



# HAUSA TRADITIONAL ARCHITECTURE

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# AGENDA

- DEFINITIONS.
- ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS.
- RELIGIOUS FACTORS.
- CULTURAL FACTORS.
- IMPORTED TRENDS.
- REVERSAL ATTEMPTS.
- LIMITATIONS.

# I. DEFINITION

- Often misconstrued to be limited to decorative walls, curved-walls, arches and roof-horns, as professed by most revival attempts in modern buildings.

*Le Corbusier said:*

**“decoration is a crime in architecture, and only criminals and degenerated aristocrats would need it”.** (Dr. E. Kortan: Turkish architecture & urbanism through the eyes of Le Corbousier.)

- Some think that the 'Tradition' is achieved only by use of mud and thatched roof.
- But material choice and application is dynamic.
- Hausa Traditional Architecture therefore can simply be defined as the art of shaping the environment to serve the requirements of Hausa *Traditions* comfortably and efficiently.
- Tradition is opinion, belief, practice, customs etc. handed down from generation to generation.



The living tradition of the Hausa-man is influenced by three main factors:-

1. ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS.
2. RELIGIOUS FACTORS.
3. CULTURAL FACTORS.

# I. ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS

## LOCATION:

- Hausa Land is located in Nigeria between latitude  $3.5^{\circ}$  East to latitude  $11.0^{\circ}$  East, and from longitude  $10.5^{\circ}$  North to longitude  $14.0^{\circ}$  North (Fig.1)

Fig. 1



## ***Characterized by:***

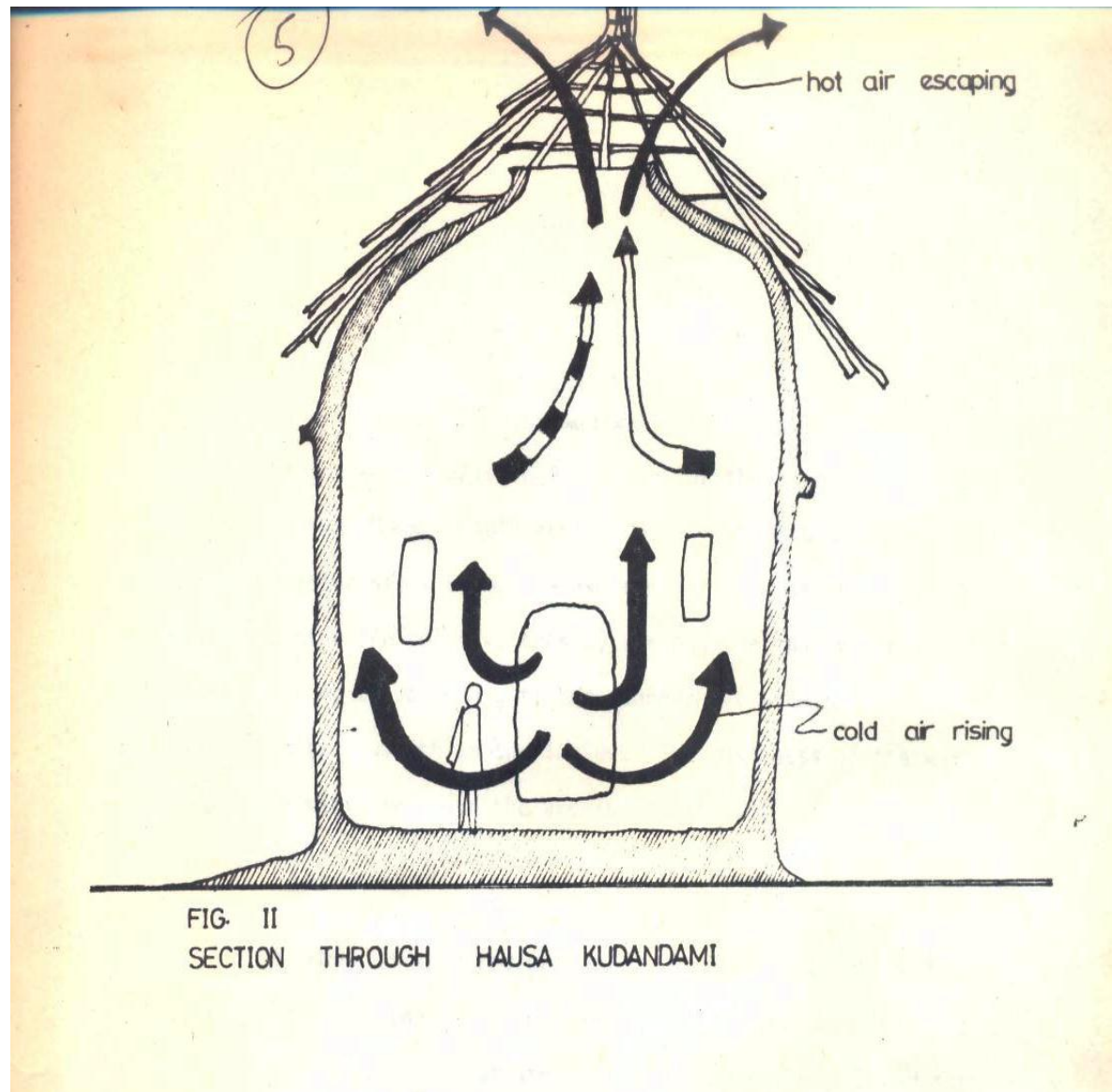
- Hot and dry toward the Northern Sokoto, Katsina and Kano areas.
- Cold and dusty North-Easterly wind prevailing between October and March.
- Day time recording higher temperature than night
- Humidity is generally very low.
- South-Western moisture-laden wind is more prominent between March and October in the more South-Western part of Zaria & Kaduna.
- almost empty streets and clustered seating round shady trees during the hot days hours.



## ***Explains:***

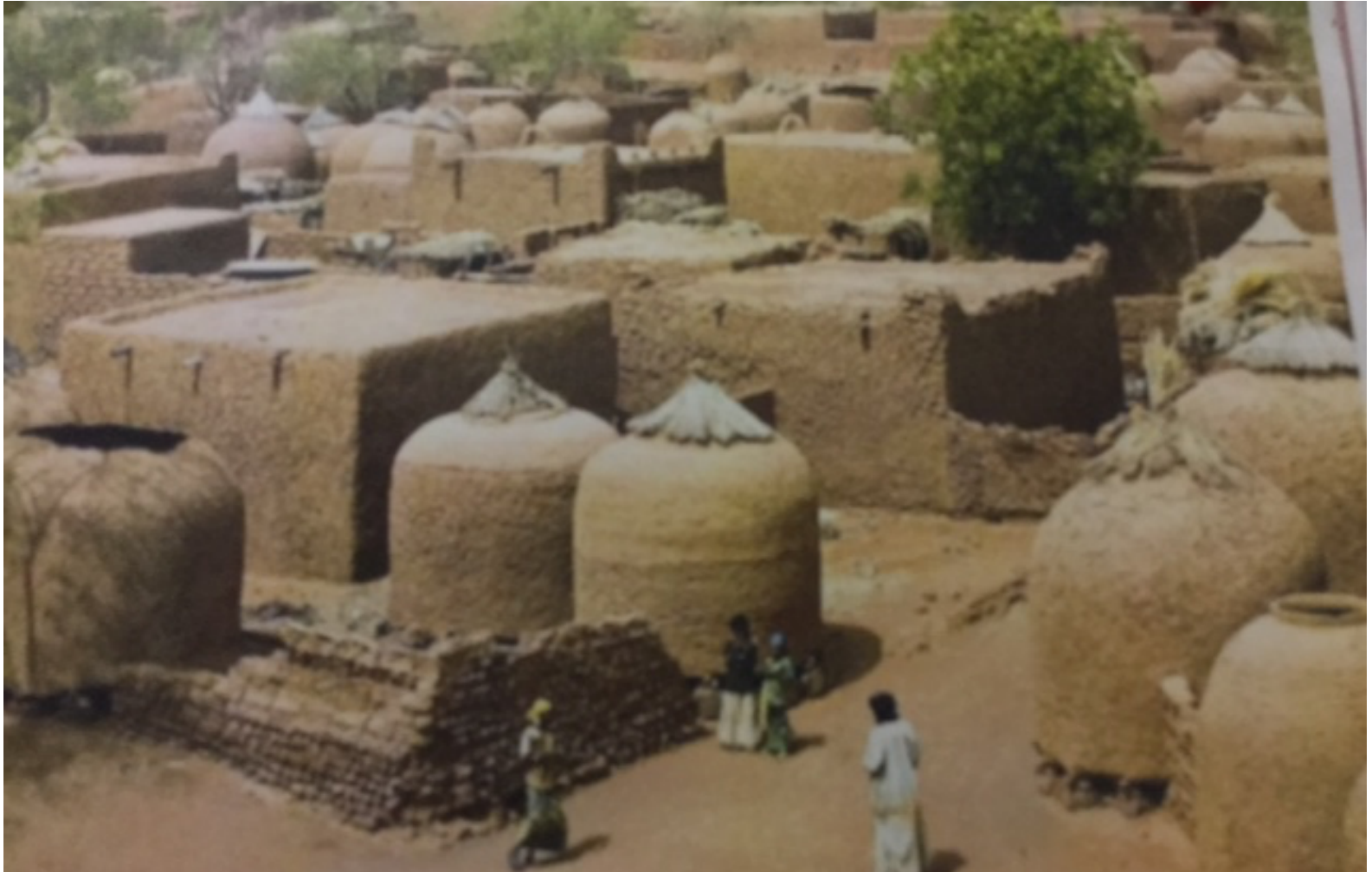
- the Hausa man's general preference for white or bright coloured dress which absorbs much less heat than darker colours.
- habit of constructing high walls round a court yard is a climatic dictation to ensure larger shaded areas, providing a reduction of intense radiation from the sun, ground and surrounding building.

- higher floor to ceiling heights as seen in ‘Soro’ and ‘Kudandami’ to allow room for the lighter hot air to rise and be replaced by the heavier cooler air at the lower human level.
- the Hausaman’s choice of mud walls of the kind of thickness it is being used.

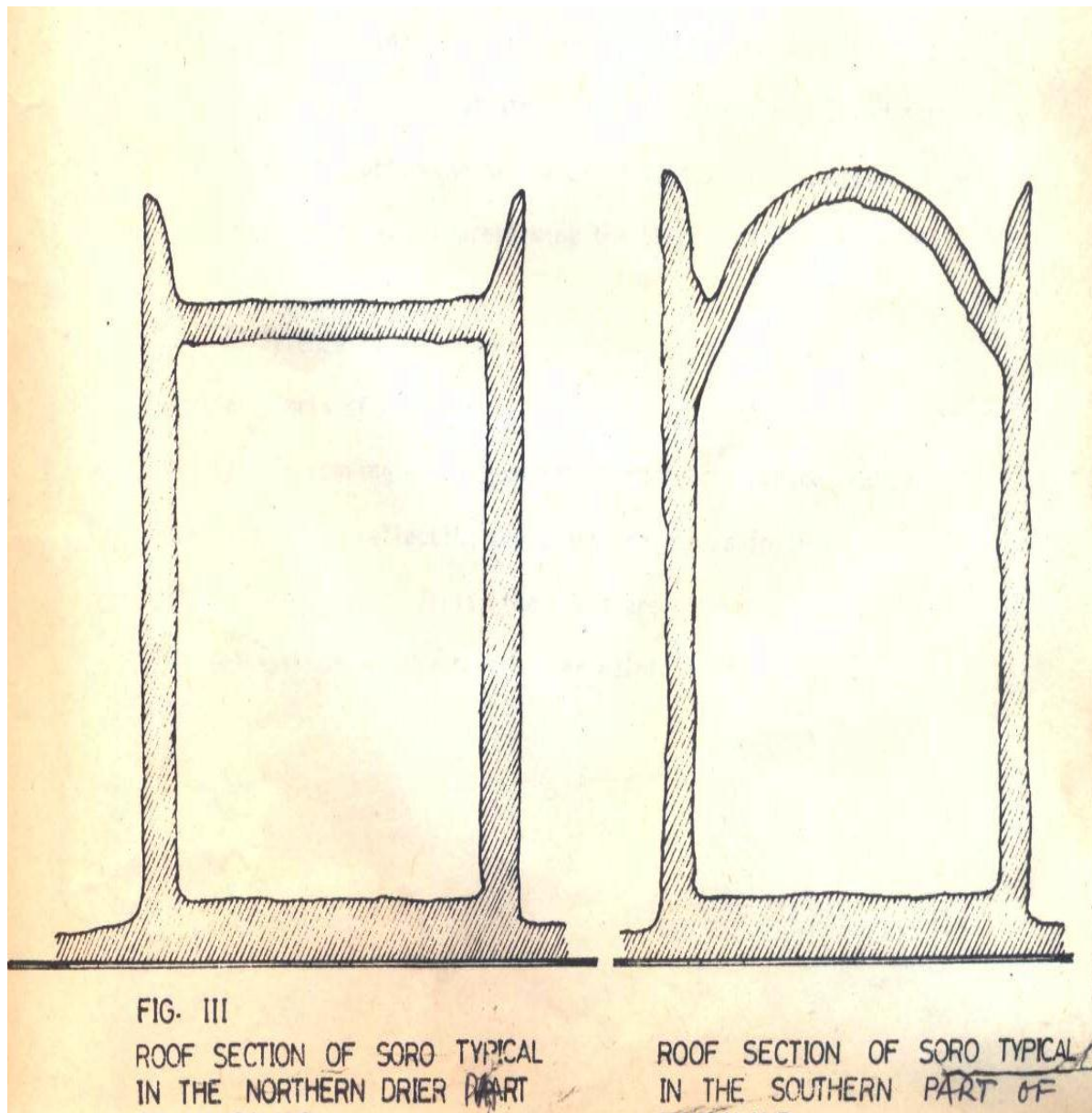


- most earth roofing in Kano, Katsina and Sokoto are flat reflecting the scanty rainfalls in these areas.
- why as you go southwards towards Zaria, the roofs are dome-shaped to facilitate for quicker run-off of the heavier rainfall (Fig. II & III).

Fig. 11










All these are in fulfillment of the architectural goals of USE, STRENGTH & BEAUTY at the Hausa-man's level of technology.


## 2. RELIGIOUS FACTORS


- Unlike their Fulani counterparts, the Hausa settle in larger groups round areas of common interest.
- This confirms the high sense of community amongst the Hausa long before the influence of Islam.
- Islam further refined this high sense of community in several ways.
- Congregation to celebrate wedding, naming ceremony or to mourn death necessitating provision of large spaces within the compound or around the neighborhood of any typical Hausa home or neighborhood.
- The concept of congregational prayers in Islam provides for greater inter-action amongst the Hausa.



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- For the five daily prayers, one is opportuned to meet generality of the family heads in his neighbourhood .
  - Friday congregational prayers extends the inter-action up to about five miles radius;
  - Eid congregational prayer affords such inter-action with family heads of the whole town or group of villages twice annually.


- Separation between men and women as is required in Islam decisively dictates the layout of the family house.
- Houses are designed round a court yard with rooms for expansion to accommodate more wives and their off-springs, and provide for an open-air space for the women in purdah.
- A typical Hausa home is virtually two houses in one- the inner women restricted area and the outer male visitors reception area.
- In planning the outer area provision is usually made for male dependents as is common in the extended family set-up.

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- The provision of many reception rooms or '*Zaure*' in the outer area is not only necessary for receiving well-wishers and mourners, but also an important element of security in Hausa Traditional Architecture.
  - The number also reflects the social status of the owner.

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- Inheritance in Islam demands subdivisions with the death of the head of family, with each child taking his '*mamlouk*' and providing for his own mother, wife and children.
  - This sub-division creates much smaller compounds within the original compound.
  - Where the head of family has other houses, the main compound is sometimes left intact as a referral point and a historical monument for the family.

# CULTURAL FACTORS


- The structure of Hausa family is a dynamic one, it grows, subdivides and/or declined depending on particular circumstances.
- A basic unit family may grow into an extended family compound called '*Gandu*'.
- This may consist of family head, his brother, his children, his wives, his parents and other relatives.
- His male children may start their matrimonial life within the compound before setting up their own nucleus.

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- Family inter-relationship dictates the pattern of living within the compound.
  - Table I illustrates such inter-relationship determines the number of the number of ‘*Sassa*’ required and their location in relation to one another.


**TABLE 1:**

**Inter-Relationship Pattern in a Typical Hausa Extended Family**

	<b>FAMILY HEAD</b>	<b>HIS WIVES</b>	<b>HIS MALE CHILDREN WIVES</b>	<b>HIS CHILDREN</b>	<b>HIS PARENTS</b>
<b>FAMILY HEAD</b>		Love & Affection	Shyness & Respect	Guidance & Respect	Guidance & Respect
<b>HIS WIVES</b>	Love & Affection		Shyness & Respect	Guidance & Respect	Shyness & Respect
<b>HIS MALE CHILDREN WIVES</b>	Shyness & Respect	Shyness & Respect		Love & Affection	Joking & Respect
<b>HIS CHILDREN</b>	Guidance & Respect	Guidance & Respect	Love & Affection		Joking & Respect
<b>HIS PARENTS</b>	Guidance & Respect	Shyness & Respect	Shyness & Respect	Joking & Respect	

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- May be the initial planning of compound may not strictly take the functional disposition as dictated by the above kinship pattern due to either short sightedness or economic restrictions.
  - However, any attempt to remodel, renovate or expand the compound seems to reflect a frantic effort towards this kinship pattern.



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- The Hausa-man has always a preference for the main entrance of his house to face east.
  - Plots of land with that potential attract better value.
  - This gives a shaded '*dakali*' for evening relaxation.
  - Some schools of thought attribute this to the love to face the '*alqibla*' as its direction in most of Hausaland is east-ward.


- Main entrance feature to the house is the '*Dakali*' which is a first courtesy reception for a guest before he is received.
- The next level of reception is the '*Zaure*' whose furnishing range from mat to rug depending on the economic standing of the owner.
- The head of family has his unit referred to as '*Turaka*'. This may be a bedroom only or bedroom and sitting room.
- The '*Turaka*' is most strategically located in the compound to enhance the supervisory and leadership role of the master.
- The kitchen is located usually far off and more often than not isolated not only for the fear of susceptibility to fire hazards, but also to reduce heat transfer to neighbouring room.
- One other reason locating the kitchen is the nature of ingredients that form our traditional food recipes. Some these emit odour that could be offensive and require a lot of air-change to vanish.


- The Hausa reference to toilet as '*Bayan-Gida*' suggests an appropriate location for toilets – far off behind the house.
- Facilities for wives depend on need and finance, but basic requirements are a room for each wife and a unity sitting room '*Rumfa*' common to all.
- This is the main area of inter-action (apart from courtyard) for the wives.
- The '*Rumfa*' concept enhances the unity of the wives and their children. It is also the reception hall for female relatives of the husband and other female guests that are similarly common to all the wives.


# IMPORTED TREND

- The Middle East influence is the first touch of the so called modern buildings.
- This is most commonly found in Syrian/Lebanese Quarters of our cities.
- They are characterized by their symmetrical look with a porch in the middle which the Hausa's refer to as '*Kwatashi*'.
- It is basically bedrooms and toilets on either sides, and a sitting room in the middle. Kitchen at the tail end and the characteristic external staircase in the case of story buildings.
- This type of structure has dominated the majority of our modern lay-outs like Fagge, Noman's Land, Hausawa, Yankaba, Gyadi-gyadi as examples of Kano metropolis.
- This has not only defaced our environment with symmetrical approach, but also contradicts our life style and dictates our contemporary lay-out planning into monotonous military grids.


- In the G.R.A. the European style dominates as building plans were brought from Europe for implementation for the use of colonial masters.
- They came along with their wide windows and doors, small sized rooms, their winter fire-place and its chimney.
- In some of them, the kitchen is even located at one corner of the sitting room.


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- These are located on a vast piece of land with hedges or barbed wire demarcating the boundaries.
  - They are provided with Boys Quarters located at the rear facing back-ward of the house.
  - This design is based on one unit family of not more than 4 persons, with total disregards to our concept of living.

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- Our first generation elites that found themselves living there had their family structure dictated by this imported colonial architecture.
  - They had to restrict their family size and relatives coming to live with them.
  - Where their mothers had to live with them, they had to be packed-up in the Boys Quarters – the most unbecoming place for one's mother, because of the kinship shyness and avoidance relationship between her and the wife.
  - They were forced to receive their visitors in the same living room common to the family.

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- Kitchens become over congested and emit bad odour to the adjoining sitting room.
  - The wide doors and windows had to be heavily grilled with burglar proof because of their insecurity in relation to the barbed-wire boundary fencing.
  - Air-conditioning became necessary because of the intense heat exchange between the outside and the inside through the thin sheets of wide glazing.



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- Laundry becomes a peculiar problem because we do not wear just shirts and shorts.
  - We lost our sense of community because of the nature of the residential layout we are living.
  - One hardly knows who his next door neighbor is, and hardly any provision for congregational mosque.
  - The children play within our boundary confine, and grow-up in virtual isolation.
  - Funerals, naming and wedding ceremonies had to be shifted to another venue in the community oriented walled city where such facilities exists.
  - Dogs kept on the vigil, unintentionally scaring off the masses being served.

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- This results into a situation where Architecture shaping Character instead of Character shaping Architecture.
  - New generation of Hausa's were born who in manner and culture stand out-cast. Children born under such a situation become individualistic.
  - Individualism breeds selfishness, and selfishness is the root of corruption.
  - We ended up having policy makers that are remote from the subjects.
  - A wife married from such culture hardly tolerates a second one.

- This goes a long way in compounding the challenge before us the contemporary indigenous architects.
- When such elites are thinking of building their own homes, they ask architects to produce a replica of the colonial style often referred to as “*Abuja Design*”.
- It is often difficult to convince such client so the architect is left with the dilemma of whether to satisfy the client’s wish or his professional curiosity?
- Even if one sees it from the concept of globalization, is the climatic index also globalized?



11/8/16

# REVERSAL ATTEMPTS

## REVERSAL ATTEMPTS BY CONTEMPORARY INDIGENOUS ARCHITECTS

- There has been desperate efforts in recent years to reverse to our Traditional Architecture.
- This could probably be due to the increase in indigenous professionals like architects, engineers and planners.
- And the introduction of courses like Sociology and History of Vernacular Architecture also widen the spectrum of knowledge of the produced professionals.
- It made it easy for the indigenous professional to straight away spot the contradictions between foreign Architecture and the Traditions of the Hausa users.
- If for example a British Architect looks at the plan of a typical bungalow for plot in Kano (Fig.V) he will find a lot of 'abnormalities' even if the bungalow looks British in style.



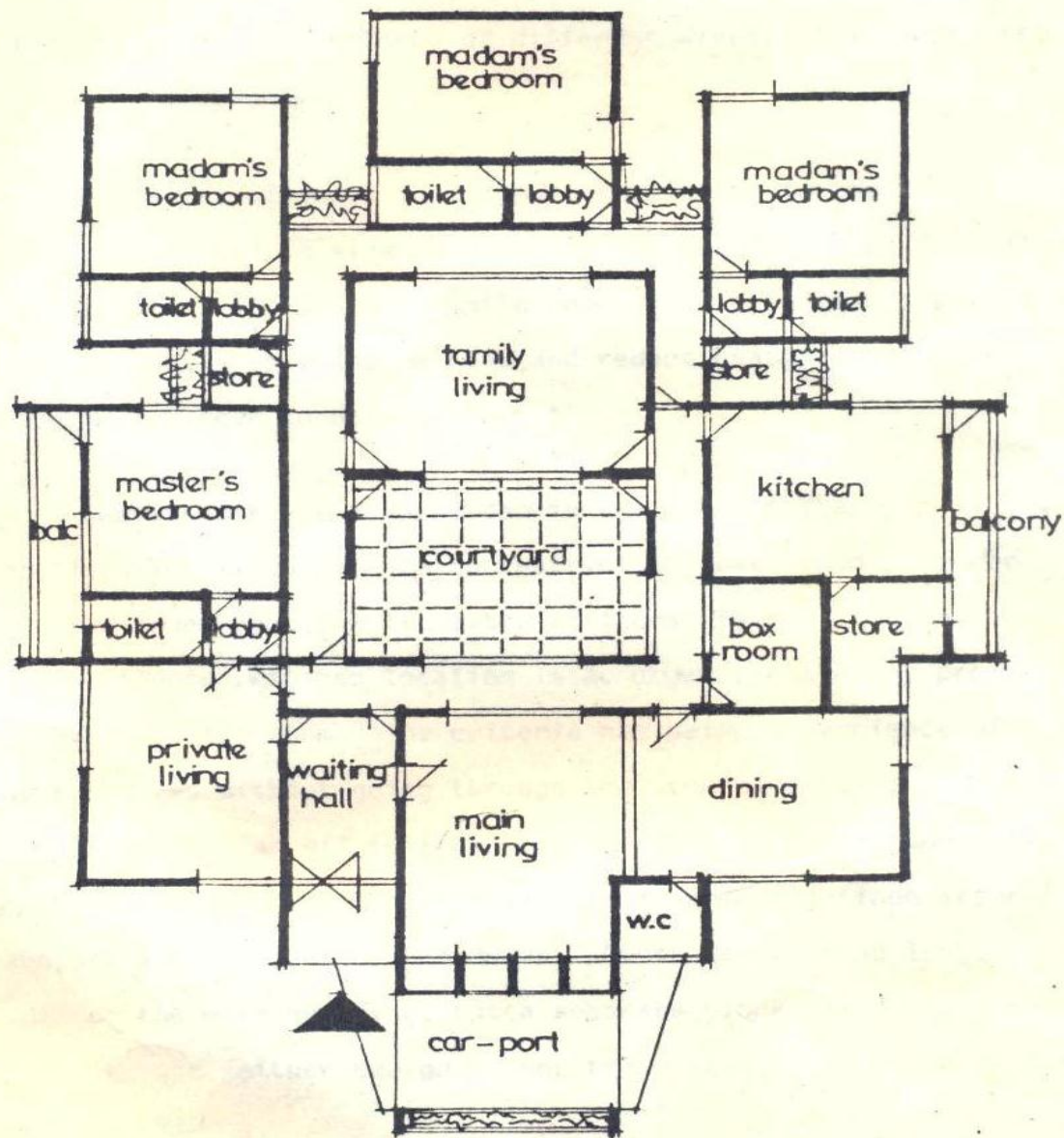


FIG. V  
FLOOR PLAN OF CONTEMPORARY BUNGALOW




# LIMITATIONS

## LIMITATIONS

- Traditional Architecture cannot be said to be wholly revived with the satisfaction of only one goal – (that of USE). One has to look at other goals of architecture – **STRENGTH AND BEAUTY**.
- The strength aspect of our traditional materials is a great limitation to the success of the revival.
- Our traditional materials are basically clay, laterite, cornstalk, grass and wood. They are either easily washed away by the scoring rain or rot away in so short a time or easily inflammable.
- There is the need for intensive materials engineering research to improve the quality of these materials at industrial level. The cost of the improved new product of the research has to be attractive to attract patronage.
- The task is a great one ahead because our people's mind has already been jaundiced to believing that our local products are inferior to imported ones.



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- It is a common is knowledge that many prefer prestige to even comfort.
  - This belief is also another bottleneck to the revival of the tradition.
  - If it is true that charity begins at home.
  - Architects and Engineers may probably have to lead the way in experimenting the full concept of traditional architecture starting with their own homes.
  - Clients are certainly reluctant to having their life-time saving used for such experiment.



Is the ball back to the court of the  
professionals?

**THANK YOU**