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INTERNATIONAL ISLAMIC UNIVERSITY MALAYSIA
بِوَسِيْلَتِي اِسْلَامٌ اَنْبَارٌ اِيْجِيْبًا مِلْدِيْنًا

IMPACT OF ISLAMIC BUILT ENVIRONMENT
CRITERIA ON THE EVOLUTION AND
ARCHITECTURAL CHARACTER OF THE URBAN
HAUSA TRADITIONAL HOUSE

BY

HAMZA BABANGIDA

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ABSTRACT

Extant studies on the Hausa traditional houses dealt more with the physical aspects such as finishing, roofing, decoration and other socio cultural aspects. Although of necessity, there were occasional mentions of the influences of Islam on Hausa traditional architecture in some of these studies. However, these were implicit rather than explicit. This study investigated the impact of Islam on the form and architectural character of the urban Hausa traditional house in northern Nigeria using the *kasar* Katsina urban traditional house as a case study. Using the non-Muslim rural house as a baseline in the area, the study traces the house evolution in time series since the introduction of Islam. The study identified and explained how the Islamic built environment criteria from the *Shari'ah* sources were applied in the traditional house building process. Through an extensive field survey, a total of 212 house samples were documented and observed, 120 household heads were administered questionnaires, and 20 key informants were interviewed. Results of the data analysis shows thirty seven generic architectural characters, three Hausa traditional house prototypes based on the frequency occurrences of their architectural characters and six house typologies based on their Islamic criteria response. The quantitative data analysis used as supporting evidence, also shows that the urban Hausa traditional house positively responds to the socio-cultural and environmental needs of the occupants; which is an Islamic housing criteria. Conclusively, therefore, these findings indicated that as in the case of traditional houses in the Arabic –Islamic traditional cities, Islam is the key factor in the evolution, form and the architectural character of the urban Hausa traditional house, relegating climatic conditions, type of building materials and available technology as modifying factors.

ملخص البحث

تتناول الدراسات الموجودة الجوانب المادية للبيوت الهوساوية التقليدية مثل التأثير والتسقيف والزخرفة وبعض الجوانب الاجتماعية الثقافية. بيد أنها ضرورية، يذكر عرضيا في بعض الدراسات تأثير الإسلام على معمار الهوسا التقليدي في بعض هذه الدراسات، لكن هذه التطرقات ضمنية أكثر من كونها صريحة. وتهدف هذه الأطروحة إلى دراسة أثر الإسلام على الهيئة والرمز المعماري لبيت الهوسا التقليدي المدني في شمال نيجيريا، مستخدما قصر كئشسينا التقليدي المدني كدراسة حالة، وتحديد استخدام البيت المدني لغير المسلمين كخط أساسي في المنطقة، فاستكشفت الدراسة نشوء البيت في حلقات زمنية من وقت التعرف بالإسلام، فكشفت الدراسة وبينت كيف بنى الإسلام معايير البيئة من مصادر الشريعة الإسلامية، والتي كانت مطبقة في إجراءات بناء البيت التقليدي. وقد لوحظ ووثق نموذج 212 بيتا عبر دراسة مسحية ميدانية مكثفة، فوزعت 120 استبانة على مسؤولي الأسر في المنطقة المذكورة، كما تم إجراء مقابلة لعشرين مبلغا. وتوصلت نتائج تحليل البيانات إلى وجود سبعة وثلاثين جنس رموز معمارية، وثلاثة نماذج أصلية للبيت التقليدي الهوساوي معتمدة على الحدوث التكراري لرموزها المعماري، وستة نماذج بيت أصلية مستندة على تجاوب معاييرها الإسلامي. وتم تحليل البيانات الكمية المستخدمة كبيئة داعمة، كما أكدت أن تجاوب البيت التقليدي الهوساوي إيجابيا للثقافة الاجتماعية والاحتياجات البيئية لساكنيها والذي يأخذ معايير طابع الإسكان الإسلامي. ومن ثم فإن هذه النتائج تشير بشكل حاسم كما هو الحال في البيوت التقليدية في المدن العربية الإسلامية التقليدية إلى أن الإسلام هو العامل الأساسي في النشوء والهيئة والرمز المعماري للبيت التقليدي الهوساوي المدني وعلاقة حالات البيئة ونوع معدات البناء والتكنولوجيا المتوفرة كوامل التعديل الأساسية.

APPROVAL PAGE

The thesis of Hamza Babangida has been approved by the following:

Prof. Dr. Ismawi Hj. Zen
Supervisor

Internal Examiner

External Examiner

Nasr Eldin Ibrahim Ahmed Hussein
Chairman

DECLARATION PAGE

I hereby declare that this thesis is the results of my own investigation, except where otherwise stated. I also declare that it has not been previously or concurrently submitted as a whole for any other degree at IIUM or other institutions.

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EVOLUTION AND ARCHITECTURAL CHARACTER OF THE URBAN
HAUSA TRADITIONAL HOUSE**

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This work is dedicated to

Masarautar Katsina

Late Emir of Katsina HRH. Alh. (Dr.) Muhammadu Kabir Usman of blessed memory
during whose time this work started

and

My parents, Alhaji Hamza Muhammad Kofar Bai and late Aisha (Indo) Ummaru
Katsina.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATION

S.W.T	Subhanahu Wata'ala
S.A.W	Sallallahu Alaihu Wasallam
IBEC	Islamic Built Environment Criteria

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter introduces the research. It is divided into nine parts consisting of background of the study, statement of the problem, research objectives, research questions and hypothesis, the research significance, limitations and lastly, chapter summary. The chapter started by briefly tracing the historical evolution of the early human settlements using the African context, as an illustration. It then explains factors that affect the evolution of houses from different cultures. Statement of the research problem was explained as well as the objectives the research intends to achieve. The limitation of the research and significance of the expected outcome were also discussed.

1.1 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

The need for protection against the elements of the climate and other environmental hazards were the primary aim of man's search for shelter which he found in two forms; the first is the readymade in the form of caves and the second one was built by himself according to his needs and available materials from his immediate surroundings. Taking Africa as an example, early settlements of man dates from the Neolithic period, the period which coincided with when man began to make a living through farming, using simple tools to assist him till the land. For example, in the Nile valley of Egypt, permanent settlements of farmers were established as early between 5000 and 400 B.C (Shillington, 1989 cited in Elleh, 1997). Prior to this period however, cave settlements were some of the early settlements scattered in the Sahara

desert as evidenced by the archeological cave paintings found (Elleh, 1997). Houses which were transitory in nature were later built after the desiccation of the Sahara along the Nile such as round huts, rectangular houses built of reeds and grass, and tents (Elleh, 1997). The first evolution processes of houses, therefore, were from the caves to tents to circular and oval huts to rigid rectangular houses in each case responding to the needs of the people, available materials, constructional technology and cultural values as societies got more complex (Elleh, 1997).

Other factors came to play in the determination of the form of shelter as the society became more complex, such as behavioral, cultural, spiritual values, and religious ideals of the people (Omar, 2006). As a result, the character of traditional built environment, especially housing has been interpreted by scholars to be a product of two principal factors; physical and social (Rapoport, 1969, 1976, 1977). In other words, houses evolved in response to one or more of the following physical factors; the need for shelter, building materials available, level of construction technology of the people, and the climate of the area. Economic, defense, and religious belief constitute the social factors. According to Rapoport (1969), the physical factors such as materials, construction and technology were more of modifying factors than determinants, which means they only facilitate certain decisions. He further argued that one factor may not be entirely responsible for housing evolution process but in combination with other factors, but that one factor could be dominant while others could serve as modifying factors. This position was corroborated by other scholars such as Moustapha (2007) and Spahic (2004). They argued that the religion of Islam was the sole force which furnishes the Islamic built environment with both its essence and identity, accordingly “relegating the indigenous geographical, climatic, social and other inherited factors as ancillary”. The works of scholars indicate that different

factors could play a dominant role in the evolution of housing given the same geographical location and climate.

Akeel (2007), traced the evolution of the Arab house from its basic form, the Arabic tent in what he refers to as the 'Islamic house morphology'. He identified nine stages of this evolution. The first three stages indicated the Arabic tent and how it was used in the early period as a dwelling. The fourth stage indicated the evolution of exposed freestanding built room(s). The fifth and sixth stages indicated the evolution of ancillary architectural characters such as a veranda, while stage seven indicated the evolution of the perimeter fence, the first privacy element. Privacy screen at the entrance to prevent direct visual intrusion evolved in stage eight, while in the last stage the open air *majlis* (the male reception areas) was moved and attached to the perimeter fence. He identified the Islamic requirements that relate to housing, for example, privacy of the women, and separation of male and female spaces, as the dominant force that gave the Arabic traditional house its form which evolved from the Arabic tent. In other words, the Arabic tent evolved into its present form due to Islam, and in response to other ancillary factors such as the climate and available building materials as modifiers.

Various factors came to play in the evolution of the contemporary courtyard house as suggested by Atilio (2006). He identified the elementary cell of the house as the most basic form from which houses evolved into a courtyard house through various stages and due to various factors. According to him, the evolution process of this elementary cell leads to the formation of row houses, apartment houses and courtyard dwelling. In the evolution process, the elementary cell was being transformed into built up rooms either on the side or opposite the cell. This was to achieve additional spaces for families. He also traced the evolution of apartment

houses from the elementary cell which according to him was to contain commercial activities through the provision of shops in the frontage of the house.

The traditional house evolved initially in response to cultural values with other factors such as the climate and adaptability to location and building materials in a modifying role such as the Malay traditional house. It was essentially influenced by the way of sitting and almost doing everything on the floor (Mohamad, Kamaruddin, Syed, Ra'alah & Gurupiah, 2005). For example, the Malay sits, sleeps, has his meals and walks barefooted in the house. This posture of sitting was responsible for the floor-sill level window which allows visual access in a sitting position (Mohamad, et al, 2005). At a later stage the house was transformed to accommodate the Islamic way of life, especially in the provision of separate reception areas for male in the front *Serambi gantung* and female at the rear parts of the house *Rumah tengah* (Mohamad, et al, 2005; Zaiton & Ahmad, 2007)

Pre-existing houses could also transform due to the influence of surrounding activities such as commerce and trade. An example of this is in the works of Moukhtar (2008), in the central part of Nigeria. In this study, the *Gbagi* traditional houses were found to have transformed into rental housing due to the influx of people into Abuja, the new Federal Capital of Nigeria as civil servants from the former capital, Lagos moved into the city. The *Gbagi* people living in the Peri-urban Abuja converted their traditional houses by adding rooms, shops and other spaces such as kitchen, which were not present before to accommodate the needs of the tenants. The transformation here is essentially for economic reasons.

The role of family kinship in the evolution of houses has also been identified in a longitudinal study on the Hausa traditional houses, the subject of this research, by Schwertdfeger (1971, 1976). In the study, he identified the evolution trends of the