẹ̀ sunwòn, bí ilẹ̀ ó sunwòn, àwò la ó ti mò.*
(The true situation of a home, good or bad, is made manifest in the skin).

Postproverb by researcher: *Mekánìkì ti kò dudu ní àwò ní owùrò, a fii ebi sùn lálé*

(Auto-mechanics that refuse to be stained in the morning will sleep with hunger in the night, Ajadi, 2022)

Postproverb by researcher: *Eni wèrè bá pá iyá e, bí ó bárí àwò mekánìkì a sáré*

(Whoever lunatic killed his/her mother will run when he/she sights auto-mechanic skin, Ajadi 2022)

An analysis of the above adage translates *sunwòn* “situation” in indigenous proverb as *ìrísí* “appearance” and the nature of mechanic occupation often discharges black stains from oily components in the engine that grease their clothes and skins. The oily skin with black stains on the body of auto-mechanics at work and dispersed waste oil on clothes picture their appearance in similarity to lunatic features. These essential characteristics of the job informed this postproverbial view “auto-mechanics that run from oil/grease stains in the morning will shut eye with empty-bellied in the night”.

Yorùbá’s disposition toward a person who is devoted to excess eating and drinking is expressed in this postproverb:

Proverb: *Ilé làá tí kó èsò ròde*

(Charity begins at home)

Postproverb by researcher: *Inú tí ó fi iséjú se àfèrí àjèjù, a fi ilé se àfèrí òsò*
(Stomach that desire excessive food frequently, will empty valuable materials in the home, Ajadi, 2022)

In the above proverb, the indigenous context of *èsò* “good conduct” which Yoruba sees as what can only be accustomed from home is postproverbially translated as *òsò* “adornment” that can be purchased and sold. Purchasable and sellable possibility of *òsò* “valuable materials” in postproverbial expression changed the context of the traditional proverb from good conduct. Potentiality of gormandizer to sell valuable materials in the home for excessive nourishment informed the above postproverb which illustrates what becomes of a home (emptiness). However, modernization of Yoruba culture by civilization and introduction of Western religions have dealt a great blow to the contextual relevance of many indigenous proverbs. The disparities in construction processes together with the change and continuity will be explored in order to explain the materials and procedures.

Materials, Change, and Continuity in Yorùbá Architectural Designs

As earlier mentioned, Yorùbá indigenous houses were built with red soils produced by rock decay that contains insoluble deposits of ferric and aluminum oxides. These soils are usually plastic when moist but solid when bone dry. The properties of these soils are determined through basic and physical examinations of essential attributes such as plasticity, moisture capability in terms of water retentive capacity and slippery smoothness. The malleability of these soils seen in the stickiness and pliability of structures that are consisting of round shapes formed by a series of concentric circles. During construction, the types of these soils are located, unearthed and garnered from the depots to the construction site for preparation. The preparations of soils done through foot march with the addition of water in order to get rid of pebbles and lumps.

Collection of soils, preparation and construction are, however, done collectively in Yorùbá community through *oowe*. This is a collaborative practice where people render their services free of charge to a member of a community on a particular task. In return, the assisted person would be responsible for feeding and general entertainment of the volunteers. He reciprocally offered similar service for the group in subsequent constructions. The process may take several days depending on the skillfulness of the workers, height of the walls, size of the building and number of workers. Construction period usually falls between November and April because of little rain and dry season (Crooke, 1966). Direct slap house, *Ilé Alámò* (Plate 2) directly built through sticking the moisture mud together in layers of wall thickness represented Yorùbá indigenous houses. In search of structural support for walls against sudden cracks, propelled exploration of framed slap house, *Ilé Alábàrà*, Plate 3, is made with rafters as skeletal frame to hold the lumps or balls of mud together in a unit.

In the same vein, the quest for solution to abrupt collapses of walls and homogeneity of compounded mud prompted brick mud house, *Ilé Onibírìkì* (Plate 4), joined with adhesive mud mortar. The bricks are made with wooden modes after the mud has been processed and foot-marched for homogenous composition then sun-dry for days before the commencement of construction. The arrangements of bricks are reciprocally connected (stretcher) to prevent connection of unexpected cracks that may occur to each brick during and after wall's erection. In the process, adhesive mud mortars are well compounded with high plasticity clay to bind the bricks together and to plaster the walls. Then, the construction is left for days to ascertain moisture's compatibility between adhesive mortar and bricks after the processes have reached controlled layer before other bricks are added. These aforementioned techniques have

aided diverse building sizes both in vertical/horizontal and above ground level dimensions (Plate 5).



Plate 2: Direct Slap House

Town: Iseyin

Year of Photographs: 2021

Photo: Ajadi Michael Olaniyi



Plate 3: Framed Slap House

Town: Eleyele Oko

Year of Photographs: 2021

Photo: Ajadi Michael Olaniyi



Plate 4: Brick Mud House
Town: Ilaju
Year of Photographs: 2021
Photo: Ajadi Michael Olaniyi



Plate 5: above ground level
Town: Ogbomoso
Year of Photographs: 2022
Photo: Ajadi Michael Olaniyi

The sizes and edification of Yorùbá indigenous buildings are often influenced by cordiality, wealth of patrilineal clans and number of male children in the family. These are usually manifested in the number of rooms on a walk-through of the dwelling apartments (*ilé igré*) allotted for different family units and architectural sophistication. Sheer gregariousness and ethnical ties are what is responsible for their living arrangement and these are so conspicuous that non-group neighbours gave different names to these prerogative and cultural homogeneity (Ajadi, 2021). For example, photograph arrangement in (Plate 6) depicts exterior and interior units of Yorùbá architectural compound in impluvium system with pedestrian passageway from main building to verandahs at four squares of the compound and courtyard. The courtyard is wholly surrounded by walls with provision of porches to the family units' apartments (*káà*). Other structures attached at the side of the courtyard are harvest room and bathroom. The square-shaped structure is achieved through continuous attachment of apartments to the adjacent family units' rooms until square corners were reached for four angular connections. And this attached technique has permitted the four angular roofs, terminated at the angled edges which are formed by four intersecting buildings in rectilinear shape. This connected method allows easy collection of rainwater from each edge before the advent of the western designs and modern-day materials.



Plate 6: Exterior and Interior Units of Yorùbá Architectural Compound

Town: Iseyin

Year of Photographs: 2022

Photo and Arrangement: Ajadi Michael Olaniyi

In spite of the fact that foreign influence is apparent on Yorùbá building styles and materials in the recent past, inherited patterns of communal compound are still evident in their living arrangement until the nineteenth century. However, with the introduction of the Christian and Islamic religions, Yorùbá dwelling houses were given a new direction and different definition to obviate sacred spaces for deities (*òrisà*) and to accommodate foreign styles and practices. At this period, buildings are built separately by each patrilineal family unit within the family space as evidential signs of gregarious social unit who avoids social isolation. Many of these houses are contemporary in features and materials with the introduction of cement for concrete mortar, concrete blocks and soil mortar for plastering the walls. This is evidenced in Plate 7 with diverse modern materials and contemporary trends of designs. The rendition of this architectural work, especially the rhythmical appearance of the pillar-shaped and series of arches supported by columns (colonnade), showcases a great master-piece of architectural ornament with identifiable Yorùbá patterns. The distinctive features of compounds in Plate 6 and Plate 7 are contemporary materials and detached buildings for separate family units that are related on the father's side. To whatever extent of structural innovations from each family unit, in any case, pedestrian passageways and courtyard are put into consideration for walk-through, entertainment centre, competitions, spectacles and judicial system.



Plate 7: Units of Yorùbá Architectural Compound with Detached Buildings

Town: Ogbomoso

Year of Photographs: 2022

Photo and Arrangement: Ajadi Michael Olaniyi

At some time in the period of twentieth century, changes occurred in Yorùbá mode of construction and decoration with the introduction of Afro Brazilian architectural ornaments rendered with diverse motifs. The houses/ compounds at this period were intermixture of Yorùbá architectural styles and Brazilian designs. The introduction of these Afro Brazilian designs can be traced to Yorùbá returnees from Brazil who made efforts to replicate these styles of architecture in their homeland. These designs, however, influenced Yorùbá's space arrangement while few among the returnees still embraced communal compounds and sought to erect their buildings within the compound space as evidenced by Plate 8 with Afro Brazilian building designs in the section of Yorùbá indigenous compound (*káà*). Some of these buildings are achieved through demolition of many traditional structures belonging to each family unit by way of line of descent. Appearance of this compound (Plate 8) expresses transference of the model forms of Yorùbá building design into a post-modern structural style that would appear old in terms of compound arrangements and at the same time contemporary in materials, ornamentation and surface appearance. In the compound also are pedestrian passageways and courtyard for open-air entertainment centre and other diverse activities.



Plate 8: Exterior and Interior Units of Compound with Afro-Brazilian Design

Town: Ogbomosho

Year of Photographs: 2022

Photo and Arrangement: Ajadi Michael Olaniyi

The luxuriant ornaments on the architectural columns, facial lintels, balusters in-between colonnades, arches, doors, windows, and other components of (Plates 9, 10 and 11) are the most distinguishing characteristics of the Brazilian and religious designs. Modernization of culture and introduction of Western religion have changed a wide range of things among the Yorùbá, particularly modes of construction of dwelling houses and introduction of foreign architectural ornamentations, materials and designs which have been modified to fit the community and family/compound-centred life. Similarly, the Yorùbá people have been able to adjust these foreign designs and materials to suit their sociological existence; for instance, the decorations in Plate 12 that is much more superlative in terms of spiritual and symbolic motifs of Islamic connotation. The decorations are akin to those found on mosque, especially, the treatment of colonnades, arches, pillars and other myriad motifs carved on the lintel. Most Yorùbá residential houses have undergone diverse changes, redevelopment and rebuilding activities.



Plate 9: Afro Brazilian Style

Town: Ogbomoso

Year of Photographs: 2022

Photo: Ajadi Michael Olaniyi



Plate 10: Afro Brazilian Style
Town: Ogbomoso
Year of Photographs: 2022
Photo: Ajadi Michael Olaniyi



Plate 11: Islamic Style
Town: Ogbomoso
Year of Photographs: 2022
Photo: Ajadi Michael Olaniyi

With this analysis, the Yorùbá compound is a patrilineal arrangement, definite and highly organized into hierarchical classification system of lineage head through seniority and chronological age. Despite the foreign influences, the major characteristics of Yorùbá indigenous styles (*káà*) are compounds in curvature or rectilinear forms with courtyards, attached living apartment for family units, pedestrian passageways, galleries and verandahs designed in impervious patterns for collection of rainwater from roof. The pattern has enhanced lingual fluxion, open-minded equity, cordial disposition and social harmony. Checks and balance through proverbial expressions, dictums, condensed traditions and facts of experiences represent their ethical principles for altruistic instincts and moral values in an extended social group. The methodical and efficient manner of sectional arrangements of Yorùbá patrilineal compounds have been an effective method of guaranteeing moral principles and preserving cultural values. In that regard, the compound architectural styles have been a virile preservation of Yoruba cultural heritage as a gregarious ethnic group who avoids solitude.

Conclusion

The analysis of this paper has clearly discussed the magnificent significance of Yorùbá architectural designs to the preservation of their socio-cultural heritages. This fact highlighted the circumstances that surround some of the proverbial expressions pertaining to Yorùbá living arrangement and its connection to ethical principles and moral values. Changes and structural styles of diverse Yorùbá historical architectures with their constituent parts have been examined contextually and clear definitions of each section were provided for explication of their signification to value-system. All the same, the cross-cultural influence has resulted over many centuries and few dominated architectures mentioned in the study are Afro Brazilian designs, Islamic patterns and Christian styles. Of more fundamental change in Yorùbá architectures are the introduction of metal as structural frame, corrugated iron roofing, cement blocks, cement mortar and other myriad materials. Nonetheless, the dynamics in Yorùbá architectural development have not obviously obliterated the prominent attributes and all-important features of Yorùbá society and living arrangement.

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