MICHIGAN STATE
UNIVERSITY

The African e-Journals Project has digitized full text of articles of eleven social science and humanities journals. This item is from the digital archive maintained by Michigan State University Library. Find more at:
http://digital.lib.msu.edu/projects/africanjournals/

Available through a partnership with



Michigan State University
LIBRARIES

Scroll down to read the article.



1. Part of the old Shitta Mosque.

2. Old Tinubu Square with the former Supreme Court in the foreground.

3. Former Carter Bridge.

(courtesy: Boyles Barl

Preface to architecture

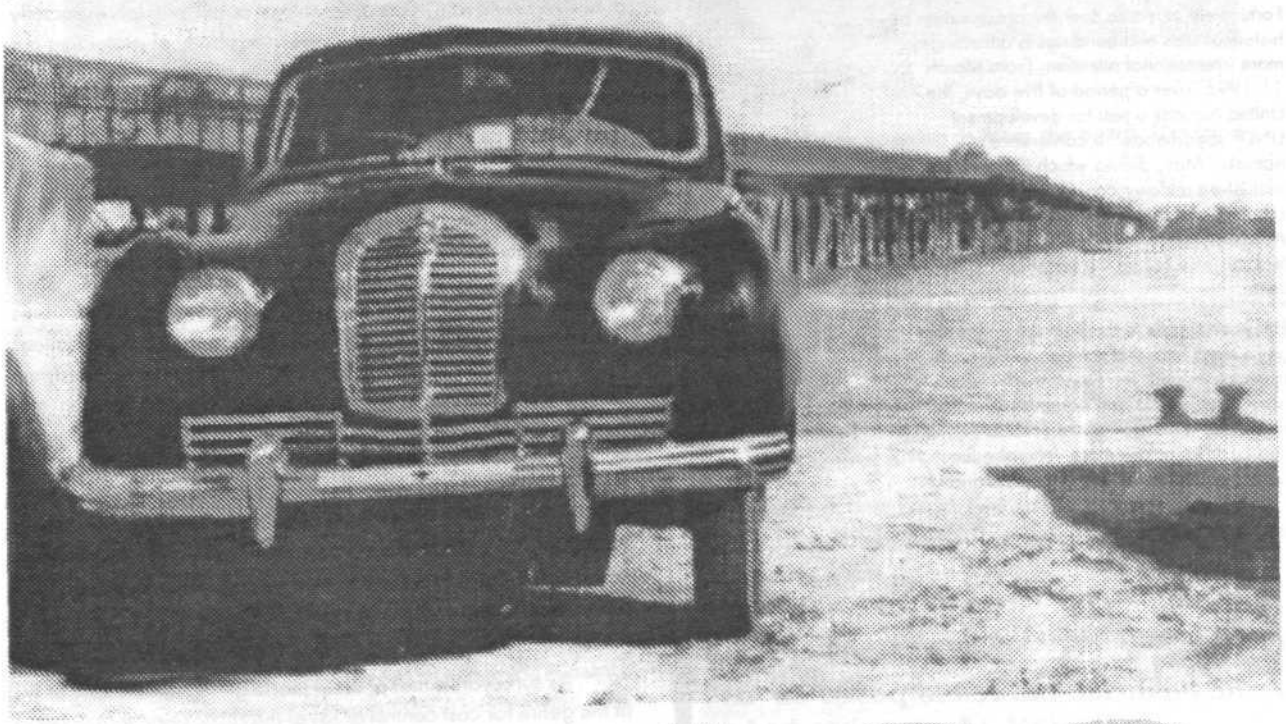
THE succeeding material is by no means quaint, despite the time of its composition. It was originally intended for presentation before a distinguished and learned gathering of surveyors and builders (Royal Institute of Surveyors) who met in Lagos in August 1994 to hobnob on emergent trends in their work at the Sheraton Hotels and Towers, Ikeja; these without the least shred of doubt were the planners and builders of Lagos and Nigeria.

Their theme centred around 'Change and Continuity' in the building industry and the key speaker's choice of subject was very useful in setting the tone and the mood as well as sharpening the focus for the assembly's onward exchanges.

The concern of the speaker, David Aradeon, his depth, clarity of tone and close familiarity with his subject (specifically the old, and in most cases now extinct, buildings of Lagos) should be little surprising once we are reminded of his resume: foremost Nigerian architect and scholar; indeed describable in his own language as one of 'the children of the city'. Any surprise then that the story of the emergence, glory and widespread demolition (some voluntarily went down in flames) of vital historical buildings and violation of public spaces, parks and gardens for private use is retold with nostalgia and in parts, restrained outburst ? Some of the more memorable being the old Supreme Court building on Tinubu Square which yielded its space along with other buildings (including the Orange House owned by the Hon Otunba Payne and the residence of Henry Carr designed by Herbert Macaulay) to the now famous Tinubu fountain; the old race course, formerly a stretch of empty space and greenery in the city's heartland, reserved for horse racing and schools' National Day parades (which the author partook in as a child) that has also been swallowed up by the present massive cordons of shopping

The Unmaking





# of Tradition

complexes.

The extinction of old Lagos and its oral history articulated through concrete structures and impressive Brazilian masonry is now nearly complete. In a sense, whilst we hope with the professionals and members of the informed community that awareness among administrators and decision makers in the country would help to preserve whatever is left or simply stem the tide of 'the unmaking of tradition', this publication is contrived chiefly to pay a tribute to 'fallen Lagos' and its landmark structures that now remain only in the minds of those who grew up to know them.

The mission of awareness is by no means secondary. For as Professor Aradeon observes in one of our many recent *discussions, the tide of waterfront violation* (through sandfilling) again for private houses, is taking over where that of historical *structures and public spaces left off. As a* result of this, sections of the Lagos Island (particularly the Victoria Island) became *waterlogged late last year. But work has* since re- intensified at sandfilling sites on the ' famous' Osborne Road

and lately also, at the Takwa Bay, among countless others, drawing much protest from concerned professional unions.

Fortunately, concern over the preservation of historical sites and buildings is attracting *more international attention. From March* 11,1996, over a period of five days, the United Nations agent for development *UNDP spearheaded a conference in* Bamako, Mali, during which the problem was given a closer consideration by African *scholars and builders. Predictably, Professor* Aradeon was in attendance, but his focus lens this time fell on the historical centres of Ile-Ife.

He recommends to the Bamako conference as he does here that solution to the problem is double-edged: increased awareness among legislative and administrative bodies as well as a revision of the schools' curricular to inclose more cultural education. So is a shift of emphasis in professional training and orientation to restorative architecture.

The Editor.

The financial burden imposed on us in the last 15 years has had a devastating impact on our lives. It was time we insisted on our rights as citizens to be consulted at every level of governance before a long, especially a contractor financed project loan, is negotiated.

WHEN MR. SAM EMIOWELE, Q.S, requested in August that I speak at this conference, scheduled for September, I had less than a month to put my ideas together. I accepted out of respect for an old friend to whom I am indebted.

David Aradeon

Fortunately, the conference had to be postponed; even though the political climate for which the postponement was made remains largely uncertain, I have had the opportunity to rework my ideas.

Sam and I collaborated on a number of projects for which we were never paid: the Linear Park, the Lagos State, State House on Joel Ogunnaike, GRA, Ikeja, and the Faculty of Environmental Design, University of Lagos just to mention some of the most exciting.

A number of weeks ago, the Governor of Lagos went to court over the sharing of public land by the Federal Government. Even though the controversy appears to centre on the conflicts of rights of ownership of land between the State and the Centre, a larger and even more fundamental issue is at stake.

As the Osborne Road land is the site of the Linear Park which we designed in 1985, this case promises to raise a whole series of questions, the most important of which is the issue of public versus private interest; the role of public officials especially those in 'locus' charged with the responsibility of protecting our system of public parks and public spaces against usurpation and appropriation by public action for private interest.

Our commitment to the environment appears to be a lifetime commitment to issues of public interest. The current political, economic and social climate has brought the issues more clearly to all of us.

Also, as an Adjunct Lecturer for the years 1980-1984 when I was Dean of the Faculty and, 1984-1986 when I was Department Head, Sam taught Building Economics to generations of our students. He was never fully paid his stipulated honorarium for many of those years by the University. So as a teacher and inspite of indications to the contrary, he shares the hopeless optimism of the teacher and the environmental poverty of our education system. My presence here today will in no way be a requital of my debts to Mr. Emiowele; if at all, this opportunity to be present here increases my personal debt. I wish to thank the Royal Institution of Surveyors for your formal invitation, the privilege to meet and make new friends as well as renew old acquaintances.

As surveyors either of the (1) form giving landscape, or (2) of the genre for cost control or (3) of the disposition that nurtures the building for environmental value added, my knowledge of your work is at best perfunctory. Therefore I will not even attempt to articulate your specializations in this presentation. Rather, in seeking a common ground, I would like to speak to you about what you already know, partly from your professional work and partly from your everyday process of living and moving around in your part of this country.



Governor's residence on the Marina, the old race course's green open fields peeping in from the north. The trees and shrubs are gone

Today, I would like to share with you some of my observations and concerns as an average citizen, whose work is part of a larger process that shapes and whose life in turn is shaped by the built environment of this city of Lagos.

The City: A Corporate Entity - Compounding Functional Problems

I am certain that the real estate surveyors and valuers must have noticed a front page publication in the Financial Times of the week, of August 30th. The chairman of the Lagos Island Local Government Council announced that construction would soon begin on a N300,000,000 'Multi-storey car park' structure on the Marina. The announcement associated Messrs Bouygues Construction with this project, possibly as a turnkey contractor.

As citizens and end users, I would like to ask you to detach yourself from your professional interests for a moment and think about this project from the interest of the average tax payers.

This must be one of those development projects designed to correct some of the problems created by the last one. In a 1977 paper, I had decried as environmentally unsightly, the concrete encasement of the Island in a continuous ribbon of elevated ringroad. I suggested as I had done in a Daily Times publication of 1973, that when a city gets to be as large as Lagos, we have to embark upon a mass transit system rather than continue to structure the transportation system on the private motor car.

The current crisis over the 'correct pricing' of fuel illustrates so succinctly the economic impact on the average workers' income. For those on a monthly income of a thousand naira or less, it would make better economic sense to work near the home for less income. In a 1988 paper, I further observed that on the Marina, the use of the long strip of land from the State House to the UTC for car parking constitutes an eyesore as well as an inexcusable waste of prime urban land.

Overloading the Debt Burden

In addition to these observations, I would now like to raise a number of questions on this proposed N300,000,000 (phase I) elevated car park structure on this site.

First, considering the current cost of the motor car today, how viable is this project as an investment on public transportation? Is there not a viable alternative? The mass transportation system still remains the most attractive.

Second, the 4,500 cars projected for parking appear dubious. Based on the current 1,500 on existing site, 4,500 is assumed for three floors without consideration for access, ramps and structure. Be that as it may, at what price per car per day, and how long would it take for this project to pay for itself?

Third, has an environmental impact study of this project

been carried out and what are the results?

Fourth, how is this project going to be financed? If by loan and whatever the source, we should initiate a process of public referendum to enable us, the taxpayers and public, decide whether we cre willing to accept the responsibility for this financial burden.

Finally, this project like any public project will have a physical impact on the landscape and a financial implication for the citizens of Lagos Island; judging by the performance of the last 15 years, we should no longer accept any debt burden for ourselves let alone for future generations without a wider public consultation. By subjecting this project to the Lagos State Public Planning Review Board concerned citizens will have the opportunity to examine and criticize it while the promoters will also have the opportunity to present and defend it.

The financial burden imposed on us in the last 15 years has had a devastating impact on our lives. It was time we insisted on our rights as citizens to be consulted at every level of governance before a long, especially a contractor financed project loan, is negotiated.

The City and its Children

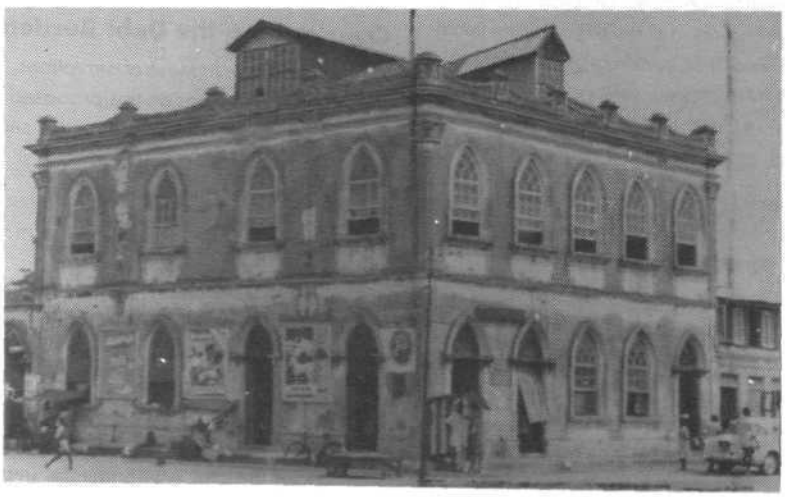
This city, like any old city, is a tradition. As citizens, and end users, we are all part of this tradition.

As a primary school pupil in this city, I never missed the May 24th Empire Day celebrations in the race course. We marched to the music from the school band, watched our athletes compete in the primary school sports. On that race course, we also watched the soldiers and police parade in their smartly ironed khakis. They would come marching from their barracks at Ikoyi and Obalende. On that same race course we would watch the grown ups as the horses raced; on those occasions, Africans and Europeans were always so elegantly and colourfully dressed, milling around and, as I understood much later, placing bets; still that race course, was polo grounds, and several cricket pitches; also, soccer teams of all age groups played on the course.

Every day the city kids went to the race course to play and on the site of the Independence Building the less formal groups played; they also threw sticks at the almond fruits. The daring kids would always climb the almond trees; the almonds on the trees at the Simpson Street end of the race course were larger. These trees were tall and Simpson Street was shaded and stayed cool all year round. The green in the openness on the race course stayed green all year round and everybody had a use of their part of the race course. Each evening as I walked home to Onikan from the Ferry Terminal, that last Governor General, Sir Robertson and I would wave at each other, he, on his evening walk on the course and I on my way home across the course.



Above: Typical Brazilian townhouse.
Below: Senhor Lazaro Borges da Silva's Yoyo Araromi house situated at the junction of Tokunbo and Oshodi Streets, went down in flames in 1979.
(Courtesy: Nigeria Magazine).



The Concrete Jungle in the Park

Then all of a sudden and in the flush of the oil glut, the new governors had a better and brilliant idea. They covered part of my childhood experiences with concrete; life was snuffed out of the expanse of green grass; the openness was enclosed and walled off; the trees and their fruits and their shade were killed; and the children of the city could no longer play or run on their race course. We had just discovered the shopping centre; the boutiques and the substantial traders took over and that part of city died for its growing children for ever.

The Governors and our Development

The new governors said it was development of another kind - the place for the October 1st Armed Forces march past. It was

like commemorating our independence only it was named Tafawa Balewa Square. In my attempt to learn about this kind of development, I found out about the Red Square and the Black Star Square where just about once a year also, the citizens get work free day to watch the soldiers parade. But our Tafawa Balewa Square was to visually link to the Marina, for naval exercise, and the skies for the airforce formations in flight. Fortunately, the proposed movement to Abuja halted the dream of the governors.

Unlike the former governors, most of the new ones knew what to do with petitions; you could discuss with them, but you had to find out how to get through. They were really so self assured; they knew what was good for all of us. It was development and they always knew what type. As citizens, the choice, type and scale of deve-lopment had become the prerogative of the governors at every level of govern-ance except at the community level. The proliferation of iron grille gates on the public street is at one level a manifestation of the spirit of community participation.

The City's Buildings: codes and symbols

To the individual, the city's spaces convey meanings to the codes and symbols of the building and its architecture. At times it nurtures an imaginative flight to fancy about the future; at other times it evokes memories of the past linking space and time. In urban cultures, not only does the duality of space and time coexist but in old cities like Lagos, the duality of tradition and modernity also coexist. The built form is an index; a statement of our evolving technology; the articulation of our artistry and craftsmanship.

As a mirror reflection of our lifestyles, it is largely through the others that we can better appreciate the impact of our attitudes on the environment. Just observe the way the next car is being driven; reversing on the expressway; driving on the wrong side of the street have become part of our driving habits. The pedestrian citizen is used to being pushed off the side walk especially by danfo and taxi drivers. Strangely, police officers appear unconcerned these days.

Special Development Pattern: Change and noncontinuity

I would like to argue that the physical changes we have embarked upon in the last forty years have had the unfortunate impact of the unmaking of tradition.

The residence of Sir Kitoyi Ajasa was one of the most important landmarks displaced by the House of Representatives in1955, and the National Hall, 1960, (Public Works Dept). In 1973, almost two decades later, the monumental concrete Grandstand on Tafawa Balewa Square by Robin Atkinson was to destroy the setting and scale of the House of Representatives. The Statuette of Queen Elizabeth II by the famous Nigerian Sculptor, Ben Enwonwu, was completely overwhelmed by the sheer scale of the new structure.

The loss of the open recreational race course with its green texture was deplorable enough, but even more deplorable was the total change of scale of the buildings whose volumes define this important colonial historical centre. North West of the race course, the 25 Storey Independence Building, 1960, (Fry, Drew and the Public Works Department); the 19 Storey Western House, 1960. (Nickson & Borys) and the 31 Storey Necom House, 1979, (Nickson & Borys) have all compromised the privacy and security of the three storey State House, Marina by locational proximity.

Tinubu Square: The Meeting Place of Cultures

According to Vaughan-Richards, Tinubu Square, was by 1890 the heart of Lagos. It was the location of the first Court of Justice. During the decade, a bell tower was added to the old Tinubu Methodist Church. The Orange House, the residence of the Hon. J. A. Otunba Payne was one of the landmarks of Tinubu Square during this period. In 1918 a new Supreme Court was built on the Square and the present fountain donated by the Lebanese Community in 1960 replaced the 1918 Supreme Court. The residence of Henry Carr designed by Herbert Macaulay on Tinubu Square had to give way to the Mosaics House in 1958.

Tinubu Square where several streets converge was an important midtown terminal for the Red Municapal Bus service by Messrs J. N. Zarpas. As I observed in an earlier paper on Lagos, this landmark Square where the British Colonial, Indigenous and Expatriate Lagos meet, has grown without any physical evidence of the layering of its history. Indeed, the growth of the Square has so transformed this historical landmark space to the extent that the architectural styles of each preceding epoch is completely obliterated. In the introduction to the opening of an exhibition of water colour drawings on Brazilian Architecture in 1990, by Abiola Fashina, I observed that the Fernandez house on the north west corner of the Square, an Afro Brazilian historical landmark in the last decade of the 19th century must have stood in elegant contrast to the old Court of Justice and the Methodist Church. That Physically, has survived the context of 'development.' Today Fernandez House can only be recognised by the visual literate public and the architectural historical literate as an echo of a past; a past that is still very much part of the present; indeed a living history!

Architecture: Expansion and Continuity

Where buildings of historical importance have survived, and there have been many until the current phase of rebuilding and refenestration, the integrity of the buildings have been largely compromised. The 1967 west extension to the da Rocha Water House changed the scale and proportion of the main house. The space between the apse end of the Christ Church Cathedral and the Bishops Court had been cluttered by a collection of disparate buildings. Even though these buildings belong to a more recent period, there as no attempt at stylistic reference to, or acknowledgement of the language of the Gothic architectural style of the cathedral.

Also the apse end of the Roman Catholic Cathedral appears crowded-in by the distracting styles of the new additions. The competing scale of the Dumez towers on Oil Mill Street across the west portal entry of the church is an unfortunate distraction.

The 1960 south wing addition to the Oba's Palace in Isale Eko neither acknowledged visual continuity with, nor achieved

stylistic relationship to the 1890 north wing. Also, the rich internal courtyard/spatial texture of the palace was hardly reflected in the extension.

Architectural Styles in Lagos

In the second half of the 19th century, four contemporary external architectural influences converged in Lagos. Church architecture expressed in Gothic revival style: *The Breadfruit Church, 1880; the Christ Church* Cathedral, 1925 by Bagan Benjamin and the Roman Catholic Cathedral, 1936, by Fr. Simon. Second, Colonial public buildings such as the Secretariat on Marina; the Government Printer on Broad Street, and the old General Post Office (circa 1910) whose style is colonial classical based on the English revival of the classical orders. Third, elegant town house for the educated elite and the merchant class in the Saro-English style. The residence of Dr. Maja on Gerber square, both designed by Herbert Macaulay and the residence of the Hon. Samuel H. Pearce on Olowogbowo are some of the most interesting examples; unfortunately the last two have been demolished.

The fourth and most wide-spread is the Afro-Brazilian style which found its expression in private houses. This style created a new building type; the southern mosque which was derived and developed from colonial Brazilian church architecture: the Shitta Bey Mosque, 1882, on Martins Street, by Jaoa Baptista/ Sanusi Aka, and the Central Mosque on Nnamdi Azikiwe by Jaoa Baptista/Sanusi Aka. Of the residences, the Vaughan house and the Waterhouse both on Kakawa Street, Elias da Silva house on Elias and Odufege Street and Fernandez house on Tinubu Square remain some of the most outstanding examples.

A casual study of these mid 19th century buildings reveal a number of shared stylistic similarities.

The composite, Corinthian column with the floral capitals articulating the access to the Secretariat also occurs as engaged and framing columns in the Waterhouse and the Vaughan house where the floral capitals are greatly transformed. We also note the rusticated masonry style of the engaged column in the Secretariat as well as its towers, the old General Post Office; the



Above: Residence of A. W. Thomas on Odunfa Street, the most baroque of the Afro-Brazilians, covered with the most ornate plasterwork.
Below: The Vaunghan House, an Afro-Brizilian type, on Kakawa Street, *(Courtesy Nigeria Magazine)*



Pearse's house, the north facade of the Waterhouse and the south facade of the Lazaro Borges da Silva house.

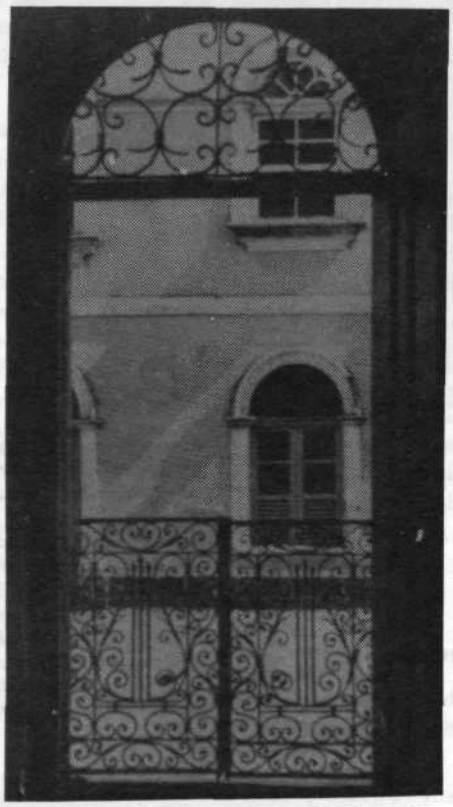
The pediment concealing the gable end of the pitch roof on the secretariat also occurs on the State House, Marina. In the old General Post office, unfortunately no longer in existence, single length Ionic columns connect two stories. The only known example of its genre in Lagos, it was a throw back to the Italian Renaissance period when Michelangelo created the magnificent giant orders in the renovation of the Capital, in Rome.

The Pointed Arch of Islamic architectural origins which became a Gothic ecclesiastical idiom, was transformed by Brazilian craftsmanship into sensitive window glass panes framed by marvellous curved timber lines. Lazaro Borges house, no longer in existence, provides one of the most fascinating examples. In the Elias da silva house, the wrought iron balconies with exquisite fleur de motif details is one of the most important and enduring heritage of the Brazilian styles.

The Brazilian Builder and his Discrete Influence

The deep pitch roof with protruding and accenting garrets that opens onto attic spaces, 'basket handle' arch openings, the portal entry as well as the robust baluster, the Italian Renaissance creation are some of the shared stylistic elements.

The Brazilian craftsmen, the master builders of this period had so discretely diffused these styles in their work to the extent that the stylistic elements had by the third decades of the 20th century become part of this vocabulary in domestic architecture from Lagos to Porto Novo and beyond.



View of the Waterhouse from the Devode Branco House. The Waterhouse was owned by the Da Rocha family. View shows fine wrought iron worked balcony. *(Courtesy: Pierre Verger)*

Development and Tradition: Mutually exclusive phenomena

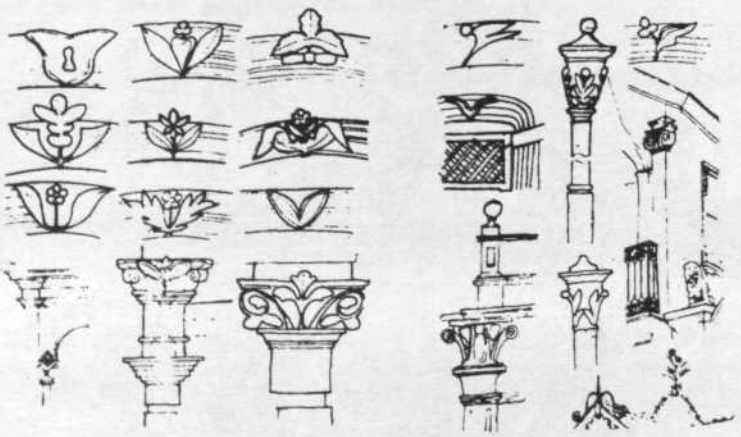
'Development' has taken a toll of the fine examples of the town houses in this city. Among the Saro styled houses the Caxton house on Marina; Ijeun house on Wesley and Joseph Street, (Bagan Benjamin) demolished in 1989 for the Eleganza Towers. 1990; Wilberforce house, demolished; Elephant House circa, 1913, demolished and replaced by the 20 storey Elephant House 1981, (Modulor group). The more common Brazilian houses with the street facade expression, highly articulated fenestration with mouldings rendered in contrasting pastel colours have fared even worse. The exuberant Baroque style old Central Mosque, 1890, with two rear bell towers by Jaoa Baptista da Costa/and Sanusi Aka was demolished in 1984 and replaced by the present four minaret 14th century Ottoman model in 1988 (Mogaji).

The Branco house on Kakawa Street circa 1900, was pulled down in 1955. On its site was built the Immigration building by the Public Works Department.

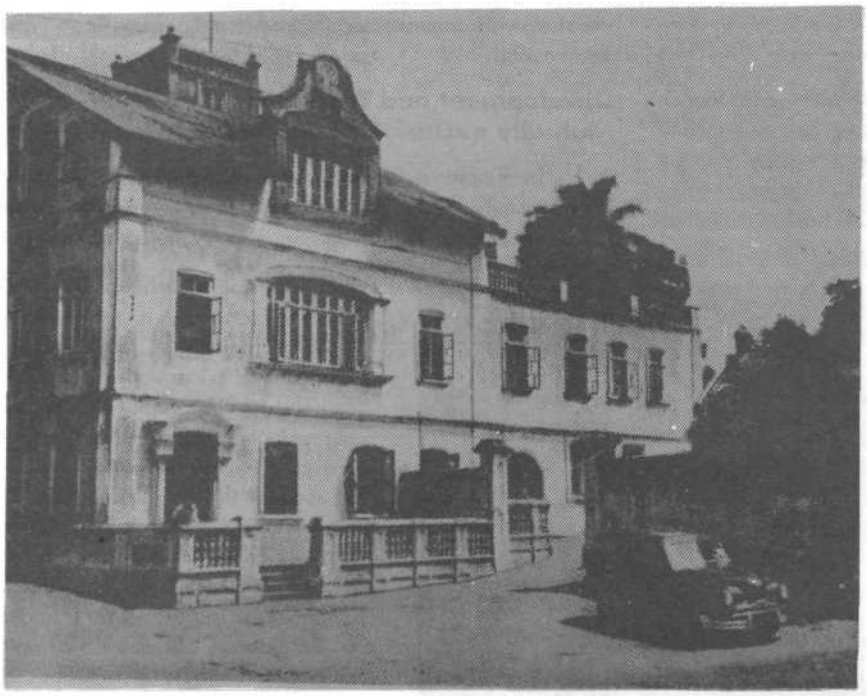
National Monuments: Official neglect

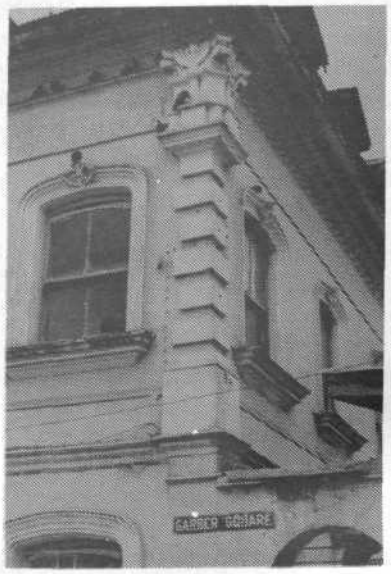
In the period preceding the 1977 Festac in Lagos, the National Antiquities Commission, which had declared the following buildings as national monuments was under pressure by the heirs for financial compensation. Fernandez house and Elias da Silva house on Elias and Odufega Streets both stood ageing and continued to show the strains of neglect. The house of Lazaro Borges da Silva on the south east corner of Oshodi and Tokunbo Streets (circa 1900) eventually went down in flames in 1979.

In 1985, the Committee on the Preservation of Historical Buildings and Monuments of Lagos State enpanelled by Governor Mudashiru published a compendium of Buildings and Monuments of Lagos State. It was during this period that the Ritz Hotel on Abibu Oki Street went down in flames. The Committee was in the process of preparing



The vocabulary of the Brazilian craftsmen and those that continued in the tradition





plans for the renovation of A.W.U. Thomas' Ebun house on Odunfa Street for an Art Gallery, when this most exuberant Baroque style in the city went down in flames like a pack of cards.

Above left: Old Elephant House, Broad Street, was one of the largest of the Brazilian houses, now replaced by 20-storey Elephant House (1981).

Above right: The Maja House on Garber square, used to be one of the better preserved houses.

Below: Shitta Mosque, financed by Mohammed Shitta Bey one of the muslim notabilities of the 19th century, designed by Senhor Joao Baptist da Costa and completed by Sanusi Aka. Pulled down and replaced by a new Central Mosque (1988). *(Courtesy: Boyles Bar).*

Documentation: 19th century architectural landmarks

Unfortunately, documentation on the turn of the 19th century architectural and-mark is scanty but the following samples reflect observers attention to details and form: The Wilberforce building was described as 'the most stately house on the Island' (Vaughan-Richards; 1977: 19-20) A.W.U. Thomas Ebun house was nicknamed by Lagos people as 'Ile Awosifila' (Aradeon, 1977; 19-20) and 'Petesi Anduru' Folami, 1982, 13). It was also described by an observer as a palatial home that towers so loftily above the Lagos House; it 'testifies eloquently to the success that the Hon. A.W.U. Thomas has achieved (MACMILLAN; 1968:-104); 'The Fernandez house is probably one of oldest and most interesting house in Lagos' (M. Jacks; 1955:110). The Elephant house, the house of Hon. Samuel Herbert Pearse, F.R.G.S., on Pearse Square was described as 'a handsome and palatial residence. It is a home of good foundations, of large and elegantly furnished rooms, a house beautiful with its roof garden and its delightful turret chamber, where, to the mind attuned to ideals high above mundane



things, a perspective may be visioned greater than that of the busy Nigerian port with its emerald Islands and its shimmering lagoon' (Macmillan; 1968: 97, 8). This house was demolished in 1979.

Problem of Preservation

It would appear that in the very nature of the personal achievements of the past 'captains of industry' to borrow a current misnomer, lies one of the problems that militate against the protection of buildings of historical importance as well as the preservation of this most enduring and visible achievement of the family patriach.

Within the context of colonial economy, men like Hon. A. W.U. Thomas and Hon. Herbert Pearse made their fortunes in commerce; they built elegant residences and invested on landed properties rather than in manufacturing. Investment on rental properties remained the most assured and only viable areas of investment open to them. Today, it is still the only investment that can be totally individually owned. Even where, as in Devode Branco's will, he stipulated that the house he had lived in on Kakawa Street should never be sold. (Cunha, 1987; 182); the pressure of the governors, the lure of financial compensation and the rights of heirs to survival are often too strong to resist.

As a consequence, our pattern of urban development even destroys the best examples of the personal achievement of family patriarchs, distorts the character of the built environment as well as their historical context. New buildings are located with almost no attention to contextual relevance and historical association as regards stylistic elements, volume play and street texture.

Cultural Education

This evident lack of appreciation of historical antecedents in our built environment reflects a fundamental flaw in our education system. If our universities are to educate rather than continue to produce manpower we have to address this deficiency. For example we need to reorganise our undergraduate curriculum to include courses on creative and performing arts.

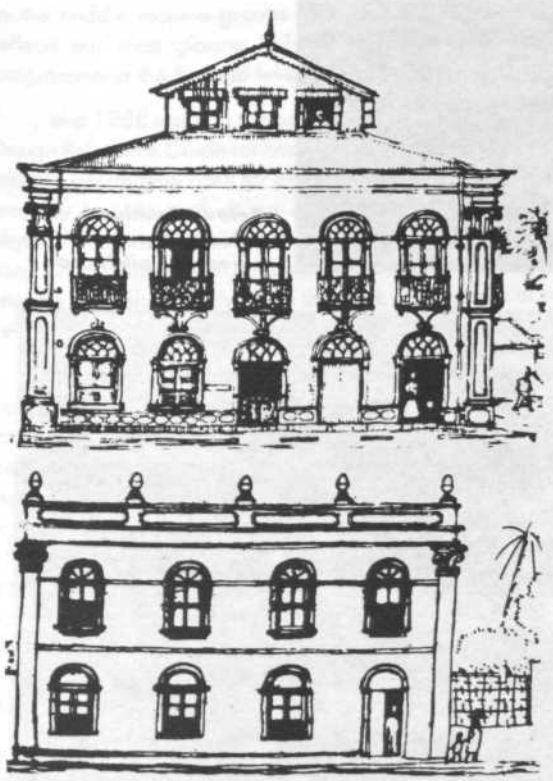
In addition to creating know-ledgeable practitioners and culture clientele, we have to actively begin to search for effective and functional ways to foster the culture of awareness among decision makers, administrators and the wider public which insists on shaping its own environment.

1985-1993 Renaissance

This period beginning in 1986 through 1990 will probably go down in history as one of the periods of high profile private investment in the built environment.

Public Parks & spaces: private Vs Public Interest.

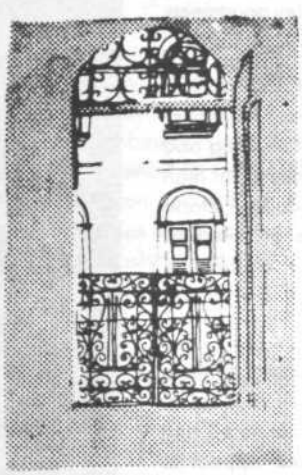
With Park View Estate III now fully built, all of old Ikoyi Park, a public park, has finally been brought under private occupation; Victoria Island and especially, Victoria Island Extension has been overbuilt; old Ikoyi is being intensely filled in. Reclothed and refurbished, even old houses on Victoria Island, Awolowo Road, and Adeniran Ogunsanya appear to be undergoing eclectic renaissance. In discussing this period, I am using the term renaissance in as wide a context as possible. In so far as the current movement liberates the creative spirit from the doctrinaire interpretation of the international styles of the 1950-1960 decades, it is a Renaissance of sorts; it is lively and enriching, if vulgar in some places. However, unlike its 16th century antecedent, this renaissance does not restore old and ageing buildings to their original style. It simply erases memories. The current fad, in keeping faith with the trend, obliterates all the traces of the original style. It repackages historical facades with collage of styles with apparent misunderstanding of their symbolic meanings, cultural and contextual relevance, as well as architectonic coherence.



Left: An illustration with details on the front view of the Branco House, pulled down in 1955.

Below left: Illustration on the Waterhouse. It got its name from a sweet water well in the compound.

Below: An illustration on the Waterhouse.



Flexible & Mutable Zoning laws and Building Codes

Since Governor Jakande

encouraged code violations by stipulating financial sanctions and, Governor Akhigbe reconfirmed violations, by increasing the penalty, some landlords have been building shops on setbacks; local governments have also been building shops on the street set backs and verges. On Victoria Island, service industries - banks, finance houses, restaurants, shops, fast food places, bureau de change and car sales depots - with access to SFEM induced fallout funds, are promoting building code and zoning law violations.



Real Property Values: Nigerian Practice

Ikoyi, is an early 19th Century low density suburbia. The neighbourhood is a living historical collection of old colonial house types. Each house is located on about a one acre lot. Since 1976, the neighbourhood has been subjected to increased land subdivision for additional buildings in order to correct the seeming 'waste of land.' In the last five years, it has been undergoing what must be severe labour pains, expanding and bloating the fifteen storey apartments located in the middle of one storey houses.



Above: Colonial residential house type in Ikoyi, Lagos.

Left: Christ Cathedral in the 1960s, much altered now.

Below: Another colonial type with sweeping pitch roof.



Victoria Island, our low density layout, 1955/58, is anything now but low density residence; continual subdivision has spread access, the current building and rebuilding activities has finally brought the city to this high income, low density dream of the 1960 decade. Victoria Island has finally been transformed into an overbuilt physical slum; an incoherent juxtaposition of building volumes and mixed use; a functional chaos, and a motorist daytime nightmare.

A substantial number of the 1960 residences have been renovated to house new banks. Their facades of sleazy mirror glass are adorned behind mannered and bloated classical colonnaded portico which appear to

invoke the confidence of discreet banking reliability. To facilitate access, pedestrian sidewalks, setbacks and verges are covered with bituminous materials and cordoned off for, customers' car parking.

If the jousting taking place on Victoria Island is a 'renaissance of sorts', then the Victoria Island extension is a postmodern convulsion. As we all know, the prerogative of the average Nigerian client to be witnessed can induce devastating results. The Victoria Island Extension is the most expensive disorder in Lagos.

Elsewhere in Metropolitan Lagos, the picture is as bleak. In Festac Town, the concept of comprehensive masterplan and housing designed in 1975 by Doxiadis Associates, has finally been abandoned with finality. It is being replaced with the ad hoc pattern of development that emphasizes individual plot allocation and the pre-eminence of the administrator as the chief planner. In Festac Town, not only are huge and expensive private houses being built, the open spaces, the heart of the Doxiadis Community structure are being sold by the Federal Housing Authority for private houses. Beyond court injunctions which went unheeded, unfortunately, the communities themselves appear to lack the capacity or courage to bring 'political' pressure to articulate this gross environmental abuse by the very Authority charged with the responsibility for protecting the public spaces.

The collapse of the housing programme of the 1975-1980 3rd Plan in 1978 has already been noted as a reflection of our incapacity to create a sustainable housing programme.

However if Jakande's Amuwo Odofin housing project is indicative of our potential to build and deliver subsidized housing to the middle income groups at the state level, Festac Town reflects our most glaring failure to manage public housing programme at the Federal level.

In a 1988 paper, I suggested the preparation of Land Use Design Reference Guide for Metropolitan Lagos. This Guide will provide information base for physical changes, service line and property tax, as well as an effective administrative tool for physical control. In addition the process of updating the guide book on periodic basis by aerial or satelite photography will provide an irrefutable check on the work of the physical control field inspectors.

One of the reasons for our inability to sustain the strict seperation of residential from business neighbourhood is due to our culture and the structure of our economy. To the extent that the average government allocation for housing is by and large exploited for its investment potential, and treated as a 'commercial' development, two houses on an average plot has come to typify most government layouts. As we are all painfully aware, this changes density configuration, and continually places undue emphasis on the potential investment value of land as one single major source of assured income from rental space.

Heirs & Patriachs and Expectations

Unlike investment in industries where the quality of goods manufactured is likely to ensure continuity of the market, commercial buying and selling based mostly on imports, depends on personal linkages. Most of the great and flourishing merchant houses of the past have not survived the passing of their family patriachs. With the expectation of the heirs, their diverse and competing interests, even the historical houses as the most visible achievement of the founding patriarch can only retain its importance as a source of income.

In the absence of filial commitments to preservation we should explore legislation in the cause of preservation. The historical building constitutes one single national patrimony that will keep alive memories of the family patriachs who inspired the best in builders of their time. Men such as Joao Baptista da Costa and Balthazar dos Reis; Herbert Macaulay, the Surveyor, Civil Engineer and Architect and Bagan Benjamin, the Civil Engineer and Architect were master builders, some of whose individual work became buildings of timeless beauty.

As a teacher and student of architecture, the built environment constitutes the living laboratory for our learning and teaching process. To have had the opportunity of meeting Joao Baptista da Costa, the master builder of Shitta Bey Mosque and the old Central Mosque, would have been a rare and an enviable privilege; but to be able to visit the Shitta Bey Mosque is to experience the power and subtleties of the creative powers of Joao Baptista, and to confront the aristocracy of his work. To achieve that quintessential level of excellence as he did in the Shitta Bey Mosque, is a single minded pursuit of a lifetime study and devotion; part self discipline and part self discovery.

In twenty years of teaching, what has struck me as one of our national failings is that we have so unstructured the system of specialization of skill and labour to the extent that, the average citizen has to be the proverbial jack of all trades and master of none, to survive in this culture.

Cultural Tourism

We Nigerians have reputation as travellers. If you belong to the generation that graduated professionally in the early 1960 decade, you were, in all probability, educated abroad. If you have visited or lived in London, you must have passed through Trafalgar Square, by that monument to Lord Nelson, which commemorates one shining moment in English history.

You are also probably familiar with the Hyde Park, that expanse of greenery in the heart of the city. A friend once remarked that if Nigerians as a group predominate in the English society, that sort of park could not survive. It would be allocated and built upon. Well, this phenomenon, is happening to the neighbourhood parks at Festac town and Agbara Estate. It also happened to Ikoyi Park; Park View Estate I under Governor Johnson and Estate II under Governor Jakande. The Biological Garden which was designed under the administration of Governor Mudashiru, was also predictably shared for housing under Governor Rasaki. With the publication in the Guardian of November 2nd 1993 of legal action instituted by Governor Otedola against the Federal Government and others, the park site at Osborne Road appears to have been shared out to private housing.

In Agraa, India, the Taj Mahal (1630-1653) is considered to be one of the most beautiful buildings in the world. To walk its

grounds is to experience its ethereal quality and the ambience of the majestic solitude of this mausoleum. The Mogul Emperor Shah Jehan, had it built to the memory of his favourite wife, Mumtaz-i-Mahal. Built with translucent marble, the Taj 'as generations of visitors attest, is blue at dawn, white at noon and the yellow of the sky at sunset.' (Hoag, 1977; 184)

To walk the St. Peters Piazza in Rome is to step back in space and time to the 16th through the 17th century; the 'intention of Pope Julius II' and the work of generations of masterbuilders from Bramante (1506) peaking to Michael Angelo (1546) and culminating in the noble entrance by Bernini (1956-67). Yet inspite of the span of time and the various ideas, St. Peters and its setting is remarkably focused around a central idea.

In this country, we espouse tourism. The last State Commissioner for Trade and Tourism under the Akhigbe-Rasaki administrations commissioned a number of monuments: One of Herbert Macaulay in two locations and the three white cap chiefs in white marble at the toll gate are some of the bright ideas that have emerged on the landscape. However the locations and setting are most insensitive. I have often wondered about our built environment, the children growing up in the city, and the values we expect them to imbibe from the buildings around them. What values do we teach them about our heritage? Which buildings of the past do we point out as landmarks? Which values make heroes of the past in our professions? What are the measures of their achievement? When we invite our foreign friends, especially our professional friends from abroad, which places, public parks and buildings do we take them to see? Which of these buildings do we tell them expresses our worthiest and most remarkable achievements?

The search for excellence, the preservation of examples of that excellence, the acknowledgement of our professional predecessors, some of whose buildings truly represent the best of their times are the monuments of all times; this is the context within which I wish to espouse the cause of preservation. The lessons of uninspiring building as well as the inspirational impact of the work of excellence transcends the time-space continuum.

It is this that is so remarkable about historical monuments and places. Let us join forces to protect our public buildings, our city parks and private buildings of historical importance. Without the past, the future can really have no meaning, and that is the significance of tradition. ***GR***

Footnotes

1. The public Planning Review Board was instituted by the Government of Lagos State during the tenure of Governor Mudashiru, it was part of the recommendation made by the Judicial Panel on the Lagoon City project.

2. The location of the Portuguese and Saro towns were buffer as well as transition zones between indigenous Lagos to the north, north and north west and the British Colonial institutional areas which stretched south West to the old Niger House on Broad Street and Marina, and through Onikan to Ikoyi Island on the north east skirting the Hausa constabulary in Obalande.

3. Elephant house in reference is not to be confused with Elephant house, 1973, on Ikorodu Road, or the Elephant house 1991 (Fola Alade) in Agidingbi for the cement manufacturers. On its location now stands the 20 storey Elephant House 1983 (Modulor Group).

4. Within the last two decades, three historical buildings have been known to have been preserved for new use.

i. Art's Place 1978; residence of Gbemi Alade Circa 1930 on City Way, Yaba. Renovation Architect, David Aradeon 1978,

ii. Offices... 1985 residence of Circa..... 25, Igbosere Road, Lagos Island designed by Herbert Macaulay, Renovation Architect..... 1985.

iii. Office for the Leventis Foundation; Residence of Dr. Lump KinCirca 1880, at 8/10 Abibu Oki Street, Lagos Island. Renovation Architect, John Godwin.

Back issues available upon request

GLENDORA REVIEW
P. O. Box 50914 Falomo, Lagos. Nigeria
Tel: LAGOS 2692762
Fax: LAGOS 2618083







The Idumota clock tower, and war memorial 'SOJA IDUMOTA' to the left in the background



Independent Celebration at Tinubu Square, note the tower of the Methodist Church, which has since been removed.