'HIDEOUS' ARCHITECTURE:
Mimicry, Feint and Resistance In Turn of the Century
Southeastern Nigerian Building

by
Ikemefuna Stanley Ifejika Okoye
B.Sc., Dip. Arch., M.Sc., University College London
London, England
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Signature of the author
______
Ikemefuna Okoye, Department of Architecture
May 04, 1995

Certified by
______
Stanford Anderson
Head, Department of Architecture
Professor of History and Architecture

Accepted by
______
David H. Friedman
Chair, Departmental Committee on Graduate Studies

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ABSTRACT
This dissertation reconstructs the histories of some exceptional, hitherto unstudied buildings, erected in southeastern Nigeria between 1889 and 1939; they are part of a larger group, dispersed over the African Atlantic coast and 'interior'. To architectural scholarship, these kinds of building have seemed unfathomable, if they emerge at all from invisibility (and thus from being unamenable to study). Typically, they are viewed through a lens which distorts them in one of two mutually complementary ways; one identifies some of them with an extended European architecture. The other consigns the rest a characteristic resistance to change, and situates them within an unhistoricized traditional world. These frames emerge from how the academy views non-western society and from local African representations and feints; both their architecture historical frames tend, then, to frustrate attempts to flee their fields of vision for more clarified accounts. The buildings in this study, and the larger class to which they belong, thus resist an adequately descriptive, coherent, historicized interpretation.

Far more than is imagined, textual witness is shown to be available, by 1890, for constructing a part-documentary history that challenges Europeanizing historiographic frames. Moreover oral narratives garnered from the buildings' communities (biographies of builders and of their patrons for whom architecture seems well developed as a form of representation) are founded as this history's necessary and equal complement. Thus, these buildings become recognizable as products of their particular sites (speaking both theoretically and in constructional terms); a recognition encouraged by granting them a categorical distinctiveness that elides, partially, the architecture of the European colony. It will moreover have been shown that transformationality, as opposed to a particular moment of change, was a property of southeastern Nigerian culture, and that all its customs (and specifically, the latter's architectural tradition) must be regarded as non-stable and eternally reinvented.

Thesis Supervisor: Stanford Anderson
Title: Professor of History and Architecture
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INTRODUCTION

...Mgbe ejeideli jeluo n'ibe a anunu
Anyanwu si esii n'anin wee na-erogote
O si n'ana o na-eligote
Igwe gudolo n'ana[...]
Na ihe avu ka Enu-nyili-mba teicheli
sitempu
tiechee sitempu
O ji ali obodo enu
Ibe avu anyanwu si aligote
O tiechelu sitempu e si ali obodo enu
W'oo oku di a[...]
Tupu etinyeve sitempu.... De ka m koludixo
Mgbe m kolulie ka m qwa gi ihe sitempu si we
puta...
....Moo ka o ji wee puta
Eji wee vu ka-eji etinye sitempu uno-enu bu

...As they kept going till they had gotten to that place
[Where] Anyanwu\(^1\) comes up from the earth and starts to rise
It was coming from the earth and rising up
while the sky [still] held on to the earth[...]
It was at that place that Enu-nyili-mba built steps
....Built steps...
With which he climbed up to the heavenly country
That place was full of heat[...]"
Before steps came to be built...(narrator interrupts himself)
Wait let me tell more of the story
When I've finished telling everything, let me then tell you from where
steps came...
....that's (this story is about) how it came out
Whence it was seen how stairs are put in storied buildings
[It] was when the hero reached that place that he saw it

Extract from the Epic of Ameke Okoye, ‘traditional’ song cycle recorded and transcribed

During the last years of the nineteenth century\(^2\), fresh approaches to the imagining of buildings make an unexpected appearance\(^3\) in southeastern Nigeria\(^4\). The new imagination was,

\(^1\) Anyanwu is the Igbo god (supreme in some areas) manifested in light and in the sun.

\(^2\) It will be claimed here that in fact the experimental bent of the imaginative practice begun at this moment seems to have survived right up to the first three decades of the twentieth century.

\(^3\) It seems justified to think of this emergence as one that is not expected, so long as it is understood...

(continued...)
as will become apparent, applied to many kinds of architecture and architectural practice; both to architecture that one might choose to label traditional\(^5\), and to architectural practice in which the invention of unconventional structures became desired. This imagination, then, involved new formal, aesthetic and typological constitutions of the individual building within local but dispersed architectural cultures. Due to our lack of familiarity with them, the names of the period’s representative buildings will most likely come, to Africanists as to architectural historians and other kinds of reader, without visual or intellectual reference\(^6\). The  

\(^3\) (...continued) 
that what is referred to is the particular nature of the transformation involved, rather than the fact of change and reformation per se. 

\(^4\) The area so called in this dissertation coincides roughly with the former Eastern Region of Nigeria, the Igala speaking areas to the North of this, as well as with the Igbo speaking areas of the contemporary Delta State. It thus does not coincide with any geo-political area that one typically encounters in texts. The use of south eastern, rather than the more normal eastern Nigeria, is meant as a constant reminder of this fact. 

\(^5\) One of the sub-texts of this work is a challenge to this notion, especially in the sense in which it is used to represent an essentiality in African architecture. Nevertheless the term is widely accepted, and is used here as a temporary measure. 

\(^6\) Some readers may in fact discover that they are familiar with many of the kinds of structures presented here, but would not have thought them particularly Nigerian. For this reason it is hardly recognized, as will be shown in the following chapters, that the previously unattended turn of the century and early 20th century architecture of south eastern Nigeria certainly offers much, as will become obvious, that should be of interest to architectural theory, to historiography, to ethnography, and to Africanist intellectual history, mainly by way of challenging some of its essential constructs. It certainly appears to demand an end to the exclusion of certain kinds of building (or at least their marginalization) from both historical scholarship about architecture, and from contemporary discourse around both architecture and its critique. 

Though many problems are met in producing the information that allows new historiographical constructions, it is hoped that the interpretations of architecture in particular, and of culture in general which these chapters afford, might contribute something to the understanding of the practices of resistance, both physical and mental, instituted by African cultures under the threat of European domination, as they might today for what in all likelihood is an erroneous characterization of the contemporary architecture of Africa, of Asia and of South America, as 'frenzied and inchoate'. (Berman [1982:232])
buildings include (and are illustrated by) amongst others a meeting house at Nnokwa (fig. 1), a three storey house in Okrika (fig. 2), St. Peter’s Church building in Okrika (fig. 3), the Onwudinjo House in Awka (fig. 4), Emmanuel Church building in Enugu Ukwu (fig 5), the Ojiakor stone mansion at Adazi Nnukwu (fig 6), the entrance portico of St. Paul’s Church at Nimo (fig. 7), the Uzoka House at Awka (fig. 8), and the old, no longer extant version of St. Simon’s Church Nnobi (fig. 9). Although the dissertation focuses on these buildings, it will include mention of a wider range of buildings in which context these are set. Through them the primary goal of the dissertation is explored, seeking to produce an understanding of what for the moment will simply be termed the new architecture(s) of late 19th and early 20th century southeastern Nigeria. In the process, knowledge may also be gained regarding the architectural culture which enabled their emergence.

Visually speaking, the buildings vary tremendously in terms of what we may recognize as architectural style. What unites them, paradoxically, is the diversity of their appearance. What demarcates them from the generality of buildings in their context, is that they are radically inventive in both form and style. This radicality is perceivable as rendering any one of them dissonant with other more ‘traditional’ buildings surrounding it. Nevertheless, it becomes clear that this apparently cacophonous dialogue with both an indigenous pre-modern architecture and a Western (and sometimes colonial) architectural style, becomes identifiable and legible in one way only. They may be ‘read’ as an appropriation to a customary architectural vocabulary of some architectonic elements, motifs, figures, spatial relationships, forms, and aesthetic qualities of surface and volume gleaned from
atypical direct (or second-hand) readings of West-European and American architecture. In such appropriations a radical misreading of the European or American building of which it avails its inventive self, is always present.

Though in the very earliest buildings for which records survive the same materials are used as in traditional building (usually clay, timber, wattle and thatch), by the turn of the century, and in the following four decades, buildings were erected in a wide range and combination of materials. Such materials typically include clay, a material that has been seen as inevitably marking the traditional. Increasingly however, it has also included corrugated metals, local stones, fired-clay bricks, and concrete.

Significantly, those aspects of the buildings that may be thought of as pervaded by conversions of European aesthetic forms (whether as a translation from one material form to another, or from one location to another of a fixed typology) was achieved in the almost total absence of a tradition either of architectural model-making or of architectural drawing. For this reason it holds additional interest for this study. It raises the question of how to understand a mode of intellectual transmission and its mechanisms of innovation, in terms that do justice to the complex cultural products which arise from this process, while maintaining the recognition that this transmission, like many other aspects of the culture of southeastern Nigeria, is a largely (but by no means exclusively) oral one.

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7 North America and South America

8 Such for example as the nature of its improvisatory process, and of the mental notation which aids architectural memory.
And, since it has been recently suggested that the oral transmission of architectural ideas has always been practiced, even in European Renaissance cultures which existed at the time when the portable drawing rose to supremacy as the primary mode of architectural information (Rykwert [1982]), an opportunity exists here to engage much broader geographic and temporal issues. For, what is obviously not preserved for the European Renaissance context are the mechanisms through which stylistic evolution is operated when orality is the primary form by which architectural culture is conveyed.

In the relatively recent context of turn of the century southeastern Nigeria, the research project which supports this dissertation was challenged by the difficulty of identifying written documents which would illuminate the mechanism of an historically oral culture: consequently the project was faced with the same problem from which other researches have turned away, and for which they have tended instead towards an ethnography of customary architecture, or a history of European Colonial-administration buildings. This difficulty certainly does have implications for the kind of knowledge constituted. What these implications are will have been discussed by the end of the following chapter, with regard especially to the scope of the work and the methodology applied.

Orality and Architectural Character
For the present, it may be important to mention at the very outset, and as a compliment to the previous comment regarding the stylistic variegation of the sample of buildings, that the commonality of a new patronage (or at least the challenge presented to an existing order by the rise of a new class of
patron) seems to underlie the reality into which these buildings were inserted. They were produced, in other words, within the milieu of larger, transformative communities, which were often in keen rivalry with each other, and some of whose ascendant leaders were ostensibly seeking to divorce themselves from identification with ancestral African cultures whilst others sought a modernity within a nevertheless more conservationist ideology. It therefore does not come as a surprise to discover that this architecture is stylistically distinct from what may be assumed to have been the traditional architectures of the areas in which they are located. Yet, though based on some knowledge of Western architectural traditions, many of them bear only an approximate resemblance to the European models, including some European colonial architecture, with which the carpenters and masons who built them could have been acquainted. They reflect, moreover, an aesthetics of assemblage which are of a distinctly local derivation, even if they (the buildings’ assemblage-junctions for example) appear curious today when considered seriously for the first time. Thus, one of the issues of the many that are worthy of address, is the question to what extent the specific character of the architecture may be attributed to the very nature of an architectural practice that retains the elements of an orality, and of the kinds of improvisation that such orality makes possible.

* When one assumes knowledge of what traditional architecture is, we must remind ourselves that the evidence of traditionality in this context has a brief time depth. The problem is of course that the so-called 'traditional', and architecture which predates the Colonial period, is only accessed through the forms in which it existed in the Colonial period itself, and in which it was first documented. The Igbo mbari (Cole [1982]), as we are able to know it, is recognized in Owerri Igboland as definitively traditional, even though it may in all likelihood be barely older as tradition than any of the buildings which form the focus of this dissertation. Tradition, in the sense of great time depth, spanning over a century say, may be applicable to architecture therefore, if we are referring say to the materials of construction generally, and possibly to the technologies of construction. It is probably inaccurate, despite the knowledge that contemporary communities may want to offer to the contrary, to extend the idea of tradition to architectural style.
Writing Difficulties, Proliferated Typologies, and the Absence of Name.

The building use-types in which these changing orders are observed is not limited. Rather, they range from the Church building (in this period a new building type) and the women's associational meeting house, to the men's clubhouse and the local domestic or clan-group temple-house. The architectural transformation therefore does not appear to be restricted to the boundaries either of the institution (such as a village temple), which may be seen as the repository of tradition, nor of the new concerns such as the Church building or the private house, of which we may think the entry of modernity.

For these reasons many interesting questions arise, not all of which can be considered here. However, the present writer has been interested in understanding how the buildings came to be erected; the kinds of cultural negotiation that would have confronted their owners in creating the structures (a sort of critical history of architectural aesthetics); why we have little scholarship on them as a group (neither Africans themselves nor Westerners show much interest in them at the present); and why those which have been studied are granted this possibility only because, it seemed to take less effort to project a European origin on to them than to imagine them as being of Africa. Such buildings have thus been easily absorbed into the determined identity of an assertive Western dispersal over an alien landscape; into, that is, the continued elaboration of Western self-representation.

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10 The question of the role women played in building (women certainly were the prime decorators and ornamenters of architecture), and of how this may have changed in the early twentieth century, is for example touched upon in many specific instances (especially where it seems indicated that women may have been aesthetically more progressive than men were), but is not addressed consistently through the work.
To answer the questions proffered in the previous paragraph, and to offer some correctives, one must nevertheless in practice limit the study to an attempt at understanding only a small number of previously unresearched buildings located on the near coastal southeastern section of present day Nigeria. These buildings nevertheless sustain a challenge to the self reflective notions mentioned previously. These houses and mansions, church buildings and temples, and some of their interiors, all extending over a varied field of possible stylistic categories, are then clearly yet to find their appropriate architectural labels. We are thus not able to commence, as is normal in the dissertation form with an introductory statement which being constructed around a recognized (if unresearched) object of study may start in the following manner: "In the late seventeenth century, the Damascene mosque..." or "Christopher Wren’s designs for St. Paul’s Cathedral.." in which even the first line clearly articulates a known object (Damascus in the 17th C, the typology Mosque; Wren, St. Paul’s) and a cluster of things and associations taken for granted.

11 Some work has been done on these kinds of buildings in Yorubaland (south western Nigeria), and in some French speaking coastal areas in the Cameroons, and in the Cote d’Ivoire, and this partly justifies the basis of the delimitation employed for this particular project.

12 In the case of St. Paul’s for example, these would include Baroque architecture, its relationship to Renaissance architecture, English interpretations of the Baroque, Charles II, Christopher Wren as scientist, the Fire of London, the birth of architectural model making, Hawksmoor and Vanburgh, ‘Romanist!’, and the office of Surveyor. The subject (and producer) of knowledge in these instances is of course the art or architecture historian. It is not meant to imply that a knowledge of which the latter have as yet no access, is necessarily absent from the community in which the buildings on which the dissertation focuses exist (local histories, even of an architectural kind, certainly exist, as the Ameke Okoye epic --with which the chapter opened-- and other less artistic narrative forms discovered in the research process, seem to indicate). Rather, the present writer means to suggest that much of this work of historical reconstruction has yet to be taken to (or done within) the academy, in the particular form in which it is found acceptable within its spaces of knowledge production.
To take such a direct approach here is only possible by employing long-winded designations, which, to make matters worse, defines its object only negatively, by means of what the object is not, rather than by naming what it is. The object must then be approached indirectly, traversing what is a social history of the architectural culture in which the referent buildings were produced, in order (after we have understood them well) finally to name them, if indeed by that time such a goal is still of any import.

In that instance the name emerges, amongst other things, only towards the end, and as such that goal cannot form the bulk of knowledge investigated here, only its possible conclusion. The ultimate set of objects, to which access may be had through a probe into the culture of architecture and its production consists therefore of the range of mentalities of the peoples of southeastern Nigeria, as the place and the mentalities of its people underwent a moment of intense turmoil and transition. That is, we concentrate on the historical moment when one observes a disjunction that is political in the first place, but that results in a revolution at the levels of social action, including the institutions within which architecture is produced, and of the institution of architecture itself.

In architecture, the difference which this transformation engendered is observed in a change in the pedagogy within which builders are produced, as well as in a change in the techniques of construction and in the materials thought usable and/or appropriate for building. Further, the client group (in our contemporary sense) for whom the buildings we will investigate were built now includes, groups distinct from
those for whom the so-called traditional buildings were produced. These new patrons consisted of individuals and groups who newly had access to what at the time would have been still-consolidating non-traditional power centers. Many of these patrons were moreover often not in the direct service or employment of the colonial administration; when they were in such direct service, they often functioned in a manner quite at odds with, and independent from, the expectations (and procedural assumptions) that their European bureaucratic superiors may have imagined was recognized as appropriate of the office held. These new patrons were furthermore often involved in a power struggle with the older ‘traditional’ authorities, a struggle in which architecture may have been ceased upon as a discernible index of the will to triumph: a struggle about and around which architecture became the visible form.

It is important, given this work’s previously unresearched subject, to leave open the possibility of a meaningful critique by others of how these struggles are interpreted here. For this reason, the location from which one takes an intellectual interest in the above mentioned struggle, and in its representation in architecture, must of course be specified. So also must be located the field of architecture

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13 It should be mentioned however that a wide ranging mixture of building types becomes therefore involved. Moreover, the investigation does not restrict itself to one patron group such as the Warrant Chiefs, in which a sort of parallel history to Afigbo’s well documented and beautifully analytical unfolding of the period might have been possible. A different dynamic does however drive architectural production, and its boundaries cannot be expected to be contained by a single and particular political category. The challenge then has been how to narrate such a history in the context of the separation that tends to exist between the history of the mission, the history of the early colonial administration, and the history of the judicial system.

14 This might for example include Aladura (the Cherubim and Seraphim Church), an African Church whose liturgy though based on the Catholic form, incorporates many elements and details from traditional Yoruba religion (Peel [1968]).
to which the dissertation's object here is related even if only approximately. Further, all this must be achieved within a larger, more general, and yet more specifically southeast Nigerian context.

These issues are engaged in a preliminary manner later in the chapter. They will also arise again, and more elaborately, in a subsequent chapter. One indicates then that their importance to the study is recognized, and that they will play a central role at many points in the text. For the moment however, beyond a sense that the intersection of old and new forms of architecture, and of architectural culture, are involved, the circumstance does make it difficult at the onset to be any more specific about what the dissertation's primary focus becomes. This is not in order to appear mysterious, but because it is not possible at this juncture to proceed (as would normally be the case), with inserting the work within a field of scholarship concerned with other closely related buildings. The contours of this field are after all what the work will strive to map; a field that is marked, moreover, by the absence of a specific group of closely related inquiries into which the work might fit. Neither the architecture itself then, nor the institutional cultures within which they emerged have been the subject of any extended scholarship concerned with architecture historical development as such. Instead, the majority of previous work which has focused in and around the same general area, has preferred to remain (as will become evident later on) within the sphere of those kinds of building which appear secure within one assumedly stable culture or another, or within the mentality of one stable era or another.

In West Africa generally, and in southern Nigeria in particular, there is reason to be surprised by this tendency
to conform to such restrictive boundaries in architectural scholarship, given the critical historiographic questions still encountered here by historians of sub-Saharan polity, the solution of which is of import to the growth of historical studies in West Africa. As a result of such a fear of straying, analysts are for example still at a loss to understand (or to convince that they understand in any depth) why a more severe form of cultural disintegration than what did obtain in the region’s modern era (whose beginnings coincide with, but do not necessarily owe their being to the British occupation), has been avoided right up to the present. How have Efik or Izhon people retained their sense of identity in the modern world, and separate from Ibibio or Igbo people in the absence of many of the ‘traditional’ elements of their culture by which one might once have essentially defined them?

15 Writers who have attempted, if inadequately, to understand ‘non-traditional’ culture to the degree that it is connected in real terms to its own past (and in the categories listed) include Janheinz’s Muntu: African Culture and the Western World (1961). In art history, Jean Kennedy’s New Currents, Ancient Rivers (Washington D.C., 1993), certainly takes the break for granted "...old ways have died", even though she is interested in the many ways the contemporary artist since about 1960 has tried to engineer reconnections with past heritages. Thus, one may still identify her work with that of Marshall Mount (see African Art: The years since 1920: Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1973), whose period of study, commencing in the 1920s, is closer to the one covered in this dissertation.

Recognizing that to an extent the idea of modernity, globally speaking, has inherent within it a break from the immediate past (which break is of course steadily recovered by critical scholarship subsequently), the popular assumption seems to be that modern African culture is well nigh disconnected from its pre-Colonial forms in ways that are dissimilar to Europe’s own experience of modernity in her expansionist period. Thus, the Colonial and Post Colonial forms it assumes somehow lacks the authenticity of its Traditional precursors, in a manner that is not directed at the products of European modernism. Rarely, today, as far as I can tell, does the question of authenticity continue to be directed at artifacts of modern Europe. The fact however that such questions were once constantly raised in modernity’s European moment of arising, by as diverse a set of people as Jean Jacques Rousseau and Frederich Nietzsche, points to the surprising range of possibilities that exist for the anachronicization of Africa.

16 Izhon is usually written as Ijo or Ijaw in earlier texts. The spelling used in this text is latterly favored by indigenous scholars, as it fits more closely the vocalization of the term in the local language.
Interestingly, the apparent unconcern amongst Africanist historians and writers on culture with understanding the mechanics of early twentieth-century socio-cultural transformation in Africa, obtains across many of the sub-disciplines of the humanities. Often one senses that a writer, or area of scholarship, seems at a loss when called upon to explain such transformations from the inside; from the location, for example, of the south-easterner himself or herself. One, that is, might recognize the phenomenon\(^\text{17}\) as much within general historical discourse\(^\text{18}\), as in cultural history\(^\text{19}\), the history of art, of architecture\(^\text{20}\), and of aesthetics and intellectual thought (Ifemesia [1979]), implying (erroneously), that the period immediately following the occupation of southeastern Nigeria by Europeans and their agents, is one that has been well understood. It is suggested

\(^{17}\) The absence of detailed, processorial knowledge, and of its contingent explanatory power.

\(^{18}\) See Afigbo (1981), Orji (1991). Of the last author for example, despite the apparent detail in which the history of the people in whom he is interested (the Ngwa) is presented, one finds that from the Ngwa perspective the reader is presented with a generalized history (quite at odds with the individualized roles and histories of the European participants in that historical unfolding). The absence of a real grasp on the historical mechanics from the location of the south easterner, renders such a history of little use as a necessary background to an architectural history such as is attempted here. Moreover, especially if one excepts political histories like those referenced above, scholars seem to focus their interest on recovering the ‘lost paradise’ of pre-colonial history (Ifemesia [1979]), to the almost total exclusion of an application of similar rigor to the local histories of the colonial period. In the rare instances where the transition period has been subject to an investigation, the focus has, as already suggested, been on the history of the nation state, or of its agents (Isichei [1973], Afigbo [1972]). There are, for example no detailed histories of the rise of a modern south east Nigerian business or merchant class in the period between 1880 and 1945, which history would have contributed much to a study such as this one. What comes closest to this (see Fibresima [1990]) turns out to be little more than a collection of biographies from which one gets only a glimpse of the historical complexity that would have existed.

\(^{19}\) This aspect is obviously a legacy of early 20th century anthropology’s non-dialectical characterizations of Africa’s many cultures.

\(^{20}\) This of course will be the aspect with which the dissertation is concerned. The discussion with relation to the history of architecture is entered into in more detail in Chapter 1.
here instead, that a critical recovery of this period is generally non-existent despite new foci on the post-colonial, and that it might in fact be much more difficult than is assumed to operate such recovery.

Sustained understandings of the actual processes experienced by most of the region’s ethnic groups in their separate transitions to modernity are thus still awaited in other words, and quite critically because they would hold the key to asserting that as these cultures became modern, they at the same time neither lost themselves in the process, nor acquired any attitude that might lead one to regard its products as inauthentic. Such an understanding would explain,

\[\text{21} \quad \text{Of course the framing of a ‘transition to modernity’ is problematic, as is the every granting of a uniqueness to the nineteenth and early twentieth century co-optation of this term for describing its own experience. However, this problem is not unique to African studies, but in fact is increasingly recognized as such by scholars of European and American history and culture. Entry into a debate on the critical theory of twentieth century Modernity, prior to involvement with the dissertations subject matter is however not practicable. To the extent that this issue is addressed here, it emerges in the exploration itself. Provisionally then, the reader is asked to at least accept that after the mid nineteenth century, the rise of new social forms of culture arise at a global level, and that regardless of how one names this phenomena, it is linked to industrialization, and the mechanics that had to be in place in order for this internationalized productive mode to be sustained. Of course, the African experience of this unfolding, quite simultaneous with its European and American parallels, is rarely recognized, and engaged. Certainly Appiah’s (1992:104) understanding of J.E. Wiredu’s writing on tradition and development in Africa accords with the present writer’s view: ‘...Modernization is not "unthinkingly jettisoning" traditional ways of thought and adopting foreign habits, rather it is a process in which "Africans, along with all other peoples, seek to attain a specifically human destiny."’}\]

\[\text{22} \quad \text{The terms modern and modernity have of course not been regarded as unproblematic, especially when applied to the African context (Robbins [1989].). Many scholars, some of them Africanists themselves, remain unpersuaded as Soyinka (1988 [1993]) and others lament, by the possibility that an African material-cultural constellation can, without apologetics, be simultaneously modern, and authentic of Africa (Bermann op. cit., Willet [1971: 254]). Indeed reference to recent, critically regarded, European and American literature on modernity in art and in architecture (by which is meant the visual qualities of objects or representations that are accepted as modern) might appear to be of little relevance to what is termed modern in this dissertation. Such non-relevance may, however, indicate the narrow discursive terrain in which scholars of modernism have operated, and not the actuality of modernity in the 20th century. The use of ‘modern’ here refers to the visual changes which are observed to occur in the aesthetics of art and of architecture as explored in this work, but without any (continued...)}\]
especially from the inside out, how such a transition is possible without a loss in the flux, of the basis of cultural identity and distinctiveness. This explanation would also have to persuade that the 'Last of the Africans' notion and its attendant formulations of authenticity, are illegitimate'. Moreover, such persuasion would have to hold in regard to culture generally, but more importantly for this dissertation's focus, must be valid for certain limited spheres in which culturality is manifested and of which building practice is an example.

It seems clear that the transitions that did occur in southeastern Nigerian turn-of-the-century worlds must have involved local intellectual reorientations, socio-cultural shifts and ideological subversions (we remember that we speak in a context of Colonialism and European occupation), but all engineered within a frame that is recognizably Igbo, or Izhon, Efik or Ibibio. The lack of access to their transitional mechanisms results primarily from the difficulty of finding locally produced written discourse, documents and records that...

\[\text{\textsuperscript{22}}(...)\text{continued}\]

insistence that such an aesthetic universe be understood as singular. That is, it is not the present writer's interest to assert an African Modernism; simply to suggest that modernity arises in southeastern Nigeria at the same moment as it does in Europe and in America, that modernity has no universal aesthetic, and that European modernity implicates African modernity as a hidden text (the Africa to Europe axis of modernity is of course much more apparent in European art history (Leighten [], Torgovnick [], (Rubin et al []), though the fact of a reverse process (of a Europe to Africa vector), which had an equally significant impact on the formal language of African art in the early century, is rarely addressed, Jones [1937], Cole [1982] and Jenkins [1985] being the few exceptions. More recent art that indicates a partial absorption of European visual codes in the post 1950s era, sometimes known as 'popular art', of course lacks no scholarly interest (Fabian & Stombati-Fabian [1976], Brett [1986]. However, this art is a product of a much later process, a late-modernism perhaps, than is the phenomenon referred to here.).

\[\text{\textsuperscript{23}}\] This must stem from more than our sense of disbelief that anyone could today imagine cultural change as a phenomenon that represents the vanishing of Africans.
would otherwise provide both markers and indices of the changing mentalité, as they also offer convenient analytic points of entry\textsuperscript{24}.

A critical gap may thus be recognized in the terrain of desire\textsuperscript{25} of historical knowledge within the broader discipline of cultural studies in which African history plays a central role. This gap seems to be recognized for example by Anglo-Nigerian historian Elizabeth Isichei (whose general critical histories of the Igbo cover the same geographic territory as does this dissertation's architecture historical work). Isichei was prompted to lament the existence of an important disjunction in our attempt to comprehend the modern moment here. She was of the opinion that a better understanding is needed of the processes involving the Igbo person (and by extension other Africans) of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, in his, her, or their responsive shifts in viewing the world (faced as Igbos were by the need for an intellectual coming to terms with, and control of, the demands of a progressively internationalized life)\textsuperscript{26}. That is, while the material evidence is available by which to track the transformations engendered by the creative experience of modernity as invented here, a proper understanding of how the

\textsuperscript{24} Such material might seem difficult to imagine, but is well illustrated for examplethe unfortunately too rarely surviving letter from African community-heads and chiefs to either a European royal court or to the European missionary headquarters. The protest sent by Jaja of Opobo for example seems to contain much that may be of value in pursuing this possibility, not the least because its halting English suggests the authors immersion well in the interior of his own culture, had one many more examples of such texts over time.

\textsuperscript{25} Indicated, for example, in what kinds of research project are proposed within the academy; by what knowledge is in other words sought by both students of African history and by their teachers.

\textsuperscript{26} See Isichei (1976) pp 111-115. which opens quite accurately with the statement that 'No aspect of Igbo history is more difficult to recover than the history of ideas.'
changes were viewed and modified from the local perspective" is hardly ever apparent".

The acuteness of the problem is perhaps best illustrated in the writing of another eminent historian, Francis Ekechi, who, working in the same geographical area as Isichei, has produced quite detailed histories of Christianity in Igbo-speaking Nigeria". Though himself Igbo, and though a number of living Igbo informants contribute the information they are able to from memory, the overwhelming reliance is on archival material produced by Europeans in the course of missioning, trading or colonial administration. The voice we therefore hear in reading much Igbo history, as is true of southern Nigerian historiography generally, does unfortunately remain an ironically European one. In fact, at many critical moments (such as the period of the anti-tax Women's War of 1929) the account that is available is one in which, generally speaking, the African narrator remains eerily silent".

As an aside, and a clarification, it should be noted however, that the text here does not intend to use architectural historiography as an instrumental means to societal analysis. That is, this enquiry is not meant to be simply a cultural history through one of the products of culture. Certainly, it admits that architecture has a degree of autonomy, and that much about its particular history may not be easily connected to the history of society. Rather, in focusing on architectural history in detail, it is assumed that aspects of social history become illuminated in the process, and perhaps in more profound ways than if this other history were the center of our focus.

Recently within the disciplines of colonial urban history, this is increasingly recognized (King ) and acknowledged, though with little sign that the author himself sees the possibility that even his own project might include this aspect, without necessarily waiting for the native scholar to take this up himself or herself.


In Ekechi's ([1989] op. cit: 167-168) description of the anti colonial-government women's revolt of 1929 for example, the documentation from the Nigerian National Archives (Enugu Branch) on which he relies is, even when written by an Igbo person, is nevertheless typically directed at the Colonial administration itself (written for their consumption as it were). This destination largely explains
To overcome such problems, particularly in the realm of the study of artifacts, is in part what this dissertation attempts to address. The possibility of surmounting these problems is premised on the notion that architecture (extant buildings or photographs of such buildings where the thing itself has ceased to exist) more than most other forms of artefact, artwork included, represents the condensation of a comparatively wide range of socially reproductive categories. The history of any building's becoming would necessarily include categories such as social organization [group to individual modes of interaction are mapped in spatial structures of buildings], aesthetic mentalities [architectural style], production structures [the organization of construction], and capital accumulation and distribution [who paid for the building, and how they acquired the means to do so]. The history of a building, or of building as such, constitutes a unique interface of intellectual, ideological, cultural, and manual labor (both socialized and individuated). It should therefore be possible that (even in the absence of contemporary documents created around the private and public processes involved in the realization of any architectural project) a historicized analysis of a set of related buildings will yield much information useful for a valid interpretation.

30(...continued)

the fact that these documents survived. As such therefore it comes weighted with a particular discursive bent which other kinds of text (from one Igbo person to another, on the same occurrence) may not have included.

Indeed, the most vivid account of the events that surround the war and its actual 'waging' is in the pages of Raymond Clough's *Oil Rivers Trader*, London, C. Hurst and Company, 1972. The writer is an Englishman who clearly lived through these events, and may not have been able to publish his memories for posterity (as have not many of the women involved) had it not been for the support his project received from an English scholar friend J.D. Fage (see Clough's 'Acknowledgement').

One would give much to a similar non pre-destined document narrating the same event, and which may have been circulated between women in the affected communities (of course an unlikely find, give that most women at the time would not have been literate).
of the buildings in question, and for better understanding the larger society in which it was produced. In other words, it may be possible to read buildings both as locally scripted self-reflexive text, and as 'document', especially where (as seems to be the case here) for the localities themselves, architecture is created with the intention that it function as text". Our attempt, then, to read these buildings as texts need not be seen as original. What the dissertation does bring to the contemplation of these buildings (how this particular reading departs from the way in which the culture itself may have encouraged its audience to read), is the determination to achieve a critical reading from a frame that, truth be told, is significantly constituted by a Western intellectual tradition. As critical reading then, and one moreover that is conscious of the inadequacy of a purely semiotic approach, the inquiry does not remain at the surface of the object. It does not even linger on the dispositions of the building’s internal partitions, regardless of the tendency for the latter to become the location where, for a building’s 'author', the user is typically expected to derive a structure’s socio-architectural meaning". Instead, because it is recognized here that the rendering of transparency to spatial disposition often makes meaning deceptively accessible, the investigation

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31 This architectural idea is elaborated in detail in a subsequent chapter.

32 Without getting too complex at this early stage, knowledge of one’s own experience of entering a building, or the study of this process as it occurs for another person or group of persons, is what is referred to. Such knowledge is, for example, enacted in understanding as one enters a building that a space acts as a reception, that there are certain behaviors appropriate to this space (including for example not transiting certain spatial demarcators without the sanction of a 'receptionist'). Even the process of becoming familiar with the same building, realizing with more use of it that there are other ways into the building that by-pass the reception, count in this scheme as knowledge of (and about) the architectural object. Specifically societal meaning in this same situation would for example include the possibility that one may sense the hierarchical position of an individual within the organization that occupies any such building based on their location within the network of the buildings internal spaces. For work specifically related to the subject of space and meaning, see Hillier and Hanson (1984), Bernstein (1975), and Steadman (1983).
adds to these valuable clues by stepping behind these 
surfaces, now speaking metaphorically of course, in order to 
understand the mechanisms of their production. Any such 
reading yields, it is hoped, a more legitimate interpretation 
than can otherwise be asserted.

With reference to Isichei’s lament in particular, it is 
fortunate then to have in southeastern Nigeria, an abundance 
of buildings which are neither customary nor Colonial-style”, 
and which are conceived, executed and owned by Africans in 
precisely the transitional period for which we lack 
significant amounts of written documents. In this 
dissertation, there is found an attempt to recognize the 
documentary status of these buildings, to recognize their 
peculiar voice, and to enable the shattering of the historical 
silence not only of non-customary Efik, Igbo, Izhon, and 
Ibibio-Ejagham architecture in the universe of architectural 
historiography, but also (as an added bonus) of the 
communities of Nd’Igbo” and the other southeastern Nigerian 
ethnic groups just mentioned, in the written historical 
discourses on this period.

METHODOLOGY AND ITS DIFFICULTIES

The Archive

Though Nigeria’s national archive at Enugu, as well as other 
archives in Britain, France, Switzerland and the United 
States, hold documentation that has been of relevance to the 
study, it was not surprising to find that those which were

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33 Many readers might challenge the claim, understanding by such terms a usage more normal than is 
admitted here. However, the naturalized understanding of such terms and meanings is partly what this 
dissertation in fact contests in places.

34 Igbos as a group... literally Igbo people, or the Igbo ethnicity.
Consulted were rarely specifically architectural. In fact, in most instances when specifically architecture/building related material was found, say as occurred one day at the Nigerian National Archive at Enugu or at the Church Missionary Society’s archive in London, the discovery often came as a surprise, with nothing in the archive list indicating that a particular set of files might turn up such specifically useful material.

Having said this, it should be pointed out that the idea of the public archive of written documents is, in any case, not one that emerges from local southeastern Nigerian culture. As a result, most of what is deposited in them is of a governmental nature. Few individuals and private organizations would have deposited material in these state owned archives, and few funded projects since Kenneth Dike’s brave but ultimately limited attempt, have added any material to them that derives from independent local sources. Material that may today have been useful for historical research, has, by dint of remaining in the hands of individuals, either been thrown away or abandoned and lost in the upheavals of the Nigerian civil war. Nevertheless, there were a few examples dating back to 1923 (in one instance) and to 1932 (in another) from privately held records, to indicate that the idea of the

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35 Other kinds of archives were lost during this war of course, including institutional archives belonging to universities, and to organizations such as churches and associations, which losses have dealt a serious blow to the possibility of reconstructing the history from documents in this period. See for example G.O.M. Tasie’s ‘War & Records: An "In Memoriam" and Preliminary Survey of Materials for the Study of African Church History Destroyed During the Nigerian Civil War’, Journal of Niger Delta Studies vol 1, No.3, 1978-1981. Here, Tasie indicates for example that documents such as Preacher’s books and church committee meeting minutes, for Anglican communities in a long list of places including the towns of Awka, Bende, Brass, Calabar, Degema, Okigwe, Onitsha, and Opobo, were lost in this war. The church histories of each one of these towns enter into this dissertation, and thus such an archive may have yielded critical information. Certainly, the one Preacher’s book from a private archive that the present writer had access to yielded critical information about one of the buildings explored later on (a church building at Mobi), which church would have been more difficult to know in its absence.
recording of events for posterity, and of conserving these within an informal family archive was natural to many individuals and communities at a particular historical moment. Often, these took the form of family photographs, but also of letters, diaries and other forms of document.

This fact however created (and creates) its own problems. The dispersed nature of this private archive, often meant that a separate negotiation had to be entered upon on every occasion, in order to be granted access to the documentation. An immense amount of time is consumed in this process. It might be easier for the traditional historian of the West to imagine this process as not unlike having to go through the gathering of references, documents and an identity card of a sort, for each file one wanted access to in any national archive, rather than obtaining one entry pass which gives access to all the material held. Even more difficult, to continue the analogy, is the fact that referees may not be replicated in this context, so that access to each separate ‘file’ not only requires a ‘letter of recommendation’ each time, but furthermore the reference ‘letter’ has to come from a different referee in order to be admitted to the ‘files’ on each separate occasion. This adds up to a necessity for a larger pool of recommenders than is ‘normal’, which fact clearly makes for a slower progress, unless that is, one chooses (and realizes) that this process in itself forms a valid part of the object of the research, and ought not be treated as if it were contingent.

In one memorable instance in the Okigwe area of Enugu State for example, the owner of a building whose appearance was seductively original, and which building would undoubtedly have played a significant role in this work, refused to answer
any of the writer's questions, declined to indicate the date of the building's construction, and disallowed the photographing of the building. The only condition on which this owner would respond agreeably to any of the researcher's requests being (according to him) were I to be introduced to him by someone who obviously knew me well, and with whom at the same time he (the building owner) just so happened to also be well acquainted. When it was pointed out that it was not possible to proceed in this manner in perhaps more than one or two out of about thirty buildings, given the number of buildings that needed to be reviewed in order to facilitate the project, he simply shrugged his apology.

On being apprised of this story (especially on learning that the owner appeared to have some formal education and experience of state bureaucratic life), and of the fact that this individual at Okigwe was therefore not likely by that behavior to be revealing a superstitious fear of strangers, others commented that this indicated the nature of the problem encountered in southern Nigerian historiography: the impossibility of the cold detachment of the archive. According to another person the resistance offered by the Okigwe owner was only an indication that underlying any of the buildings relevant to the study and which belonged not to an association or to an organization but rather to an individual, was a history with some unsavory content. The suggestion was that the resistance to historical investigation arises from two misgivings. The first one is that the researcher was an agent of the government 'Probe', seeking

*This opinion was not necessarily offered in a manner to suggest that this was desirable. In fact, it appeared to be directed at the hope that the researcher might realize that here, the historian, like the anthropologist, could hardly get away with somehow being detached from the realities and problems of the society under study. He seemed also to derive some pleasure from the knowledge that this is a difficulty that would force the necessity of negotiating on me.
recompense so many years after the event, for funds that may have been taken illegally from the state, including rather ridiculously what may have been taken from the colonial state. The second misgiving is the one which suspects that the supposed research was actually a private plot (by an as yet unspecified adversary) to sully the good name of families that have since, a generation or two later, become amongst the more highly respected in their communities.

Having said this, it must nevertheless be stated (returning to the question of the archive) that written documents form the smaller part of the sources from which is constructed the historiography represented by the dissertation. The cultures of southeastern Nigeria are constituted by orality, to the extent that even in the literate present, writing functions within society in a way that is distinct from its operation in scripto-centric Western cultures. That is, the widespread presence and use of writing and reading by itself does not now appear to transform the modalities of communication in all cultures similarly; writing here appears to have been appropriated into the oral, inverting Europe’s own experience in which the literosity engendered by writing took over and re-ordered the oral universe.37

37 In Walter J. Ong (1982), and especially in the fourth chapter ‘Writing Restructures Consciousness’, Ong seems to believe that writing necessarily subsumes orality, as seem to think most writers on the subject. However, this idea seems born out of theoretical work centered on European culture, in which, for example the epic narratives of Homer, textualized by the time of the emergence of Greek civilization, is recognized as deriving from oral tradition (Kirk [1976]). Though such a view of Homer is itself under attack (Miller [c1982]), the recognition survives that the development of European culture involved the conquest by writing of the landscape of the oral. It seems possible that this may not be a universal principle. African cultures for one, have, even with the presence of writing much more than it could have been for Europe until the modern industrialized age, shown little of a tendency to be reconstituted by writing in the manner that this seems to have occurred in Europe. Indeed it may not be too far fetched to suggest that for Nigerian culture generally speaking, oral culture is fast regaining the ground it lost to literary culture during the European occupation.
Much in the dissertation therefore relies on the archive both of an oral literature (recorded and transcribed by others) and of oral narration and oral histories by those from whom information was sought.

In the collection of such information, the tape recorder might appear an obvious research aid. However, this has rarely proved to be so. Given the nature of the object under discussion, there was, as already indicated, enough reason for distrust to exist at some level between the researcher and the indigenous narrator. Unfortunately, in the pursuing of a particular historical trail, occasion rarely called for becoming sufficiently acquainted with any one informant for an appropriate level of trust to develop. In such situations, requests that the conversation be recorded were generally declined. However, in a number of instances when this level of trust did develop, it was clear that the nature of the conversation was skewed by the presence of the mechanical aid. And, not simply in the sense that subjects became more measured in what they said. Rather, it was observed that the subject was motivated by the tape recorder’s presence to, in one extreme case, return continually to the subject of the amazing feat that technology performed—the machine all the while recording this conversation about itself—to the detriment of the topic at hand.

The decision was therefore made early on not to record interview sessions. Instead, interview sessions were attended in the presence of another person\(^3\), who was encouraged to listen intently, and if possible also to take notes. At the

\(^3\) For many of the most notable and memorable interviews, the present writer was accompanied by the artist and art historian, Uche Okeke of the Assele Institute at Nimo, who had kindly agreed to accompany the present writer on a number of his research visits.
earliest opportunity, which tended to average two weeks after the interview, the notes were 'transcribed'. The transcription attempts to recreate the real-time conditions of the interview itself. Firstly, a description of the room in which the interview was held is made, including those present in the room, and where each person was seated during the interview. The interview transcript itself, is written moreover in the form of a screenplay. That is, each speaker is given a separate line on which to enunciate, as if in the text for a play. This text follows rigidly the structure of the notes, which are themselves drafted to include the sequence of key words from the conversation. In transcribing from the notes and from memory, the proviso was that such key words must be connected logically and narratively, for any given section of a transcript to become acceptable for use, and for any assumption to be made that the conversation so transcribed has been reproduced with anything near the accuracy of the actual and complete series of words (and pauses) spoken.

As experience was gained in this process, it became clear that it still was possible to make such a transcription even several months after the notes were taken. And yet, it also became clear that in many ways, forcing this narrative to cohere with the notes, revived a memory, taste and context of the interview, which the tape recording itself was not always able to evoke⁹. In many ways, that is, the transcription made in this way seems more authentic for inscribing in the memory those things that were unspoken in any context, and which

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⁹ This results in all likelihood from the fact that with a tape recorder on, the researcher relies on this machine to act as his or her memory, turning his or her attention to the structure, continuity and logical coherence of the conversation at hand, with the result that much of the texture and taste of the encounter is not recognizable to the same degree.
things therefore are impossible for the tape recorder to capture.

The text thus produced was, when the situation allowed, then given to both the person interviewed, and to the temporary co-researcher, for any comment; for any omissions, or suggestions as to things said, but which may have been transcribed by the present writer in a way that does not capture the spirit in which a statement might have been said or intended. Such 'corrections' were included in considering the transcript before any aspects of the interview information became incorporated into the main body of the dissertation's discourse.

In a way therefore, some aspects of the project amount to commentary on text that is generated by the author. That is, the dissertation may also be seen as a comment by an author on self-generated text. There may therefore be reason to be critical of its validity in the sense that the material studied is not the history of a set of buildings at all, but represents instead the author's self-insertion as object of his own study. However, because the project is not a project in the study of oral literature, much more than the accuracy of speech units and rhythm is involved in producing useful records. Moreover because the oral material is not part of a bounded, demarcated performance, but instead is one whose boundaries are produced situationally, it was judged as indicated earlier that tape-recording produced a boundary of the speakable which appeared much less useful.
A Summary of the chapters

A number of different ways of ordering the writing of this dissertation appear possible, given the nature of the material collected, the constraints they impose on a traditional historical writing, and the extent to which the buildings themselves, remaining extant or long since gone, were able to contribute to the project. Given especially the comment made earlier about the absence of voice in historical reconstructions on any subject of southeast Nigerian origin, one writing possibility could structure the text largely through the changes in the narrative voice represented in the documentary evidence itself. That is, it seemed possible to start with aspects of the history in which only the European voice has, as it were, survived through time intact, even where reportage was of the speech of Africans interpreted and translated into English. One might then move on from there to the early known examples of African scripted letters and diaries written in a halting English (or other European language), no matter how little might be the insight they give into specifically architectural matters. Next would then follow a section constructed around documents written by those indigenes who first had command of the English language, particularly when (as was the case say with missionaries) they may have been involved with building schools and churches.

Finally, would then be the staging of an entry into the world both of the recorded oral tradition, and of the interviews conducted by the writer, with those individuals whose memory stretches back to the later part of the period under consideration. This ordering, as well as its construction, seemed credible given that as evidence they coincide somewhat with the historical progression of the development of the architectural styles. However, this possibility, attractive
as it seemed for many reasons, was abandoned largely because of a realization that nothing approaching a useful consistency in the rate of the survival of the documentation was to be discovered across the varied types of evidence. Such unevenness demanded a much more flexible and inventive approach to writing, than does the initial structure imagined.

Another possibility was to utilize a somewhat typological approach, in which the progress of the writing would be structured according either to identified building types (churches, schools and houses say) or according to kinds of patron (former slave-dealer, native-court clerk, blacksmith, warrant chief, pastor, or trader) especially because it seemed that each patron group had a preference for a particular 'look', around which clusters of architectural style appeared identifiable. Moreover in each such possible typological ordering, knowledge which in itself was revelatory appeared to be generated. In spite of this advantage however, such a structure often made it more difficult to identify erroneous interpretations, because this would be typically produced beyond the histories themselves which govern the interrelations among the artifacts. Therefore, even though typology, and typological comparison was used in the text to raise important questions, it was left to a historical reconstruction to ask such questions within the scope and validity allowed by a historiographic frame.

Consequently, while a recognition of typology is implied as especially useful when the buildings are being introduced to the reader for the first time, the penultimate ordering of the evidence is historical. In addition this history is however, forced to oscillate continually between the history of the buildings, the reordered sequences of the memories of
individual members of the communities, and the history of the research project itself. And this, both because of the unfamiliarity of the architectural landscape, because of the reality of the kinds of evidence marshalled, and because of the inter-subjective mode in which the knowledge here presented was garnered.

The present introductory chapter apart, the dissertation consists of nine chapters, in which is included the final (and concluding) chapter. The first of the following nine chapters attempts to contextualize the interests and concerns explored in the work itself, within existing studies and literature on the architecture not only of southern Nigeria, but of the West African region generally. It includes an assessment and interpretation of how these texts characterize both the pre-modern period and colonial-period architecture of West Africa, and offers a positive critique of what seems either inadequate or unsatisfying about many of them.

The second chapter introduces the reader to a pair of buildings in the same vicinity of the town of Okrika, which buildings in themselves not only distill the kinds of problems that the dissertation insists on encountering, but also form one of the more important historical cores of the investigation and analysis, and to which many of the other buildings discussed subsequently seem constantly linked in history. The writing will therefore regularly refer to these two buildings. Each building is described, problematized, and then contextualized, all the while attempting to offer an interpretation of each one’s architecture based on the information presented at the particular stage already reached by the text’s explication. And even though the buildings present myriad research and methodological difficulties to a
historicizing project such as this one, it is shown that they nevertheless force a rejection of the historiographic characterization normally reserved for this region. The questions raised are seen to be unanswerable in the terms currently available, such that alternative explanations for their existence, and for their meaning needs be sought.

In chapters 3,4,5 and 6, the buildings described in the first chapter are revisited in the context of introducing many other buildings to some of which the former seem related in history, to others against which only a contrast might be observed. But, in these chapters the descriptions come armed with information which enables the writer to enter the structures in more depth, plotting the histories of how they came into existence, down (in some instances) to narratives that offer a glimpse into the social organization of the building-work on site. In other words, it becomes progressively possible in these chapters to encounter in a meaningful way some early departures from the customary architecture, but here viewed in primarily historicized terms. This is achieved through a reconstruction, in the text of the chapters, of the history and contexts of the production of a small number of houses and church buildings in which one may observe the beginnings of new stylistic preferences and understandings of architectural culture. These four chapters are, in a sense, the core architectural material from which the others, more concerned with related politico-historical, anthropological and culture-theoretical issues of interpretation, might be thought to extend.

In Chapter 7, the context which made it possible for these buildings to be producible is pondered, via an extended presentation of detailed information on related building
practices and their historical transformations. Here, then, will be reconstructed the histories of some of the region's locally well-known non-customary builders, their earliest cultural universes and backgrounds, education, subsequent careers, and the transformation and growth of their working aesthetic concepts. As would have been indicated in the first chapter, these buildings (or at least the interpretation made of them in this dissertation) invite controversy because of the not uncommon assumption that they are 'really European' in origin. The narratives in chapter 7 will determine the extent to which such an assumption is justified or not. In the final event, an interpretation asserting that this new architecture is, in fact, rooted and grounded in a locality, becomes defensible; so also does that locality's own sense of the normality of the historical transformation of culture which these buildings indicate.

Party to the exploration of all the above-mentioned issues, will be an interpretation of the pedagogic structures which soon produced building creators who may easily be thought of as artistic (architectural) designers of buildings, as opposed to merely being seen as builders. Here, this is achieved by reconstructing the careers of many builders of the second and third decades of the 20th century, including that of a specific second-generation builder of particularly notable

40 It should be reiterated here that this might apply equally to other buildings like them in diverse other locations in West Africa.

41 The text of the first chapter focuses in part on showing that many writers have assumed so in similar situations elsewhere, all along the Atlantic coast of the continent.

42 One hesitates here to use the term architect or designer, even though these terms capture the intellectual input into the formation of the idea of the building to an extent that the builder, or master mason does not. 'Building creator' is therefore used here as an interim term, to indicate (without pre-judging) that one refers to the inclusion of a creativity beyond the technical mastery of an art.
distinction. This biography is offered in order to show the continued development of the new architecture, and how talented individuals were able not only to master its constructive character technically speaking, but also to display an improvisatory freedom in the creation of buildings that represent the ideals of its 'progressive' new world. It is suggested by the chapter's end then that what is discovered allows the builder/mason by this time to be qualified as artist or architect. These terms will be used in the sense in which they were understood elsewhere⁴³, before the twentieth century professionalization of the activity of the formalized conception of buildings, and the resting of the latter activity's identity in a legitimated membership of an institution.

In chapter 8, as the concluding chapter is approached, a chronological step backwards is introduced, taking the reader from the buildings described in the preceding chapters to an earlier period during which they would not (most typically) have come into existence. This regression seemed necessary, in order to allow the review of a number of earlier buildings in which seem marked the first recorded disjunctions with 'tradition'. The regression is embarked upon with intention, in other words, to show that the new architecture here, as now generally accepted to be the case for European and North American modern architecture, was, despite suggestions to the contrary, properly a historical and historicizable phenomenon. It becomes possible as a result moreover, to show that 'traditional' architecture itself has a history, and that the new architecture belongs to the latter's unfolding. Indeed, it will be indicated that presently, what will have been

⁴³ Here, the reference is directed especially at Europe and North America.
termed ‘new architecture within the pages of the dissertation’, has for some time now become known in the popular southern Nigerian imagination, as ‘traditional’.

Through the exploration of the earlier, more typically and easily cast-as-traditional buildings that form the central focus of the chapter, it is suggested that in order to reinterpret the existence of both the latter mentioned buildings, and the buildings of the new architecture detailed in the previous chapters, a further assertion, which was always a necessary one, might now be made. The assertion is that in the reality of a customary building of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and in other forms of representation such as is found in oral narratives, we are prepared for the fact that southeast Nigeria possessed a culture of architecture, one that was sophisticated, and one which moreover, was intensely dynamic. Indeed the opening section of this chapter (chapter 8) will have revealed that even the travel drawings and photographs of Europeans in the early 20th century do seem, and despite their creators’ intentions, ultimately unable to conceal this dynamism.

Having established a position on this contested issue, the dissertation then returns in chapter 9, to the critical aspects of all the description provided in the above chapters, here brought together in order to operate an overall historical re-textualization. In performing this task, the writer includes, in part, the drawing of a parallel between the histories of legal convention within the locality of southeastern Nigeria on the one hand, and on the other of architectural convention as established in this work. This juxtaposition is made in order not only to begin to understand the larger cultural changes that were occurring in the period,
and to glimpse the connection that architecture might have to this larger transformation, but also in order to respond directly to the lament enunciated by Elizabeth Isichei". Both the architectural and the judicial transformations are used, that is, as a map of the changing mentality of turn of the century southeastern Nigerians. Moreover, even this larger historical context is itself set within the interpretative framework of the wider cultural history of southeastern Nigeria in the period under study, particularly as this impacted the possibility of the emergence of a particularly new class of architectural patron. For the latter, it is shown how they performed a role as local players in the transmission and/or translation of new ideas and cultural purchases which were of architectural import, across the interface where the European encountered the African. It will be suggested that much about the new architecture after 1910 was contributed in the context of this local dynamic. Its mechanics will be illustrated through the related and brief biographies of a few of these individuals. It will be seen that together with the black missionary perhaps, these patrons may be theorized as the 'carriers' of cultural innovation, especially when focus is aimed, particularly, on how architectural representation was used in their lives.

Towards the chapter’s termination the text restates that it is clear that the hitherto available characterizations of the architecture of southeastern Nigeria before the modern period results from the absence of attempts to enter into the world that produced them in any depth. The chapter then concludes by addressing some of the wider theoretical, interpretative issues that the research raises, most pointedly centered on

"Anglo-Nigerian historian mentioned previously (see p__).
the notion of cultural ownership, marginality and peripherality, on the lived contexts that inhere such notions, and on the equally theorized local responses to the fact and experience of such situations. Scholars often (and variously) characterize the responses referred to here in terms of collaboration on the one hand, or of mimicry, resistance and subversion on the other. It will be submitted that the history and culture explored do not easily accept such concepts, and that a reorientation is called for if the complexity of this moment, and of other moments like this one in other near-coastal African places in which inter-cultural exchanges occur, are to be comprehended adequately.

'ABOUT THE AUTHOR'
Finally, it seems relevant to mention, no matter how briefly, the location or site from which the author writes, and how this location may have influenced the nature of the dissertation, both in terms of the limitations and constraints imposed, and by the unique viewpoint the location offers. It is however intended neither as an autobiography nor as a curriculum vitae in the normal sense."

Though of Nigerian nationality, and more specifically of the Igbo ethnic group, the writer’s first language was English, learned as a child living with Nigerian natural parents and in one instance with English foster parents“ in late 1950s

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45 For the purposes of this small section, it of course becomes difficult, if not exactly impossible, to escape the use of the first person singular in many sections. The alternative, a repeated and unyielding use of ‘this author’, ‘the present writer’ and similar conventions, becomes quite ponderous when repeated frequently within, for example, the same paragraph.

46 For no more ominous a reason than that both the writer’s parents were pursuing higher education here, and that the use of foster-parenting was apparently a common practice amongst this cohort of (continued...)

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Britain." The writer was largely educated in this place from the equivalent of senior-high up to the three currently held degrees (undergraduate and graduate) in architecture and in advanced architectural studies.

Equally significantly, however, the writer spent a twelve year period in primary and secondary school in Nigeria, including a still-memorable experience of the Nigerian Civil War from the Biafran location. In that twelve year period, Nigeria was, without hesitation, understood as the place that was 'home'. On a personal level therefore, the problems associated with resisting the social demand to define and fix one's identity (a demand that has been acute whether he has been in Nigeria, in England, travelling in Japan, or writing in the United States) are familiar. These for example have included everything from asserting that my first language was English and that therefore my possession of Igbo and French be considered to fulfill doctoral language requirements, all the way to challenging some Nigerian acquaintances who chastised the present writer's then unabashed response "I'm English".

"(...)continued"

students, perhaps because they may have viewed the practice as parallel to the common practice in Africa of sending the child away to grow up with another adult member of one's own family (extended).

At the time it was much more typical to use the name Great Britain, a term for which I showed incredulity much as I continue to in the present, despite an argument which suggests the 'Great' refers only to its being inclusive of all the British Isles.

Often misunderstood in the moment of its utterance, this claim is usually meant in part at least as a protest against the fact that Europeans with Italian sounding names for example may be encountered without difficulty claiming to be African (if from South Africa), and that generally speaking no one bats an eyelid. In other words, white skinned people may be from anywhere, including Africa, while black skinned people seem accepted as being from anywhere (the United States, Jamaica, Panama) as long as this does not include Europe. Moreover, the choice of 'English', as opposed to British comes out of the taunting the writer experienced in a British Grammar school, in which context it was not untypically told me by my school mates that 'you may be British, but you can never be English', forgetting of course that English history makes it clear that to be English is an idea barely a
to the sublimely complex question "Where do you come from?". The fluxes in which all these assertions and counter challenges occurs, ultimately lead to an understanding at close quarters of what is meant by the idea that identity be not considered essentialized but negotiated, and that this not only changes constantly, but that in addition each person normally has recourse to claiming more than a single such identity at any one time.

In this author's own experience, competing identities within the same individual certainly made for an interesting, and sometimes bitter educational experience, most particularly at University College London's Bartlett School of Architecture. It was here that the culturality of architecture, then taught within a modernist frame which, true to form, denied completely the cultural and ideological basis of its particular pedagogy began in some vague manner to reveal its form. Nevertheless, its ideological basis was one up against whose invisible surface this writer always seemed to bump. The articulation of this surface (of architecture's cultural embeddedness) seemed inadvertent (but for a few rare instances'), as revealed for example in the context of the real resistance by the school or institution to the insistence that my professional degree thesis be about (and located in) Lagos Nigeria, rather than say in Norwich, East Anglia, and

"(...continued)

thousand years old, and that the English are in any case a 'bastard' nation.

In this light, it is interesting that Africans themselves (especially when South Africa is not included) are resistant to accepting the possibility of black-skinned people claiming a 'from'ness that is not African, and I often think that Peter Fryer's Staying Power (Fryer [1984]) might be more usefully thought of as critical reading for this community, than it should be for white Britons to whom it seems directed.

* In seminars by Robert Maxwell, by Steven Groak and by the team focused around Bill Hillier and Julienne Hanson.
that it be centered around the development of a master plan extension (and a specific building as focus) for the University of Lagos. My articulation of the recognition of the culturality of architecture included on the one hand resistance (not to mention incredulity) on my part to both the notion that modernist architects Le Corbusier and Mies van der Rohe be set up as idols or geniuses to whom appropriate and uncritical worship be offered, and on the other hand a difficulty with the idea to which all were expected to subscribe, that the proportions of the human male body were the most perfect in nature. Few in the department at the time were inclined to listen, let alone to be sympathetic to the difficulty I was experiencing with being socialized into such tenets, and to my offering instead an anti-humanist rhetoric in which I substituted a leopard for the male figure of Leonardo da Vinci’s drawing of Vitruvian Man.

At the center of all these disputations of course was the refusal by the English architectural academy (despite in fact the inspiration from African art that is reflected via Purism in some of the work by Le Corbusier) to accept the value of

50 The leopard is the ‘totemic’ animal of the writer’s ‘ancestral’ village of Umuagu, at Nnobi. Umuagu, translates as ‘siblings of the leopard’. A totemic system as such does not in fact operate in southern Nigeria, but there are indications within the naming of places to suggest that such a system may have once operated.

51 The degree to which dissent might be perceived as disruptive in the context might be understood by noting that unlike what obtains in architectural education in the American system, design studio education at the Bartlett (the Architecture and Planning department at University College London) in the mid-1970s involved the whole class working on a single project. The unit system in which one is faced with a large number of alternative studios was not then available. The Architectural Association School, a ten minute walk from the Bartlett School had instituted such a system a few years earlier under the chairmanship of the American, Alan Boyarsky.

52 The connection between Picasso’s cubism and Jean Jennerait’s purist painting is of course recognized. What is rarely claimed (though this seems suggested by the formal language of purist painting as well as by any connection is has with cubism), is the implied linkage then between Le Corbusier’s architecture and African sculpture (see Mariam Gusevitch, Midgard (vol?)).
the knowledge acquired by African cultures throughout the latter's protracted histories, except in so far as it be considered a repository of a romantic primitiveness. Primitiveness, of course, ran counter to this writer's own experience in Nigeria; the motivation for this dissertation ultimately stems from a long held desire to mount a constant project of challenging such conceptions, and the resulting marginalization of Africa and its culture in the contemporary, international milieu beyond the continent's own shores. As someone who still, in certain situations considers himself African European (in a way not dissimilar to the term African American), it was critical to insist then, as it is now, that the African in that couple not implode its own identity, but that it reveal the extent to which it possesses all the faculties which are usually denied things African in the context of the Western scholarship generally speaking.

Almost an act of faith at the outset, the research-project out from which this dissertation emerges was embarked upon with a determination to discover that Nigeria's culture had not been a static, traditionalist one, but that it in fact was a human one; that it was not victim of modernization but actively participating in and contributing to it. This certainly seems to be born out in the pages of the dissertation.

53 Interestingly, a couple of years after I had departed from London, the Bartlett School, for whatever reason, seems to have been forced to undertake an assessment of the pedagogical encounter with people of non-British cultural origin in its midst. This, at least, is what one might judge by the document ' (to which a detailed questionnaire was attached), which arrived in my mail box late one morning in 1988. It is not clear what the context was however motivating this action, nor is it clear that anything in the culture of Wates House (the Bartlett School's home) has changed in a manner that would indicate that anything came of this apparently self-directed soul-searching.
Interestingly however, the implementation of such a project as this one becomes did not occur without significant resistances from the 'African side' itself. In many situations in which this researcher found himself in Nigeria, it was clear that a white male researcher pursuing exactly the same research objective would certainly have had a different experience (and set of responses) but might well also have had, in regard to particular parts of the experience, an easier time than the present writer did. Of course there were fewer problems facing this researcher in relation to adapting to the cultural milieu in which he was immersed; problems that a white researcher might well have encountered with greater trepidation. However, other aspects of the work presented problems that had a different resonance for me than it typically might be imagined to have for a white researcher. One is a constellation of ethical issues that arise through the ethnic identification with most of my interlocutors. Constantly for example, I, as researcher, came up against the issues of the morality of a coercive anthropology, and though not quite with Amitav Ghosh's (1993) paradoxical resolve (I was not forced to abandon my Egypt for an India [or was it Bangladesh?]), I largely allowed the research project to be diverted, as indicated earlier (p__) according partly to the dictates of those individuals from whom I sought information.

Typically, the present author was (as indicated earlier of an encounter in the town of Okigwe) under suspicion as either a covert government agent seeking information for some investigative (and vindictive) government tribunal, or he was thought of as a rather clever and shrewd speculator, really attempting an original entree into the making of an offer for the purchase of an antique building. Simply put, the idea of a Nigerian doing particular kinds of academic research on
Nigerian society, is still not widely known or accepted. It sometimes appeared to be seen, thanks to a local perception of anthropological work, as the wasteful and irrelevant preserve of those strange white people with nothing better to do but use both their time and the luxury of their privileged travelling, in a typically idiosyncratic manner.

On a number of occasions, the research-project related interviews that the present writer was attempting or actually conducting were marred by the other party’s discovery, made in the process of the mutual self-confession that is the basis of a non-coercive exchange of information, that I was 34 (at the time) and unmarried. Having arrived at such a point, the interview became converted by the interviewee into a lecture on why I, according to my interlocutor, had my priorities wrong. This advice was typically offered in the most

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54 Nigerian historians and scholars of culture, still anguish over the difficulty of reconstructing histories of the colonial period, continued to focus mainly on studying ‘traditional’ forms of culture. It may be that had my research been more tailored to such an inquiry, the air of suspicion would not be raised, because such questioning by Nigerian scholars is now familiar given the plethora of institutions of higher education in Nigeria, most of which require, even at the Bachelors degree level, the production of a research-based thesis.

55 This attitude seemed most strong during a section of my research which took me to the Republic de Niger, but which data has since not been relevant to the final focus of the dissertation.

56 A classic reversal really, in the sense that I was no longer a subject of the research, but had become an object of my interlocutor’s own interest.

57 In Igbo culture, at least according to this person, and as seemed confirmed by this writer’s own experience, an unmarried man beyond about age 30 (but typically say in his late forties), might be known as, or labelled ofo-ogeli (or ofo-ogoli, or akali-ogoli). This same word is the name of a bad spirit (even a minor deity), one that is recognized as a destroyer of harmony (Thomas [1912:39-41]). To be unmarried at 34, especially as the writer ‘is himself Igbo’, therefore justified the sometimes ridiculing, sometimes insulting use of the term to address me. Clearly I was sometimes perceived as possessed by the destructive spirit, and needed a good word to exorcise me of it. In fact, it was suggested on more than one occasion that scholarship itself might be the bad spirit.

(continued...)
unexpected context, and even when this conversation was with perfect strangers. The gist of this being, as another 'informant' put it, and perhaps aptly in the following scenario:

"....when you meet a man on the road, you always ask how is your wife, how are the children, how are your parents. One does not ever ask how is your Ph.D.!

There were, more properly speaking, political overtones to the interaction involved in the pursuit of the research project itself. Most critical is the one which arose out of inter-ethnic rivalries and the occasional violent but small-scale conflict which marks the history of southeastern Nigeria in the period under investigation. Briefly, the region is peopled by Igbo, Izhon (of whom the Kalabari are a sub group), and Efik peoples in the majority, and by numerous smaller but no less vocal groups including Igala, Ogoni, Ibibio, Efik, Ogoja and various Ekoi-Ejaghm groups; a context therefore in which one might in fact expect to see much more strife than generally seems to exist. More specifically, of relevance to the research project itself however is the fact that it was over this context of ethnic rivalry that the 'Biafra' of the Nigerian Civil war was enacted in the late 1960s, without (it

\[57\] (...continued)

Such discussions might have drawn a smile to the lips of a white colleague, but they did begin to sting the present writer more and more every next time, and with a surprisingly progressive sense of hurt.

\[58\] The Nigerian civil war was not about ethnic conflict between the groups just mentioned; rather it was a conflict in which these groups were unified for at least a brief moment under the banner of Biafra, and forced into a struggle for autonomy directed against all the other Nigerian groups, more specifically of the more northerly muslims of the Sokoto-Kano-Maiduguri axis. More accurately however, the war was not even inter-ethnic (or inter-religious) in this sense; rather it resulted from a political machination in which ethnicity was manipulated by modern political figures for the furtherance of their own quite un-nationalistic (in the best sense) personal advantage.
seems) the explicit consensus and committedness of the non-
Igbo groups and their leadership.

The overtones remain up to the present of the expanded
animosity created between the various ethnic groups in
southeastern Nigeria as a result of the ‘failure’ of Biafra
and of the experience of war\textsuperscript{59}. I encountered this animosity
to the degree that I seemed under suspicion whenever my
questioning might have appeared to demand detail that was
deemed sensitive, given that the research project and the
interrogation which drove it forced a traversal of the
imaginary boundary circumscribing any one ethnic group, and
that I of course belonged to one group, the Igbo, numerically
the largest of the many ethnicities of the region. However,
given the nature of my research, it became more and more
impossible as the project developed to restrict the inquiry
within the borders of Igboland alone (despite the Ozo title-
taking area with which I had commenced), were I even inclined
to choose such an approach. One of the houses in this project,
to take the best example presented here in detail, was built
by an Igbo-speaking builder from Asaba\textsuperscript{60} who nevertheless
created an architectural marvel at Okrika, a town which is
ethnically Izhon, but which has experienced over time a
significant and always almost completely assimilated,
gendered, Igbo presence.

\textsuperscript{59} For example over the issue of ‘abandoned property’ in the Rivers State, and of the bitterness left
in its wake. (Not much is published on the subject, though official government documents would have
been produced around the issue in the 1970s. For a sense of the issues at least as these played out
in the context of properties ‘abandoned’ by southerners in the North, see S.E. Mosugu, Abandoned
properties edicts in the Northern States of Nigeria: an analysis with recommendations. Zaria, Nigeria,
Institute of Administration, Ahmadu Bello University, 1972).

\textsuperscript{60} Geo-politically speaking, Asaba is not normally described as lying within the south east, which
border is recognized as the Niger River. This makes clear therefore the openness of the project to
going where the historical reconstruction in fact forced it to travel.
The author's own obvious presence in such a place, as a non-Izhon-speaking Igbo, was therefore always viewed, at least initially, with a slight suspicion; one that was not alleviated in any way by the post-civil-war deliberation of the Abandoned Property Commission. In dispossessing former Igbo residents of near-by Port Harcourt of their pre-war landed property (or depriving them of their unfairly and even illegally acquired property as some Izhon people might see it), this commission only succeeded in shifting the positive thrust of ethnic distrust from the Izhon side of the rivalry, to the side of the Igbo refugees now (since the end of the civil-war) returned in significant numbers to live amongst them (in rented accommodation).

In one instance for example, an interview with an assimilated Igbo spouse of an Izhon-speaker was cut short, apparently because both the interviewee and this researcher quickly resorted to speaking in Igbo. The Izhon speaking male head of the household could not accept (and I might add understandably so) the possibility that a conversation was occurring with a member of his household, to which details he could not be privy.

Thus, Izhon speakers and Efik speakers sometimes seemed to have regarded me with an additional layer of mild mistrust, and it was a labor of love to peel all this back (as far as was possible over the time available) to the point where the information that I had projected I would acquire, was offered up willingly and responsibly. In the end this experience proved nevertheless to be of value both to myself and the individuals who collaborated with me in various capacities making the project possible.
By thus persevering in sometimes difficult circumstances, the research project did ultimately proceed with uncovering what I hope are important and significant bodies of knowledge, and certainly revealed the existence of a much larger sample of the kinds of buildings explored here; which buildings the writer had, like most Nigerians, hardly ever noticed before. In fact, there is no gainsaying that the present writer may still have continued to be blind to the historical significance of many of these buildings, had it not been for the rather casual comment of a long-distance taxi-driver conveying me by an old road (not the expressway) from Niamey (in the Niger Republic) to Enugu via Owerri.

Certainly for what is perhaps the most important building in this study, a normal perceptual frame, whether Nigerian or Western, may have meant that I would have walked past the building every day for perhaps a year, and would not have recognized the uniqueness of the structure under my nose, because I would quite easily have perceived it not only as a recent building, but also would have registered it as not really being of Nigeria; risking a reenactment of the post-colonial 'curse', and of the ironic and somewhat tragic

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61 It is the case in fact that the earliest memory I have of the idea of a research project did occur in a conversation with a long distance taxi driver, who conveying me from Owerri to Enugu made 'small talk' by pointing out as we drove through one town that from "...here eh, na so-so double-double wey di tower dey be. Before, now, na only one dem dey get..oo", referring to the fact that at a certain point, church buildings along this route divide across a line which separates a culture of double bell-towered churches, from single tower churches. The taxi drivers conceptual record of this stylistic fault line, seems in itself also to be an important comment on the importance of buildings to cultural definition in this part of the world.
predicament in which it inserts most contemporary Africanist thinking\footnote{A comment regarding this will be made later in the text in relation, for example to a quite erroneous chronological and cultural attribution made of a building at Enugu Ukwu by John Cosentino in an essay that was published in the catalogue Africa Explores (Vogel [1991]), part of the Museum of African Art’s (New York) exhibition of some contemporary art from Africa.}

In summary then, since the writer brings his or her own personal history to the construction of any text or work, this one is no exception. My cultural and ethnic location will have been implicated in the work itself (it is hoped positively), while straining to maintain the distance and objectivity which is my scholarly responsibility. Nevertheless, such a site of production clearly made some things possible and others not. The final result must be seen to differ from what a non-Nigerian might produce given a similar set of circumstances, chief amongst which (in such a text) has tended to be the extreme separation of modern culture from one that is considered ‘traditional’, and the refusal to see the inaccuracy of maintaining such an impermeable boundary, even where the object of study is located in a historical period as far back say as a century before the period considered in this dissertation.

This is not to claim that had a Nigerian who was largely brought up (and educated) in that country been producing the work, it would be any less likely, judging by the artefact-focused historical scholarship with which I am familiar\footnote{Some of these discourses are the subject of a part of the following chapter.}, to maintain the separation between traditional and modern. I would only suggest that such writers portray a degree of ambivalence towards the notion (sometimes only by implication in a text that may otherwise be no different from that of
their European and American counterparts in this regard), a result of the increasingly obvious and perhaps then oblivious absorption of apparently objective colonial discourses, and of the representation of the African past in such discourses. An uncritical acceptance of these narratives, has often formed the origin for many an African scholar’s own work. The present writer’s struggle with identity and its formation, and with the resistance offered as already detailed by the British academy to representation of this identity, rather than in some manner that was confirming the preconception of a colonially-formed ideological mind, has in other words been instructive. With regard now to historiography, that experience certainly served as a metaphoric warning to the writer (earlier in his career than it may have been to other African scholars), of the need to question the ideological frame of what might appear as did the notion of architecture itself to be an apparently benign Colonial-period document.

SCOPE AND PRELIMINARY BOUNDARIES.
A critical recognition of the narrativist avenue suggested previously presents many problems. One, that is, may recognize the textuality of the object without being able to read it. A deciphering must occur; one which forces the involvement

"By seeking for example to introduce a complex understanding of African architecture before the colonial period, and by offering a critique through it of western homocentrism (as mentioned earlier, da Vinci’s drawing of Vitruvian Man was a central icon of that education, and working against it, the present writer attempted, unsuccessfully at the time to indicate that only man incarnated as an animal of one kind or another might be said to occupy the center of any African cosmology. I insisted, again with little apparent persuasiveness that in African intellectual systems, man’s body was not recognized as the most perfect in African thinking; and that therefore the notion of Man, and of the latter’s centrality might not be universally valid."
both of the native interpreter and of what little there actually is either of locally-scripted, written material or of any oral tradition. This in turn forces considerations of the nature of authorship, because, given the object of focus, decipherment as project involves more interpretation than it does translation. Furthermore, an interpreter brings to any project his or her own priorities, interests, ideologies and history, often such as to challenge the researcher’s parallel set of categories. Unscheduled negotiations must occur between the researcher and his or her local interpreter in a space in which power is dispersed (even if invisibly) in some form, and these dialogues clearly modify and redirect the project. Such negotiations certainly modified the research project from which this dissertation arises. Further, in this writer’s case (being of Nigerian descent) the ‘normal’ field of power more typically between a white European or American and an African (in which the weight of the Colonial period constituted notions of European-ness operate) is dislocated, since the Otherness of the present researcher (and his or her historically derived authority) is not necessarily recognized or cared for. Also not acknowledged or conceded in such a context, in fact, is the space requisite for establishing the conditions of writing apart from locally scripted texts of the

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65 This fact distinguishes the work here from archaeology. In the latter, one has no immediate access to the society that produced the object under study, and to the experience of such objects even as filtered through ideologically loaded native perceptions.

66 The specific issue of the writer’s personal identities is addressed towards the close of this chapter.
market". Thus, the present writer has been surprised to discover that persuading the academy in America as to the value of the project was less difficult than it has been to convince Nigerians of its relevance. Given the then current intellectual climate", most people seemed unconvinced that the cultural value of the present research project could be comparable to that attached by contemporary Igbo and Izhon society to other forms of activity such as 'business'". Indeed, in the negotiations previously referred to, this writer was constantly being prodded to undertake such activity instead.

67 The production of text in Nigeria, has become largely driven by the possibility of direct profitability, or of the use of it in staking out historical and political ground with obvious and immediately real consequences in the local world. The fabulous text Nnewi History by John Okonkwo Alutu (1986), and there are a plethora of such texts, written largely in English in Igboland, and more often in Yoruba in western Nigeria, resulted in violent written responses to it, from categories of individuals and of sub-groups that would be quite uncharacteristic in the context of the West, for a correspondingly 'scholarly' history a small town (Orizu []). This indicates that relatively speaking, writing is profitable in Nigeria today, and secondly that the notion of its disinterestedness here is imaginable only with difficulty.

This had several real consequences, not the least being the insistence that one pays for information. This demand was sometimes heard from elderly men in their early nineties, who seemed intent on making the researcher know that they themselves knew that one was trying to hood wink them by not admitting that the history they were offering was one that the researcher would make profit from, and so without any acknowledgement to their individual contributions. Such a demand flew directly in the face of the clearly stated Social Science Research Council research-grant condition that 'Expenses such as the following are not covered by the Program: [Item 9] Gifts of stipends to informants'. (Contained in the Information Booklet [1990] of the International Doctoral Research Fellowship Program.)

68 This climate might best be described as a moral uncertainty, which in the last twenty years, has brought on an unbelievably rapid consumption of the society by new forms of religious piety (in which intolerance of others, even of other ways of being Christian always lurks), mixed with a gospel in which the promise of material prosperity (God wants only the best for his children) takes precedence over the more 'traditional' message of an earlier Christianity in which grace, blessedness, and the rejection of possession (or of property) as represented by the Bible's narratives of the life of Jesus.

69 Or even other kinds of more profitable historiography.
Preliminary Boundaries

The feasibility of an inquiry which addresses both the purely architectural interest, and the wider socio-institutional one described above demands a second form of delimitation, and of boundary-demarcation establishing apartness. The usual delimitations, including a grant period which stipulates that a research project be conducted in a reasonable time (in this case within a year and a half), and within the confines of the kinds of funds normally available to pre-doctoral research fellows, of course applied. However, it became imperative to establish a set of boundaries, no matter how fluid, which would be arrived at defining both a geographic space and objects of interest within it. For the foregoing reasons, the study was therefore initially delimited to what Afigbo theorizes as the ozo-title-taking complex of Igbo-Nigeria, an attempt by Afigbo to define a sub-cultural area in terms that might be useful for studies of local Igbo cultures. Apart from the small size, geographically speaking, of this zone (the furthest points being separated by no more than about 100 kilometers), this delimitation seemed to offer several advantages. Culturally speaking, the area thus covered represents a distinct sub-group, who occupy north-western Igboland (see fig 10). The culture is marked by a particular attitude to governance and political authority which indicates not only a preference for democratic processes and a historical bias against the wielding of authority by structures of the state (common to the larger part of Igboland in the 19th and early 20th centuries), but also provides institutional mechanisms (the aforementioned ozo title-taking system) for ensuring that changes to this status quo is

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70 Personal discussion with Prof. A. Afigbo, 1992. The idea was then slated to be published by him in a paper, of which publication at this time, the present writer is not aware of.
resisted and is not too easily dislodged". It would, for example then, not be stretching it too far to describe early twentieth century customary Igbo society as consisting of political mechanisms that illustrate (in part at least) Pierre Clastre’s notion of societies that resist the idea of the state”. Further, this area also marks not only the point of earliest sustained Christian evangelical activity in Igboland, but also the area of earliest sustained mercantile activity with the Europeans, sifted though it was initially through other mainly non-Igbo near coastal groups such as the Kalabari, the Efik, the Ejagham and the Ibibio.

These correspondences of geography, of political culture and of history not only seem to have resulted in social institutions that would desire the existence of the kinds of buildings searched out in the investigation, but also provides us with a cultural and historical basis for understanding the origin of this desire, and for offering up an interpretation. The dissertation therefore focuses for a good part of its duration, though neither at its initial moments nor in its final stages, on reconstructing the history of the formation and consolidation of the architecture of those Igbo peoples

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71 This description of the ozo title-taking region, is somewhat idealized for the purposes of definition. In reality of course it would only be true of the periods before the late nineteenth century. Since then, it would be more accurate to accept that the two systems of authority constantly negotiate over the space of Igboland. One, is the customary system of authority of kin-group heads (most typically male), agnatic sets of adult females (umuokpu), and titled men. The other source of authority is the Nigerian state and its functionaries, who had inherited a parallel structure initiated in the Colonial period. The dynamic of this relationship is often pretended away by scholars of culture (less so by perhaps by political scientists), who still exclude the workings of the state (and its coupled relationship to ‘traditional’ authority, from conceptions of power play in contemporary Igbo, Izhon and Efik society.

72 See Clastres (1987[1974]).
who have the social institution of ozo" (henceforth the ozo-Igbo, a term which is not used amongst the Igbo themselves as any sort of categorical naming). This is an attempt to create a manageable context in which to begin to historicize local reinterpretation, replication, absorption and propagation of initially foreign artifacts and ideas into its own architectural culture. One must however, never lose sight of the fact that this small area is set within the larger context of the Igbo-Izohon-Ibibio-Kalabari-Efik-Ejagham multi-ethnic complex with which historically necessary connections must be made. Ultimately, in other words, the writer's own demarcations and delimitations, including the ozo title-taking region as a limit, are ultimately breached by the dissertation's completion.

Indeed, a different approach to ethnic boundaries than is usually the practice, pervades the writing. Thus, Fantes and Asantes (Ghanaians) appear together in the same space as do Saros (Sierra Leonis), Yorubas, Izhons, Igbos, and Hausas. This is a more accurate representation of West African life generally, and of late 19th century, early 20th century southern Nigerian life particularly (Allen and Thompson [1848:240], Kingsley [1964[1900]], Asiegbu[1989], Dixon-Fyle [1989]), than seems generally admissible in anthropological

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73 This title has variants in other Igbo areas, so that for the purposes of our study, we will include nzre, nzeleh and erza(ozu) as essentially being the same as ozo.

74 These include a wide variety ranging from the pre-modern European church architecture, to the wheel-axle of a large truck.
and historical discourse". It certainly represents more accurately the author's own experience of Nigeria in the twelve year period there, during which time part of his childhood occurred.

Of course, it is not meant to suggest that therefore the idea of the Yoruba, or of the Igbo (in other words the idea of distinct ethnicities) be somehow abolished or wished away. It is rather to suggest that the various ethnic groups are not, and never were as isolated from each other as seems often to be assumed, and that constellations of artistic and architectural style that have since achieved ethnically bound labels, have often involved (and even been invented) by the presence of groups of people from communities other than one by which the artifacts have since become labelled". In this dissertation research-project, [and quite intentionally], both

75 It is not uncommon to find that scholarship on particular places are framed in terms (often revealed in the titles) which essentialize cultural space, and imply a purity which may be misleading. Of course a title in the manner 'Yoruba Religious Practice in.....' or 'Patterns of Inheritance in Efik coastal......' may simply be shorthands for organizing a space in which to write, and may mean no more (to take this writer's invented Yoruba example) than that a religious practice in question is one with which a group of actual Yoruba persons might easily recognize and identify. However, much of the work so defined, often develops in such a manner as to essentialize the community focused on, paying scant attention to the presence (and influence) within any such community, of members of other groups (and of customs of other places). Indeed, during the very earliest moment of the research project, during which I found myself in the streets of Agadez (Niger Republic, just north of Nigeria), I recall that I was struck by a rather eerie feeling that this city was more cosmopolitan than New York city; that the ethnic mix apparent in this Tuareg city was challenging even my own presumptions. The most spectacular discovery was made however only early this year (1994), when narrating this experience to a colleague (Leslye Obiora), she herself narrated the experience of an Igbo friend of hers who also had been in Niger. This friend had apparently been approached at a point in his sojourn, by a traditionally dressed Tuareg, who upon discovering the south eastern Nigerian origin of the former, commenced to speak to him in fluent Igbo. The idea of a Tuareg of Igbo origin would probably not be recognized easily, but this person was apparently well-integrated into Tuareg society, and amongst his compatriots appeared to command power and respect above what might be, on average, appropriate for a person of his age.

76 For further reading on this problem in art history more specifically, see Sidney Littlefield Kasfir 'One Tribe, One Style?: Paradigms in the Historiography of African Art' in History in Africa II, 1984, pp 163-193.
the process of the search for information, and the interpretation that is brought to bear on its collected data, and the process of the writing out of such an interpretation, is constructed so as not to fend a crucial awareness: misunderstanding and misrepresentation of significant aspects of the artifactual products of any one community are likely without the recognition of other, minority ethnicities in the same community, with whom the majority have co-habited the same space, and by which the majority is in any case definable. One, moreover, also defines the community in part at least by the fact of the multiple, other, related groups who exist at the former’s geographic margins”. Speaking even more positively, it will be constantly suggested, in the way the context is written, that some aspects of the culture of Yorubaland possesses Igbo elements, and vice versa; that Igbo culture contains Hausa elements, and vice-versa; that much of Igbo culture beyond Onitsha reveals much that is Edo and vice versa; and that a not insignificant part of eastern Izhon culture is southern-Igbo and vice-versa. Indeed, a vague sub-text seems visible in some of the most ancient and difficult-to-study oral traditions of the above groups, which interpretation might be taken to indicate that the idea of inter-ethnic influence, effected through cross-migrations, through the itineration of traders, of craftsmen, of ‘priests’ of traditional religion, and from warfare and slave trade, is its condition of possibility. The Ejiofor narrative of the Ikwerres (see pages___ further on) indicates such a cross-

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77 See for example Susan Aradeon ‘Transborder Cultural Interaction: The Case of Hausa Style Mosques Across the Nigeria/Niger Boundary’ in Asiwaju and Adeniyi (1989).

78 The case is more easily made for Onitsha itself, which therefore claims in contemporary popular discourse a Bini-Edo ethnicity. A closer attention to history and to cultural dispersion however indicates that neither Onitsha, nor other riverain Igbo towns such as Aboh or Ogbota are unique in this regard, and that such cultural interaction, migration and interdependence (even when focused on Benin) need not, as is often claimed, indicate that a people are therefore not Igbo.
fertilization between Ikwerre-Igbo and Izhon peoples; but more ancient ones include the person of Moremi in Yoruba oral history and of Ezechima in Western Igbo and Onitsha oral history⁷⁷, the former suggesting an Edo-Igbo or east-of-the-Niger-river Igbo origin for masking in Yorubaland, the latter suggesting the significant contribution that Igbo culture⁸⁰ might have made to the formation of Benin culture and politics in a bygone era. The accuracy of these narratives, or of present interpretations of them is strictly speaking not the issue. What cannot be debated, is that they do indicate (and act as symbols) of the antiquity of inter-group contact and cultural influence. It is hoped that the flavor of this reality is communicated in the following chapters.

The knowledge of such vague historical connections, or of the less ambivalent examples indicated previously(Dike, Ekechi,

⁷⁷ See Nnabuenyi Ugonna’s ‘Bridges Across Africa’s Ethnic Boundaries: The Example of the Afa and the Ifa Divination Systems of the Igbo and the Yoruba of Nigeria’ in Asiwaju and Adeniyi [Eds.] (1989) op.cit. Ugonna’s thesis regarding divinatory practice is an analytically convincing one. However his representation of the Moremi and Ezechima narratives does not make persuasive reading, not the least because the citations he gives are only to archaeology on the one hand, and to the autobiography of Nnamdi Azikiwe (Nigeria’s nationalist leader and first President), on the other. The former is not the stuff from which history is produced (it can only add certainty to history, not construct it), the latter is, for a work produced by a still young Azikiwe who was still politically active, and for the fact that it was probably written as the Nigerian civil war was obviously coming to an end (at the moment of his ‘defection’ in fact to the Nigerian side), cannot be thought of as a disinterested, scholastically reliable work. For a more serious treatment of the Moremi narrative see Adepiti (1973 [1978?]). Similarly for the Ezechima narrative see Okpuno (n.d.).

⁸⁰ Which for the time must be considered proto-Igbo, since we speak by what the estimations have been on offer of this initiatory linguistic diaspora, of over 5000 years ago. Certainly this is believable for the fact that in today’s Yoruba language, the word Igbo (spoken with a different pair of tones than the name for the eastern Nigerian communities who now call themselves Igbo) refers to the forest, to the unknown, to that which might be feared, to that without civility. Perhaps then (and this is quite hypothetical) the term Igbo records a vague trace of Yoruba culture’s having developed into a more cosmopolitan society than did the rest of the ancient Igbo groups, either because of a migration away from the forests to which later generations would then turn a disdain toward, or because their culture results from a merge between a forest group and more metropolitan immigrants from beyond the forests who continued to retain a memory of the awe in which they would once have held the unknown forest.
Isichei and others), enabled the making of initial selections from the plethora of buildings which present themselves as possible candidates for undertaking the study, while avoiding a certain degree of randomness. Since the aim is to solicit a historical understanding, a statistical approach was deemed both inappropriate and impractical. On the other hand, identifiable historical connections would, at the very minimum, allow stylistic influences and migrations to be described and followed with some connection to the historical experience of individual actors. These connections also bring to the surface a view of the changes such an experience foisted on certain persons; individuals who were after all responsible for the very idea of architectural innovation on which our interest is focused.

**Textural Demarcations: A Brief Historical Setting**

If a geographical delimitation is seen as being about space, then it is clear that in the discussion of history above, time is already implicated, and as such must be delimited in its own right. As is already suggested at the beginning of the chapter, and as the dissertation’s title makes more specific, the new architecture may be thought of as emerging after about 1889, and its freshness seems lost after about 1939. These dates nevertheless are as problematic as are any ‘inaugural rupture[s]’ on which is hung the commencement or termination of any historiographic construction (De Certeau [1988]:11). Nevertheless, in terms of the suggestion that architectural consequences followed from the exchange of ideas between the coast of the Nigerian southeast and of Europe, certain events allow 1889/1890 to be viewed as a beginning of sorts. The first one of these is the change that occurs in the coastal encounter itself, and with the ultimate trade monopoly established by a British concern, the Royal Niger Company.
For the reader who is quite unfamiliar with the geography of southeastern Nigeria as for the Nigerian unused to abstracting the territory in which he or she lives, a useful way of spatializing its history is to consider that only a century ago, southeastern Nigeria could be described as consisting of a dense network of market centers, whose interrelationships appear to have been well synchronized and extensive. Each center's market-day occurred only on one (and the same) day of a four (or eight) day week, with an apparent constellation which ensured that markets within the same 'catchment area' did not occur on the same day. This network, which was both spatial and temporal pre-dates the participation of British traders (Northrup [1978], Hodder and Ukwu [1969]), and functioned primarily for the internal exchange of locally produced goods destined for both local and distant consumption. That such a well-established indigenous culture of the market was in place partially explains the lucrativeness of trade here for Europeans stationed on the coast. It is also this fact, ironically, that made it possible for the Atlantic slave-trade from southeastern Nigeria to out pace the trade in other nearby regions, in spite of its relatively late entry into the practice.

Along the routes which historians have established first for this trade in slaves destined for America, and, after the 1860s, simultaneously also for the trade in palm-oil destined for the factories of Liverpool and other places, the Royal
Niger Company (RNC henceforth), acting as proxy for an absentee, proto-colonial British state soon followed.  

The transformations in the relationship between the Royal Niger Company and the various southeastern Nigerian communities with whom it traded at one time or another is instructive. The specifically architectural implications of the relationship will be explored in chapter 5, and then again, and with greater consequence in chapter 9. Here, it will be noted simply that where, prior to 1886, local communities had themselves continued to be involved with, and partially responsible for, enforcing fair execution of trade treaty provisions (which often found against European traders), when in 1886 the British government sanctioned the first establishment of a RNC military force on the coast of what ultimately became Nigeria, this act itself effectively instituted a new order of things. The very presence of a European force gave civilian Europeans the confidence to venture away from their hulks, and to establish their trading stations on the land itself.

From this point onwards, one in fact observes an increasing audacity on the part of coastal Europeans, hand in hand with a relinquishing of control by African coastal communities, over the rules and laws governing commercial activity. The tables were, in other words, effectively turned on the nature of power relations and of judicial control. Thus, as those

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81 This company was created by the Briton Sir Thomas Goldie, after buying out other companies who were trading in the same area, including a few French owned concerns. The RNC shortly achieved a trade monopoly, and was subsequently granted a charter by the British government to take on all the administrative responsibilities that a colonial government itself would normally be expected to have. For a more detailed history see Ukpabi (1987).

82 The nature of this situation is dealt with in more depth in chapter 8, along with the architectural consequences that arose from it for the south east.
kinds of disputes that are normal in any trading situation arose, historians have discovered that the threat of the use of force, became increasingly resorted to by the RNC, replacing the once normal desire its operatives may have had to negotiate seriously and to be fairly heard. It was not long therefore before trading centers in the delta, including Brass, Bonny, Akassa, Calabar and Opobo as well as the more interior Niger River location such as Onitsha, had unpalatable conditions imposed upon them°. Such impositions usually took the form of a war-boat blockade meant to stifle any 'recalcitrant' community's opportunity for conducting trade. These sanctions themselves typically resulted from the local community's refusal to allow the RNC to disrupt the monopoly of inland commodity exchanges that had been the preserve of the coastal Izhon, Igbo, Ibibio and Efik middlemen for several generations.

Of the trade carried out for example by Brassmen, that is traders of the city-state of Nembe (also known as Brass) or by the traders of Bonny both of whose communities were Izhon and Izhon-Igbo°, it is known their involvement with international trading had been on-going at least since the late 1700s°°, and may represent, with nearby Akassa, the earliest internationally connected trading community on the

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83 Mockler-Ferryman (1892:74-75) tells how in 1879 Onitsha was for example bombarded by gun-boats, and then blockaded in 1885, when it was clear the town remained unwilling to succumb to the company's whims. By 1889, the blockade was apparently still in force (Ukpabi [1987:13-14]).

84 Various late nineteenth century observers write of the significant populations of Igbos and acculturated Igbos in many coastal and near coastal towns which were originally non-Igbo, a result of the continued influx of Igbo slaves to these areas, well after the international trade had dwindled to insignificance as a result of the European and American anti-slavery laws, the first of which came into action in 1807 (Horton, R.[1969]), (Johnson, James [1897]), and an anonymous contribution in the Church Missionary Intelligencer [1853] p258.

85 Reference on the date of establishment of Brass trade)
eastern coast in the period. Europeans would have anchored just off the coast, coming on land to pick up the items in which they traded, and leaving behind their own goods, which Brass traders would subsequently transport inland where they would be exchanged for the produce of Igboland and other inland communities. Brassmen were middlemen properly defined, and in the early part of the 1800's, they were politically and juridically in control of that middle from which they operated. Prior to 1889 then, apart from the rare in-land incursion by Europeans, most commercial and social exchanges between the African and white communities had occurred across a boundary. Europeans and Americans traded from their hulks, and did not establish any settlements (even leased ones) on African soil. To an extent, they traded from Europe, such that whenever they did set foot on land, they regarded themselves as fully existing in a foreign land, and thus appear to have been careful to conduct themselves in such a manner as to avoid any conflict with the coastal inhabitants.

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86 The Church Missionary Society archives is replete with commentary by its trading and missionary agents which imply the European operation from beyond the coast. ________ comments on the establishment of a European Church on a hulk, rather than on land. ________'s drawing made from the land, clearly views the hills beyond as a constellation not inconceivably parallel to the reverse view that Europeans have of the coastal African land itself. Rarely does one find an image indicating a co-existence of the communities in the same physical space.

87 Such for example as the Lander brothers' Niger Expedition of 1830 (Lander and Lander [1832,1837]), and another expedition soon after by McGregor Laird (Laird and Oldfield [1837]).

88 That Americans had a significant presence on this coast too, and at the very same moment, is often forgotten, perhaps because the idea of an 'Atlantic Triangle', popularly assumed in writing on Slavery, suggests slaving on the African coast was a solely European preserve. However, American slave ships were amongst the traffic on the west African coast, and maintained an even more significant presence here in the late 1800s and the early 1900s. For a description of American activity here, see Brooks Jr. (1970) and Bennett and Brooks Jr. (1965).

89 Ukpabi S.C. (1987 :5)
In the period with which we are concerned however, Europeans commenced the undermining of the role of Brass as middle-man, and a sometimes violent struggle for control of this ‘middle’ ensued. Specifically, starting in 1890, the Royal Niger Company attempted to negotiate a shift of power from the Brassmen to themselves, a shift which the latter, quite sensibly, resisted. By 1894, such pressures were turning the situation sour, to the extent that the people of Brass plotted a preemptive strike against the Europeans. Later that year, in line with the Brassmen’s plan, a European ‘factory’ was attacked and ransacked, in protest at European attempts to insist, despite Brass refusal, on themselves going inland, and of the right to establish their own trading settlements and factories at will.

This attack enraged the Royal Niger Company, who reprised in 1895, sacking the town. When the smoke had cleared, it was quite evident who had now taken charge of enacting the rules under which trade with the inland places would be carried on.

Such military impositions were signaled the destination to which the slow process was headed. It may be seen, in other words as a precedent for the most determined campaign of occupation which would occur but six years later after the establishment of military presence when in 1902, the British colonial army proper (in the name of the West African Frontier Force), would be called in to wage war against Arochukwu; the latter a center of religious practice, and by all accounts the most powerful pan-Igbo phenomenon in existence at that moment. Oracular centers tended to be transformed, by Igbo communities, into points of resistance against colonial
power90. They were, that is, a signal of a will by southeasterners generally (vested most typically in its older adult males) to maintain integrity over their own futures91. The successful invasion of Arochukwu therefore was a visible sign of an event of more profound symbolic importance. This moment, if any, marks the final collapse of any real possibility that the colony would not achieve a degree of reality over the space of southeastern Nigeria. 1902 was a clear political rupture.

Yet, even this date is preceded by others. The waging of war against coastal and inland market towns and centers of local religious practice92, was only possible as a result of earlier, dispersed, occupations of towns such as Okigwe, Opobo, Oguta, Akwete, Brass93, Abob, Bende, Owerri and Awka (Oka), from many of which the combined military attack on Arochukwu were launched (Ekechi:__). Typically, missionaries followed on the heels of the invading forces. The missionary group consisted, as already indicated (and as will be revealed in more detail

90 The resistance occasionally took the form of actual terrorist attack, such for example as might be said of the murder of Dr. Stewart, a colonial official, apparently in revenge for some of the latter's own excesses. Such action however only brought a more determined reaction from the British; for Ahiara, a punitive expedition, in which the town was raised and occupied.

91 Many reasons can be adduced for the British government's decisions to launch such an invasion. Archival material indicates a multiplicity of motives, not the least interesting of which is the desire expressed by non-native church leaders (most specifically the Roman Catholic priest Father Albert Bubendorff) that this campaign get underway. Couched in terms of the 'evil' that Arochukwu represented (Aros, as the people of Arochukwu are known, were active participants in the slave trade), it is obvious that the church saw such a strong religious power as a major stumbling block to the possibility of the success of their own mission.

92 Of course it is taken for granted at this point that religion and commerce were not separate in southeastern Nigeria. Successful market towns would typically have been under the protective domain of oracular power.

93 Brass was technically outside the Royal Niger Company's chartered sphere of influence, but this was nevertheless also victim of a British offensive.
subsequently), of a diverse group of white Europeans from France and Ireland, black Anglo-Africans from Sierra Leone, and Americo-Africans from Liberia (rare, but certainly not unknown). Their presence is also of critical importance to the architectural history narrated below (see following page).

Implications for a New Architecture
That such a strife-ridden history (and the state of affairs it resulted in by 1890) was bound to have implications for the production of culture seems easily assumed. Even though local Africans in these communities had financed and built non-customary buildings in these parts as long ago as 1644, only in the period after 1890 does the frequency and density of the erection of new buildings demanded by its societies' newer institutions appear to increase dramatically, and this at exactly the moment in which Europeans commenced their own temporary and sparse dispersion into the mainland.

The route and chronology of the physical penetration of the hinterland by the emergent new culture is related somewhat to the traversal of the territory by those 'Nigerians' who had encountered this culture in one form or another on the coast itself. What influence European ideas may have then had on the transitions of the architecture of the inland peoples, would therefore have been through the offices of indigenous travellers who came down to the coast from their up river

94 See Loiella (1982), and also Dixon-Pyle (1989).

95 Care must be taken here to recall that this was neither an Algeria nor a South Africa; as far as white Europeans are concerned, one is speaking only of a small and non-settler community.

96 This early in the region's history, such individuals would of course have had no concept of themselves as being something called Nigerian.
villages (Igbos	extsuperscript{97}), or who went up inland from their coastal settlements (traders from the town of Brass, Akassa and Bonny), both in pursuit of trade. Such individuals would thus have been the carriers of new ideas to the inland areas, in which places they remained regularly for a number of weeks, before returning home to the coast to sell the merchandise amassed over the period.

In general, and as will soon become apparent, the first examples of the new architecture appear, with a fair degree of consistency, to follow the same spatial and chronological route as did either the traders or the returning, now-metropolitan, sons of the soil. As will also be evident subsequently, the architectural culture	extsuperscript{98} which accounts for the presence of these buildings does appear, however, to have been dispersed according to other rules.

Inadvertently, two returning sons of the soil, the ethnically Yoruba Ajai Crowther, and the ethnically Igbo John Christopher Taylor, both representatives of the Church Missionary Society, may have enabled the dispersal of early forms of the new architecture. These men were not traders per se, but were present with the aim of spear-heading the missionary project for the Anglican Church. And it is indeed noteworthy that in the particular history traced in this dissertation (of the

\textsuperscript{97} See McGregor Laird and R.A.K. Oldfield (1837) op. cit., pp180-1, for an account of the nature of this trade, and of the fact that Igbos were involved in it at that time, and probably during the era of the Slave trade. As early in the period as the 1830's these Igbo definitely included traders from the towns of Aboh and Ossomari (Kaine, Essama [1963])

\textsuperscript{98} It is difficult to apply the word 'style' to the selection of buildings represented in the dissertation. There does not appear to be a single stylistic tendency governing architectural practice at the moment, unless this is defined in very broad terms. The idea of a culture, of an approach to creation itself, rather than the formal nature of the object produced seems to be a more reliable basis for making the necessary connections between the buildings.
many that are surely traceable) the first location (site) of significance for the new architecture, is also the one in which Ajai Crowther hoped to commence his own penetration of the ‘hinterland’. It is important moreover because of the indication that the proposed missionary entry into the ‘hinterland’ was planned to follow the same routes that had been established for many decades (at least) as trade routes. This route was, even more ironically, offered up in the town of Okrika (the point from which Crowther commences, and from which the dissertation also gets underway) through the narration of an Igbo slave-girl, brought to Okrika along this route in the reverse direction to that in which Crowther hoped to travel inland\(^9\).

In the event, it was left to others to pursue the route inland from Okrika. Crowther the missionary chose instead the river route up the Niger river, which then had only recently been mapped. No concern need be shown here for the details of this expedition, but it seems by any standard to have been successful, since it is clear that by 1857, Bishop Ajai Crowther\(^{100}\) and his colleague of Igbo ancestry the Rev. John Christopher Taylor (Isichei [1976: 70]), had established a mission station at Onitsha, smack in the heart, if not exactly the center, of Igboland\(^{101}\). No records survive as to what the

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\(^9\) See S.J.S. Cookey ‘An Igbo Slave Story of the Late Nineteenth Century and its Implications’ in Ikenga vol 1, #2, July 1972.

\(^{100}\) The Yoruba repatriate to Sierra Leone who had subsequently been educated in Britain, and who had worked amongst his own people in Yorubaland for several years, during which he attained the status of Bishop.

\(^{101}\) Some readers may debate the characterization of Onitsha in these terms, since when compared to Awka, Nri or Nkwerre, it lies geographically at the border where the Igbo speakers do not refer to themselves as Igbo. However, considering the fact that the Anambra River ends up as a tributary of the Niger River, the latter by far the undisputable main artery through which International trade reached Igboland, such a characterization seems accurate well beyond the metaphorical.
nature of the mission station itself would have been like in
the years immediately following this event. Related reports
indicate however that they would have been a thatch building,
and even if this were so, evidence from Yoruba land itself
indicates that even with such buildings, missionaries were
able to produce churches which though created from the same
wood, adobe and thatch as the then customary building, managed
an appearance which departed in small but significant ways
from the architectural forms and styles by which they would
have been surrounded (fig 11).

Thus whether one speaks with reference to churches which for
the moment might be accepted as being more directly reflective
of an appropriation of European ideas, or with reference to
meeting houses, temple houses and domestic structures which
begin to incorporate elements of the European world; the
buildings on which this dissertation focuses were first
constructed in centers such as Brass, Buguma, Bonny, Calabar,
Onitsha, Aboh and Okrika whose topological position in the
trading network meant that they were more likely to experience
the presence of new ways of thinking. Towns such as Enugu
Ukwu, Nnobi and Adazi, were on the other hand (and in terms
of its geographic connectedness to a major trade network)
further removed from the major trading centers (fig 12), would
only encounter the ideas of the new metropolitan life
indirectly or a little later on in time, with consequences for
the stylistic character of the latter locations' own non-
customary buildings.

Although it is clear then that contact between the Europeans
and coastal West Africans of the region which was to become

102 A photograph of a slightly later building which would have replaced the very first structure does
survive however in the records of All Saint's Cathedral at Onitsha.
southern Nigeria resulted in new types of building, the specific evidence which emerges of an event that may presage the period of architectural change, specifically in the eastern half of Southern Nigeria may be a documented decision by Henry Venn of the Church Missionary Society. Seeking to produce craftsmen for the expansion of this mission and for the production of the buildings that would have to house its activities, it was proposed to send two young men (apparently of the Yoruba [i.e. southwestern Nigerian] mission), with the already Anglicized and therefore anonymous names of Messrs. Ellis and Wilson, to Manchester, England, in order that they might learn the craft of making burnt-bricks and tiles. It was intended also they were to learn the crafts of building construction (bricklaying, carpentry and masonry). A second, later, event that survives in the archive (and specifically for southeastern Nigeria) is a 1905 report which records that Bishop Tugwell of the Church Missionary Society left his at the time relatively remote inland station of Owerri, taking with him six young boys whom he meant to enroll at the Onitsha Industrial Mission for them to become Carpenters and

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103 Venn was Church Missionary Society Secretary, once stationed at Freetown Sierra Leone (in the 1850s and 1860s), but ultimately residing in Nigeria.

104 It will be seen much later, that from this period only up to the very recent, Nigerian Christians generally assumed 'English' first names, most usually taken from the Bible. As Europeans themselves came to make it habitual to refer to these individuals by these first names alone, it becomes difficult from the present to be specific about who these individuals were, of what ethnic origin, and what general area their home towns might be located in.

105 See CMS CAI/023, referenced in Ajaye (1965). Ajaye comments that the previous reference is a most useful source, but it would appear that this source neither mentions which school exactly they trained in at Manchester, nor what the curriculum would have consisted.

106 Of which Industrial Mission more is said in chapter 5.
Sawyers\textsuperscript{107}. As will be observed frequently in the present narrative, for the earlier part of this study the following of the trail left by such concrete forms of archival evidence, proves impossible because of the fact that they typically disappear without further trace. Whether such individuals ever successfully completed their training, whether they ever returned to southeastern Nigeria, which early buildings might be attributed to them, are matters on which no conclusion can be reached. Their stories can certainly not be connected in any specific way to the thrust of the historical construction attempted here. That is, further information has not been discovered (to take the first case) as to where exactly these two boys (or men) came from in Igboland, how their training proceeded in Manchester, whether or not they ever returned, and if they did, what buildings they built (and whether or not they are extant, who else they trained upon their return, and what influence on future developments they may (or may not) have had.

What has been discovered is, as already mentioned, a building-related linkage to Ajai Crowther, through the eyewitness account of Captain J.P. Luce of the Royal Navy, who seems to have been travelling along the West African Coast in 1862. Sailing (as a passenger) towards the Cameroons, he has left us a brief description of the early building activity, which being located in the inner reaches of one of the delta creeks, already marks the first example of the location of a non-customary building inland from the coast proper. Luce narrates the encounter with buildings that were apparently part of a small Christian missionary settlement:

\textsuperscript{107} Ekechi, op. cit. These markers are specifically however the ones offered up by the document only. For in 1905, a domestic building already exists in Onitsha which was built by, and for, a south easterner.
"...Delroy [?] and I landed at daylight at the settlement recently made here by Mr. Crowther. It consists of five or six decently built cottages and stores— but the lazy wretches have not cleared away an acre of ground or sown an ounce of seed. Why should they as long as they have a lot off Muffs in England who under the fond idea that these Sierra Leone angels are civilizing and christianizing Africa—keep them well supplied with nice parcles [sic] & luxuries."108

The agency for these buildings therefore seems to be the person of Bishop Crowther, already attempting to evangelize along the Niger, perhaps part of the same project which saw the establishment of a mission station further up-river at Onitsha from about 1857, in the so called Igbo heartland.

Thus far, an explanation has been offered for this dissertation’s insertion of an inaugural rupture. The architectural ripples that emanate from this rupture have also been pointed to. Of the other end of the period, the termination date of 1939, a much less persuasive argument might be made, simply because its own markers are all located around larger political events such as the outbreak of war in Europe and the mobilization of African populations to join that war; the fact that in that mobilization the seeds of the post-war movement for political independence were planted. These posts are not specifically architectural however, certainly not in the manner in which the erection of buildings by Ajai Crowther, inland from the coast, might be construed for its ramifications. For such a milestone, it might be recalled that it was suggested previously that after about 1939, the architecture in question seems to have lost something of its zest. Perhaps though, a 1937 colonial government ordinance requiring the registration of individuals

who might be seen as proto-architects (plan-drawers they were called)\textsuperscript{109}, might be seen as another rupture, across which one might claim that a very different history commences\textsuperscript{110}. Though no great point will then be made here of the termination date of 1939, it is clear that in the period between 1937 and 1945, several events occur which suggest that a transition occurs in the period, and that 1939, is a convenient milestone which this dissertation will look across, but not traverse. The appearance of a self-serving arbitrariness still lurks of course, as it does in the setting of dated limits to any historical study because in this instance there is no doubt that a few actual buildings may be located beyond the period, at either end of the latter’s markers; still an approximation to the period 1890 to 1939 seems, given all the above, to have a particular relevance to the subject of study.

\textbf{Inclusions: The selection of study objects}

For the reason then of the two kinds of historical connectivity pointed to in the preceding pages, the selections from the total number of buildings that still exist, each one of which may stand potentially as a subject of this study, were made after an initial series of searches, reviews and interviews. However, because neither does previously published information exist for these buildings (which information might have guided one through the maze of unfamiliar examples), nor does preceding work exist that even at a summary level provides a basic body of knowledge about them, the act of selection itself became subject to a historical process. This process was initiated by chance at

\textsuperscript{109} The ordinance comes about because plan drawers were progressively beginning to make a living from doing this work

\textsuperscript{110} A history in which the idea of building becomes increasingly inseparable from the idea of recording its layout and appearance in advance.
the outset¹¹, but was progressively fine-tuned through the experience of following (and sometimes losing completely) those promising historical trails and traces which presented themselves. The longer the writer remained in the field however, the more purposeful, directed and certain were the choices made of which particular traces to follow.

Even within the fifty year period of 1890-1939, the majority of the buildings that emerged in the process some ten months later, themselves appear to cluster into an early period (1890-1914) and a later period (1923-1932). For the earlier buildings (in which many of the buildings and interiors are no longer extant) it was possible to proceed from an assessment of the relevance and usefulness of still extant documentation. For the later buildings, the first selections were made on the basis of the author’s assessment of the building’s architectural character. This was therefore a purely subjective entry, influenced no doubt by the present writer’s own significantly European-based notions of architectural quality, no matter how aware he might have been of this ‘limitation’, and regardless of the degree to which I might have critiqued the process of my own selection as it proceeded. Nevertheless, these were only tentative beginnings, made with the clear understanding that many of them may not have sustained a historical interest (and significance) for long. Indeed, a number of them were quickly dropped from further consideration when for example it became obvious that despite appearances, these particular ones were built after the second World War, and thus lay outside our period of interest. In at least one memorable case (the Onwudinjo house, at Awka), the writer was guided to a particular location in

¹¹ The writer had no idea, it must be confessed, what sense might be constructible from the pieces of this jig-saw for which no picture has ever been created.
order to meet with a certain individual, through whom the trail of a builder was being pursued, and not in any sense in order to be shown a building. The building, which subsequently entered consideration, just happened to be near by when the location for a pre-arranged interview (on an unrelated subject) was reached. Though the present writer had not come to this meeting in order at that point to be escorted to a building, the latter’s owner Mazi Onwudinjo was quite insistent (despite my reluctance) that he show it to me. As it turned out the house which was thus come upon by chance had seemed unimpressive when first encountered, and, judged by the subjectivity of the writer’s architectural sensibility, appeared uninteresting. Photographs of it, though covering the structure in detail, were only taken in order not to offend the owner who himself showed as has been said a great enthusiasm for talking about the house. Only after further research in the area, and after the acquisition of other pieces of information from elsewhere, did the real historical centrality of the structure with which one had been faced, then become clear.

Nevertheless, the narratives, and documentation which surrounded initial selections, lead naturally, but with certain historical connection, from one building to the next. This for example is what occurred when in order to understand the development of the innovative skill of one building’s master-mason (once the individual builder had actually been identified), the search commenced for the subsequent work with which he may have been involved. Such searches extended to unlikely places, sometimes beyond the boundaries defined at the outset, and also led to the discovery of other individuals, also connected in some way to the story of this architecture’s advance. For this reason, the narrative of the
progress of the research project can hardly be separated from the knowledge acquired. That is, the information garnered, the sensible organization of that information, and the interpretation made of it, all to an extent occurred simultaneously. Unusually, interpretation itself was often necessary in order to proceed to a subsequent stage, and for this reason ceased to be the preserve of the writer, but often involved members of the communities in which the buildings were located. This work therefore becomes at the same time a study of the architecture of a particular place and time, a study of how these buildings operated and were represented in then contemporary communal mentality, a study of the transformations of the representation of a set of objects that themselves remained physically unchanged, and finally a study in the local dynamic of historical memory.
CHAPTER TWO

Writing the 19th century Field:
New Architecture and its (Dis)contents

Unless of course one wants to claim that West African culture is inherently resistant (and more so than most) to change, it might seem difficult to understand how the idea of a timeless traditionality may be acceptably grafted on to this place. For, apart from the close contact that has existed for several centuries between West Africa and the world of Muslim North Africa, mediated no matter how changeably by both the Sahara desert, and by the various Sahelian Islamic nations which constitute that 'coast', an almost equally long history can be traced for the presence of a variety of cultures at any single point on the Atlantic coast, in which variety Europeans came to stand out more than most, from the sixteenth century onwards. And lest it be assumed that this latter culture was somehow sparse, and therefore unlikely until the modern era to have been of such a density as to interact in any meaningful way with the cultures beyond them, one need look no further for elucidation than an early 19th century map of the West African coast, whose European-established ports and forts and the commercially driven towns that enter (or surround) them, strike one by the sheer multitudinosity of their numbers. In the region covered by this investigation,

112 The metaphor of the Sahara as a sea, with two coasts seems a rather useful one. Indeed the idea of a Saharan culture (parallel to that of a Mediterranean culture is an attractive one. Viewed thus, the regions studied here are as much a hinterland of the Saharan coast, as they are of the Atlantic coast.

113 Which is meant to state that trade between diverse communities along the coasts and lagoons, as well as migrations from one coastal location to another, was a process in existence before and when Europeans also arrived here.
the European fort was rarely if ever a settlement type. Nevertheless, the towns of Badagry, of Brass (Nembe), of Bonny, and of Calabar, are of a nearly comparable age to the first settlements of the more easterly Gold Coast. The former towns also derived their sustenance from the same trade (generally speaking) as the one which kept the self same fort settlements going.

The Gold Coast fort-towns, like the towns of the Ivory Coast and like the aforementioned Nigerian Slave Coast ones, were all born largely of the slave-trade, and remained related to this trade for a good part of their histories. They nevertheless soon also attracted other kinds of commerce, not the least of which was the provisioning of ocean-going vessels prior to their departures, for the cross-Atlantic journey. As a result Africans and mixed-race Africans began to settle in such places, attracted perhaps by the possibility of a better standard of living than the rural context might have provided, by the example of the few Africans who had acquired substantial personal wealth, and possibly also by the mere opportunity of experiencing coastal urban life. It is thus hardly surprising that these latter kinds of

114 Feinberg (1989):82

115 Well known trading families of this sort on the Gold Coast would include the Brews, whose late nineteenth century generation is documented (Priestly [1969]:118-128). In the Niger Delta region more expressly this process was institutionalized under the House System (discussed in detail in a later chapter), but is still recognized by, for example, the distinction still made in the early 20th century eastern Niger Delta between Izhon and Kalabari (the latter a supposedly more cosmopolitan group of communities which are nevertheless ethnically Izhon), or between ‘bush Izhon’ and the Kalabari Izhon as Talbot (1926:888-889) would have it.

116 Sandra Barnes citing J.H. Kopytoff’s A Preface to Modern Nigeria: The Sierra Leonian in Yoruba, 1830-1890 (Madison, Wisconsin, 1965) has written that ‘there had been a large influx of migrants into the city in the years preceding annexation [1861] so that by 1866 the population was almost 25,000, a tenth of which was engaged in commerce.’ See Sandra Barnes On Becoming a Lagosian, doctoral thesis, University of Wisconsin, 1974.
individuals would at some point begin to put up buildings for their own habitation and for the conduct of their business. It is also not difficult to imagine that their relatives and friends from further inland may have been impressed by this example of achievement, and may have been influenced to emulate some of the qualities of these middle African community's cultures, in the transformation of their own 'interior' customary practices.

It thus ought not to come as a surprise that in the architectural history of the many West African nationalities and ethnicities, the desire to appropriate the elements of other cultures, West African or otherwise, and to invent and innovate freely within any particular group's own architectural creative universe, has a much longer pedigree than is sometimes assumed. In a sense, the questioning of tradition is as valid anywhere here, as it is in most other

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117 Most readers are familiar with the typical image of the more or less undifferentiated 'mud hut' which the idea of architectural tradition in Africa conjures up in the popular and the general, scholarly imagination. The latter belies the possibility of the naming of a recent ethnographic account fielded in the Cameroon: Adventures in a Mud Hut (Barley [1983], published in the United States as The Innocent Anthropologist). A closer perusal of books devoted to 'mud' architecture quickly dispels such ideas (see for example Andersen [1977], Denyer [1978]), by the complexity of form, of style, and of constructiveness which is revealed. It might in fact be easy to not take such texts seriously, and to assume that its consequences for architectural scholarship are so limited as to be of little concern. However, the degree to which ones mind is formed (in the absence of such contestation) by the apparently harmless textual appearances of the 'mud hut', is well indicated by John Cosentino's essay (Vogel [1991]:246-248), in which a non-'traditional' single level building in Igboland is dated to the early 1970s, based on the style which for the author is not seeable as traditional. The detailed research conducted for this dissertation indicates unequivocally that this style is in fact dated to the early 1930s generally speaking, and that the particular structure that is referenced by Cosentino, was in fact erected before 1943. What this writer prefers to label Igbo traditional architecture, is attributed by Cosentino to '...inspiration from the Italian firm that [the owner] worked for, [...] Udoji optimism is unmistakable in the design of the house.' Cosentino could not in fact have been further from the truth.

Aniakor (1978:294) comes closer by locating the kind of building referred to above to a 1950s emergence. This dissertation will substantiate the error of both the 1970s and the 1950s derivation of origin.

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places, even though this is a supposition that few seem to allow.

For southern Nigeria, it will become evident that it is not as easy as is thought to understand what first prompted a departure from the forms of building that were customary in the early part of the nineteenth century. Whatever the initial motivations were, and whoever the individual catalysts may have been at the moment after which non-customary houses begin to proliferate in Nigeria, it is the case that starting around 1870, we may locate the first of a number of these unique buildings in southeastern Nigeria. As will become apparent these non-customary buildings are erected by both individuals acting privately or as head of a private commercial concern and by the separate leaderships of social or religious organizations and associations. Each such person or group of persons might then be thought of as an independent locus of potential architectural patronage.

Cultures of building in late nineteenth and early twentieth century southeastern Nigeria.

It may be useful in the effort to sort out this complexity, finally to formalize the cultural landscape of building in southeastern Nigeria during the early colonial period. To do so, it may be asserted that this landscape was occupied by three main cultures of building. These were respectively the many localized customary architectures, second would be that indicated by the plethora of European colonial buildings, and finally is the culture manifested in an as yet unnamed third architecture. These three cultures of architecture, each one recognizable across various building types and functions (such

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This happens also to be true of the coast and its near-coastal interior as observed of Yorubaland to the west of this particular location, and of the Cameroons to its east.
as common domestic architecture, the mansion house, buildings for religious congregation and worship, and the men's social club), existed in both the rural setting and in the urban centers that already existed at the time. The last of the three above mentioned categories, is an unconventional and apparently still developing architecture which, though sharing obvious architectonic qualities with European Colonial architecture, appears also to have continued several customary preferences in a new and/or disguised form. It is on this third architecture, and on the historical and cultural context of its production, that focus is trained in this investigation.

The buildings of this third group were produced parallel to the increasing presence of the second group on the local landscapes: that is to say of the offices, factories and residences of the various European trading concerns, whose own buildings were conceived and planned by Europeans, if they were almost always built by Africans working under European supervision.

Of this third architecture about which we are concerned, what distinguishes it from the European colonial group and the European-invented neo-Sudanese architecture of the more northerly Sahel with whom they share certain structural parallels¹¹⁹ (but with which we are not concerned here), is the fact that the new buildings defy many a scholar's learned

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¹¹⁹ This architecture, first introduced into the Colonial Exhibition fair grounds of Paris, and then subsequently proliferated in the real worlds of Senegal, Mali and Niger, displays a pseudo-Islamic and eclectic aesthetic. It was apparently born of a history of the Colonial metropolis's romanticism with Empire and its exotic peoples (Sinou and LePrun [1984:274-339]). In the context of Nigeria however, its British equivalent (and it must be reiterated that it is in France and its African colony more than in Britain and its realm, that this architectural desire was extended to the absurd) is generally restricted to northern provinces alone.
expectations about what architectural appearance is representative for this location and period. That is, the non-customary buildings explored in this study (in all the variety of 'style' in which they come) may have been conceived not by European expatriates and colonists, but by West Africans, contrary to a position claimed by available architectural historiography. Moreover, these West Africans may also have financed these buildings and supervised their construction. And yet, neither are they the more familiar 'traditional' buildings, nor the European invented neo-Sudanese, nor even the unmediated copies of European tropical or Colonial style buildings theorized by some scholars. That is, their stylistic character is not of a kind that any of the sub-national groups in whose territory these buildings were located, would have been familiar with prior to their appearance, nor would we, as outsider ethnographers or 'indigenous architecture' scholars, have recognized them as forming the canons of the Traditional. For sure, architectural scholarship would not have (and has not) been wont to admit them into the latter canon.

This third architecture is moreover also the one about which the least is known in the academy, the buildings having been little researched and published. Historians of architecture have, generally speaking, consigned such buildings, for which even anthropologists have indicated only a marginal interest, to the realm of those buildings that are not-architecture.

\[120\] This position will be summarized in more detail later on in the chapter.

\[121\] The ethnocentricity of this definition of both what history is and what architecture may be (i.e. of both terms of the discipline history of architecture) is revealed in the disturbances wrought by no less than a determined historicizing effort of the earlier, traditional buildings of West Africa, once themselves also given no attention for a related reason. It is only as a result for example of the work of historians such as Jan Vansina(1988), and D.P. Abraham, who abandoned the modernist
Both historians of architecture and architectural theorists have instead turned their interests towards assumedly European-style colonial-period architecture for which documentation is more easily available\textsuperscript{122}, while anthropologists have by and large ideally concerned themselves with the West African architecture which, as far as seems discernible has not been directly or indirectly subject to the experience of European or Colonial culture, and which has variously been described as indigenous, vernacular or traditional.

This categorization and the historians choice when faced with it may be, in part at least, a result of the rarity with which one encounters the written document in anyway 'about' these non-'traditional' architectures outside the more northern Islamic contexts. The result is that they have become invisible, not just to the universe of scholarship, both Western Africanist and African, but to the majority of the members of its inheriting local communities. For even here, one sometimes sensed\textsuperscript{123} the cessation of a recognition of its status as a physical object distinct in any way from the generality of buildings amongst which it is dispersed, and

\textsuperscript{121}(...continued)

collusion between the anthropologist and the art practitioner, that we are now better placed to successfully challenge either the assumption that certain West-African artifacts were not 'art as we know it' (a ruse it is shown for marginalization of practices that differ from western forms), or the assertion that history is by universal necessity a scripto-documentary practice.

\textsuperscript{122} Labelle Prussin's doctoral dissertation \textit{the Architecture of Djenne}, as well as her more recent publication \textit{Hatumere: Islamic Design in West Africa} are more historically based than had hitherto generally been the case with spatially extensive studies of architecture in West Africa. It is noteworthy however, that such work is located within the \textit{muslim} milieu, in which context the existence of locally generated documents is more likely to have existed, than would be the case in non-\textit{muslim} societies to its south.

\textsuperscript{123} In the context of conducting the research project in the field.
with which it cohabits the sometimes remote but often vegetation-camouflaged geographical space.

That is, we shall see how it has been that these buildings which are investigated in the following chapters have so far escaped scholarly attention because they are not comprehensible within the paradigms through which much of West-African architecture is contextualized, written, and known in the academy.

Insularity, Atemporality and The Writing Of West African Architecture
With respect both to the problem of traditionality, to the role that representation in text might play in its construction, and to the scholarly paradigms that account for its installation, one might for instance cite Asante 'traditional' architecture124, which, as will become evident, bears an indirect relevance to the historical context of southeastern Nigeria125, as an example of the ironical status of our knowledge. Asante 'traditional' architecture is most widely thought to result from a historical process which involved a symbiotic relationship between the Akan peoples and the Muslim world to their north, with whom they exchanged many kinds of commodity, both material and intangible, and not excluding intellectual and technological property126.

124 Permit me to use this in the sense of its being the architecture in evidence for the houses and palaces of Asante royalty and nobility throughout the 19th century. A more problematic understanding of the idea of traditional Asante architecture will be introduced later.

125 This example is however not random, but may have historical relevance for the other locations which form the core of this study.

Nevertheless, even if one does, no matter how unwillingly, submit to a definition of nineteenth century Asante architecture as traditional\textsuperscript{127}, because we nonetheless are able to come up with architectural examples which indicate an Asante desire to depart from even this ‘tradition’ too, the accuracy of the assertion made at the outset (that it may be in error that one claims West African culture as being more enamored of tradition than are other societies), seems only the more strengthened.

Generally speaking, two kinds of architecture which may have been considered non-customary late eighteenth century Asante society are identifiable. As indicated in a previous note, one kind is influenced by what may be understood as an interpretation of North African arabesque patterning. Indeed a comparison of two illustrations of the Asantehene’s palace, made about fifty years apart, indicates (if one trusts the accuracy of each artist’s observations) that in its 1824 mode, the architecture of the palace is one whose courtyard balcony’s are much less enclosed by screens and low walls, and whose aesthetics show only minimal interest in geometricized ornament which proliferated over the following fifty years (fig. 13). This later form is what is widely recognized whenever Asante architecture is spoken of today.

Of the second kind of non-customary architecture, the British Army destroyed a building, the Asantehene’s Aban (fig. 14),

\textsuperscript{127} Farrar (1988) has for example written on the ‘traditional’ architecture of the Akan, the larger ethnic group to which Asante belongs. Though his text shows no specific interest in debating the term ‘tradition’ as such, it implicates a tension between a notion of tradition as an extinct or partially changed phenomenon which would have once possessed a pure, indigenously invented, stable, originary form (Farrar 1988: 182), and tradition as something historical; a transformational phenomenon which unfolds against a stable constructional core (p194-195). Indeed it seems to be the author’s intent to get at the architecture’s essence by tracing the clues offered by archaeology, by oral history, and by the evidence of altered survivals (p 50) that existed at the time of his research project.
that would have stood for early evidence of this architecture, and more significantly of the desire the latter also represents for a departure from a 'tradition', judged by the Aban's architectural aesthetic, style, material of construction, apparent spatial layout\(^{128}\) and modes of actual use. However, even though architectural historiography deletes this building's prior existence from its disciplinary texts\(^{129}\), and thus displays this historiography's typical resistance to a critical approach which might dissuade alignment with political expedient (in this case with the British claim to civility), enough survives about the building for a claim to be sustained that one Asantehene had conceived such a structure in detail by the late 1700s, and that some version of it had become a reality in (or soon after) 1824\(^{130}\). For the

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\(^{128}\) One judges this only from published perspectival drawings of the building as it was before its destruction. The drawing was produced by an artist accompanying the British military force. As far as the present writer is aware, no archaeological project has been carried out to reconstruct the building's plan.

\(^{129}\) It is possible, that is, to imagine a different, globally oriented architectural history, that would pay attention to all the forms that African architecture takes without restricting interest in Africa to those kinds of building that might make a particular ethnographic point. To take an example that seems easily asserted (and which is only indirectly relevant to the buildings in this dissertation), a history of modern architecture, even of western modern architecture, is quite incomplete without including a significant assessment of modern architecture in Dakar, Lagos and Adis Ababa, places which in fact hold large collections of modern houses (and the writer does not by this refer to housing). The houses referred to are, as it happens, respectively by French, English and Italian modern architects, and appear in numbers that are far in excess of the numbers of modern houses that exist in the environs of Paris, of London, or of Rome. To be even more specific, histories of modern architecture in which the architect and teacher Ernst May is made part, would seem to be missing something quite significant about who this architect was, if his Soviet period is included, at the same time as no mention is made of his workers building (post office building) in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. No doubt, the absence of the latter building in history is a result of the general assumption that Africa would have nothing to contribute to such a narrative, and of the fact that few would bother to pay it attention.

\(^{130}\) For, the Asantehene's now defunct Aban (the Stone Palace) which certainly was designed and built by borrowing some elements of the European coastal forts of present day Ghana, was built by African craftsmen under the Asantehene's employ as is reported in the records of a visitor to Asante at the time of its construction (Dupuis 1824):
southeast Nigerian place on which the dissertation concentrates (several hundred kilometers east of Asante itself) as for the larger West African region subsuming them both, we may therefore claim the date 1824 as a marker of sorts. However, for the southeast Nigerian locality, the equivalent date in which a radical and determined departure from architectural ‘tradition’ is observed, appears to have occurred somewhat later. As will become evident, it seems that starting in the 1870s, the first buildings in what was to become a new wave of architectural invention, departing in significant ways from what was then customary, began to emerge.

The reference and allusion to Ghana in a work that is ostensibly about a Nigerian location may appear suspect to some readers. Certainly however, Ghana is not introduced here simply because in those of its regions which were once under

The king was in a vein of good humour, laughing immoderately at the awkward manner in which his own people, courtiers and labourers together, elevated the stems and secured the lashings. The building in every part was so thickly covered with human beings of the sable hue, in all postures and attitudes, that they required but a small effort of the imagination to compare the coup-d’oeil to a legion of demons, attempting in mockery a Babel of modern invention.

To this, Dupuis later adds a description of a conversation with the Asantehene himself: "‘Those workmen’, continued the king, pointing his finger to some who were engaged, ‘were sent me by the Dutch governor, for Asantes are fools at work; they can only fight’", which implies that the workmen though black, were not Asante, but coastal craftsmen, probably of Fante origin, and who may have been involved in the construction of some of the many buildings that Europeans erected for themselves up and down the Gold Coast (Ephson 86-87). What is significant in the Aban’s context of building, is that here they were not being supervised by a European, and that many of the aesthetic and space planning decisions, would have been made in response to local Asante opinions, if not to outright royal demands.

Moreover, the evidence of the way in which this building was used, not to mention the more traditional Asante palatial architecture-scape in which it was inserted, leads to the conclusion that for this, and for the reasons already mentioned, it would be inaccurate despite appearances, to consider the Aban a European building.

131 It goes without saying that this dissertation’s intention is to track this development (through a number of specific examples), and to give an account of the ground of its possibility.
Kumasi’s suzerainty, it is possible to discover the conscious use of architectural grandeur and style in the service of the projection of power. The uses of Ghana here follows a somewhat different path, even if this path inevitably crosses the representational nature of Asante royal architecture and of Fante merchant-class architecture.

Ghanaians (of whom Asantes are but one nationality) have been present in Nigeria in progressively larger numbers from the mid-1800s onwards. One can hardly omit to mention this, and yet claim to have adequately explored all significant historical possibility, even if (and this is interesting) popular memory in Nigeria today tends quite to forget this now historical, once significant presence. The Ghanaian population in Nigeria would have reached a peak (if one speaks of the pre-1960s period) of perhaps a few hundred thousand in the 1930s and 1940s\(^1\) when to all intents and purposes, Accra may easily be regarded as the capital city of a somewhat hypothetical British east-Atlantic colony whose territory was nevertheless discontinuous, because of the intervening contiguous territories of Francophone Africa\(^2\). The Supreme Court of this ‘land’, the place to which Nigerian appeals ultimately had to be heard was for example located in Accra, and not Lagos.

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\(^1\) This may be judged by the fact that a minister of the African Methodist Episcopal Church of Accra, Rev. R.S. Wright, saw it fit to visit Nigeria on a fund-raising mission, soliciting contributions from Ghanaians living in Nigeria towards the building fund of a proposed school, the Payne Collegiate School, Accra. Following his return to Ghana, he saw it fit to announce his gratitude to contributors through the pages of a Nigerian Newspaper (see *West African Pilot*, March 10, 1938).

\(^2\) Lagos was in fact part of the Colony of the Gold Coast from 1874 to 1886. Adewoye (1977: 49).
In Nigeria, the Gold Coast populations\textsuperscript{134} appear to have occupied a surprisingly wide variety of roles. Certainly, many amongst them served as employees of the proto-Colonial Royal Niger Company based in the western Igbo, Niger river town of Asaba\textsuperscript{135}. Indeed, Ukpabi (1987:39-41) indicates that the RNC preferred to recruit from beyond the area in which it was called on to enforce the 'law', so that 'most of [its] men [were] from Sierra Leone, Ghana and Yorubaland. [...]it concentrated on getting men for the force from Fante in Ghana and from Yorubaland.' More generally, people from the Gold Coast (i.e. from what is now known as Ghana) were to be found employed in various other capacities in southern Nigeria\textsuperscript{136}, including that of the self-employed and literate lawyer\textsuperscript{137}, of the builder (occupied by the rash of colonial government or missionary buildings that were in need of erection)\textsuperscript{138}, of the

\textsuperscript{134} The Gold Coast was, to remind the reader less familiar with West African history, the name of the colony which at Independence was renamed Ghana.

\textsuperscript{135} Asaba was the administrative and judicial headquarters of the Royal Niger Company from about the mid-1880s. A 'constabulary' (it was in fact much more than this in effect) was added in 1896 (Ukpabi [1987:27]).

\textsuperscript{136} See Epelle (1955: 15) in which it is stated for example that the coastal town of Bonny during the last decade of the 19th century, a Sunday school was run for employees (carpenters, cooks et cetera) who were mostly from the Gold Coast.

\textsuperscript{137} Adewoye (1977) mentions that the British, uncomfortable with their presence in the political life of the south east, saw them as 'strange barristers from Sierra Leone and the Gold Coast' (p118). Many were in fact qualified lawyers, though a large number were simply literate individuals with a smattering of experience as a clerk in a colonial court. The latter group of individuals would tend to be employed by the non-literate south easterner petitioning the colonial government for some perceived injustice, typically involving disputes of the ownership of land.

\textsuperscript{138} Writing to Henry Venn in 1872 of a the extra costs involved in a project to complete a church building in his mission, Dandeson Crowther pleads that '...the agreement [between his mission and missionary headquarters] states that the passages of these Cape Coast carpenters are to be paid back to Lagos...'.[emphasis is present author's.] (CA3/013-021, January 4, 1872). This implies that builders from present day Ghana were routinely transported from the Gold Coast to southeastern Nigeria, to work as contractors on building projects.

Ayandele (1966: 298) states in addition (in a description of the technical-training success of the Presbyterian mission in south eastern Nigeria) that '...the most successful [Nigerian government]
teacher working for the Christian mission or for the state, and more rarely in the role of preacher. Who, though, recalls today that independent of these kinds of role which were mediated by the presence of Europeans, other roles were enacted by Gold Coasters, the form of which did not involve Europeans? There does appear, that is, to have been a simultaneous intra-African network of relations which parallels that marshalled in the service (or contestation) of British imperialism. Only by understanding this can one comprehend that such roles might include both that of a long-distance coastal trader as much as it might the role of royal consort, or wife, of Igbo and Izhon chiefs. The English naval officers Trotter and Allen (Trotter, Allen and Thomson [1848]) speaking for example of the chief (or Obi) of the Igbo town of Abon which was much involved in trade with coastal Izhon peoples, narrate that:

"The amount of Obi's harem [sic] adds also to his power; for by obtaining the daughters of the principal men in the different villages, he secures an interest there, and thus his influence may be said to be in proportion to the number of his wives, of which he has at present about one hundred, one of whom is a daughter of the royal house of Ashanti." [present writer's emphasis].

department was the carpentry department, which obtained apprentices from various villages in the interior and ultimately brought to an end the situation by which Accra carpenters did all the important work in Old Calabar.' [emphasis is present author's.]

339 As the case of the Fante Asafo illustrates, coastal societies traded with each other via the coastline, or in places whose geography afforded them such a possibility, their boats and canoes could ply the less turbulent routes offered in stretches by the lagoon.


Of course one need not take the statement at face value. The woman in question may well instead have bee a slave purchased for the purpose of marrying her, from a trader from the Gold Coast. Since no detail is given regarding the manner or basis for Trotter's attribution of the woman to Asante royalty, one cannot fairly judge the degree to which significant relations may have existed between the Asante court and far away places like the small kingdoms of Igboiand. Still, the presence of Gold Coasters in south eastern Nigeria cannot itself be doubted.
The fact however that in spite of all this interaction, an architectural marker comparable with the 1824 foundation of the *aban* at Kumasi occurs relatively later, may indicate that for all the above signs of a pan-West African presence, certain ideas may not have been transmittable through this network during the early 1800s, possibly because of the sparseness of this network in the period. Moreover, it would appear for the latter period of the 1930s that despite the fact that in this period the Ghanaian builder was regularly to be found employed in Nigeria in the colonial service the possibilities offered the cosmopolitan (or at least travelled) Ghanaian, for influencing the transformation of customary architectural culture in southeastern Nigeria itself, continued to be minimal, for the above reason and for others one might imagine.

Such a certainty seems however to be challenged by observing a temple and ancestral shrine (ogwa) (fig 15) which was once to be found in a western Igbo town, most likely in the town of Ogwashi-ukwu. The distinct and unusual features of the

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141 Which builder was trained either by the European mission or by the government of the Colony of Lagos and the Gold Coast.

142 Amaury Talbot, the ogwa’s original photographer and the only one to have left a record of an ogwa that may date from the late 1800s, does not, unfortunately, divulge a more specific location than western Igboland, though he indicates somewhat vaguely that the temple-house was located at Agbor, a town located even further west of the Niger River’s lower reaches.

The present writer’s hypothesis is that it was located at Ogwashi-Ukwu, a town which like Asaba, is located on the western side of the Niger River. Igbo whose communities are located here are known as western Igbo or as Ika Igbo, to distinguish them from the large majority of Igbo speakers who live east of the Niger. The argument for an Ogwashi-Ukwu attribution lies in the fact that many western Igbo towns claim historical connections to various east Niger river communities, most typically (but not exclusively) to Nri. Some of them also recognize that they had, simultaneously, owed a kind of allegiance to the kingdom of Benin, at which kingdom’s capital city their own chiefs would have had to travel to be crowned in the earlier part of the 18th century (see Ohadike and Shain [eds], 1988:95-106). In fact the name Ogwashi-Ukwu recalls Talbot’s designation of the temple as an Ika-Igbo ogwa.
architecture of this c1915 building itself suggests the possibility of a connection to an Asante royal architecture with which the various Ghanaian expatriates may have been familiar. Alternatively, one need only recall that the western Igbo town of Asaba was the location for the foundation of the earliest colonial military force in Nigeria, and that people from Asaba and its surrounds (which includes Ogwashi-Ukwu) may have been amongst those who served with the West African Frontier Force, to recognize another possibility. The West African Frontier Force after all maintained the occupation of the Gold Coast and its hinterland after they had participated in the second, later (1896), more final British invasion of Kumasi. If any of that force’s contingents were from the Asaba force, it may be expected that service in Kumasi would have familiarized its participants with Fante and Asante architecture of every kind. It may thus also be the route along which one might imagine travelled the new cultural outlooks brought back by home-coming Asaba and Ogwashi veterans of a foreign war, that explains the presence of the architectural style of this ogwa building here in western Igboland. At least, in terms of historical possibility, this seems more likely than not.

in the sense that Ogwashi Ukwu, an elided form of the words ogwa nshi ukwu, may be translated as Temple of the Greater Nshi (Nri); or Great Temple of the Nshi. This implies that at the heart of the foundation or self representation of ogwashi-ukwu as a town, would have been from the start, an identification with a grand architectural structure which functioned as ogwa. However, non of the oral traditions narrating the story of the arrival of the Nri (personalized as Odaigbo a son of Nshi), includes any mention of the centrality of the ogwa itself as an architectural symbol of any importance.

\[143\] An observation made by Susan Denyer based simply on a visual comparison, which she is not inclined to push further (Denyer op cit., [1978:76]).

\[144\] Asaba history in this relation is entered into in more detail in a subsequent chapter (Ch. 9).
All the processes we have skirted, which appear to link Ghana and Nigeria in a variety of ways, would of course have operated in tandem. In the absence of the additional alternative just described however, it would hardly be surprising to suggest that the Ghanaian presence had no architectural consequence for southeastern Nigeria, given the previously mentioned positions occupied by most Ghanaians in turn-of-the-century Nigeria, and given that the Ga, Fante and Asante people whose presence is indicated in all these scenarios would have been serving in Nigeria (Ukpabi [1987]:39) some two decades after the 1874 destruction of the aban.

Passage of time apart, there is yet another reason to hesitate over the idea of a Gold Coast source for the later transformation of the architectural culture of southeastern Nigeria in the absence of the theory of a veterans-abroad contribution. It seems reasonable to suggest despite our knowledge that the aban was after all built by coastal Fantes, and not by Asantes\(^\text{145}\), that the Ghanaians who lived in Nigeria in the 1910s, 20s and 30s would most likely have failed to recall in sufficient detail the Asante royal architecture of either the 'traditional' kind, or of the later stone-built kind which the aban represents, because they were largely from the former's community of coastal Fante-speakers. That is, few if any of the proportion of Nigeria-resident Ghanaians who themselves were builders, are likely to have been involved in the building of royal architecture in Asanteland in the 1870s. It is more likely, in other words, that the Ghanaian builders in Nigeria, belong to a subsequent generation, trained specifically for absorption into the colonial context.

\(^{145}\) See earlier footnote (number__).
Perhaps more important than the issue of whether or not Asante royal architecture of any one of its traditions was exported to southeastern Nigeria, is the question of whether the use of architecture as a representation, specifically of power and civility, was a notion which might have migrated from Ghana, Yorubaland or the Benin Kingdom, to southeastern Nigeria. As the reader may recall, the Asantehene was quite astute about using architecture as a means of projecting royal power, a projection certainly aimed at the European visitors to his inland Kingdom. The answer to this question cannot really be developed here in the kind of detail that would result in persuasion. However, it is reasonable to suggest that even were Nigerian-resident Ghanaians of a more inland group (even if such a group was Asante) this group of individuals are not likely to have brought with them anything more knowledgeable of the political and diplomatic use of architecture than the vague awareness culled from the memories of their fathers', that the erection of non-customary style building had occurred in Fante and Asante, without the direct involvement of Europeans, and that the latter were bound to be surprised and impressed by such a building’s presence. It may be too much in other words to expect that these Gold Coast indigenes would also have retained any memory of why it was the Asantehene thought his aban a good political idea were they even to remember that such a building ever existed in the world from which they hailed. Even less should we expect the emigre Ghanaians, including the women amongst them who were betrothed to the chiefs of southeastern Nigerian coastal society, to have transmitted to the high status men of their host country of Nigeria, the Asantene’s discovery that Europeans did indeed seem more respectful towards the possessor of such a structure.
Ultimately that is, no evidence exists besides the style of the specific western Niger Igbo ogwa mentioned previously, that would suggest that the 'rulers' of western Igbo society, the obis or okpalas, or the Asagba (were the ogwa to be located in Asaba), may have learned from the Ghanaians amongst their own subjects, many of whom were there largely in their capacity as subjects of a different crown, something of how to deal with the British colonizers; of how to curry the favor of the latter, and to command their respect, through the representations of grand architecture.

This explains the absence of Asante-style building applied to the potentially critical architecture of the residences of the chief's of Ogwashi Ukwu. For the lesson of Asante to be more closely learned, this is where one might expect, more than one might for the ogwa building itself, to find such buildings. Of Ghana itself, no documentation seems to have survived judging from the absence of reference to this by scholars of the Asante state, to indicate what the effect of a building such as the aban was on the political interchanges amongst Africans themselves in whose midst the aban existed. There is no reason to think however that a search through the European archive, and through the Arabic records of Kumasi's muslim residents would reveal anything less than that it was as influential at this level as it was in international relations. The local politics of power and of client loyalty

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146 The town of Asaba, like almost any in Igboland recognize a division between the owners of the land (original settlers) and migrants. The latter are usually said to be responsible for introducing religious practices and chiefship institutions to the town. In Asaba this division still holds, and the Asagba (an Mri descendant) is only crowned by the okpala-ani (or diokpa) of Ikelike (the recognized original inhabitants). See Ohadike and Shain (eds), Western Igbo (Jos Oral History and Literature Texts), no 6. Jos, Nigeria, Department of History, University of Jos, 1988. pp12-13.

147 Specifically the British Crown of course.
are known to be extremely dense in Asante, and to have been played out in the milieu of everyday life. Located in the palace grounds, the Aban was certainly a part of this, and would, it seems, have been used by the Asantehene in the mediation of his relationship with both his own sub chiefs, with his Akan and Arab subjects, and with the emissaries of his rival states such as were Dahomey and Mossi for example.

In the absence of historicity, it may be what was perceived as the curiosity not only of these buildings (of Igbo, Akan, Akan-Igbo Izhon origin) but also of their related material cultural products (furniture and fixings, clothing fashion etc) that has led, on occasion, to their having been variously described as frenzied, syncretic, inchoate, hideous and ‘rude’. Such nomenclature was typically in use by early dilettante commentators, but has also more recently (when buildings are specifically at issue) been taken on by architectural critics and historians. The buildings thus come to be deserving only of being passed over by scholarly comment; oblivious and too easy victims of a lineage of prejudice in which African architecture has been a locus of what Mudimbe (1988) has, referring to culture generally, called the geography of Monstrosity148. This passing over may be more difficult to observe today, but is revealed when one examines the architectural historiography of the recent past.

148 In architectural historiography, one may illustrate this in early attempts (Dalzel [1793], and Burton [1893]) to illustrate decapitated heads hanging from the enclosing walls of various West African palaces (variously at Benin, Danhome and Asante), with intent to suggest that these are necessarily architectural ornamentation. Moreover, what is thought by Europe to be the impossibility of modernity for this culture may be implied from the modernist architect and theoretical polemicist Adolf Loos’s short essay Ornament and Crime, which (title included) seems unthinkable in the absence of the forms of travel writing by which Loos was preceded. And even though the ‘crime’ of the essay’s title is understood as applying to the European whose civility ought to mean that more be expected of him than of the Papuan (the primitive of Loos’s essay), its full meaning is understood only with a recall of the essay’s statement that ‘the lower the standard of a people, the more lavish its ornaments.’
It is indeed difficult not to forget the status placed on African architectural production in the past when faced with the more optimistic tendencies of our present moment. Today, the cultural value and aesthetic originality of customary African buildings, once hardly recognized by scholars in the late eighteenth, the nineteenth, and the early twentieth centuries, has finally entered the public sphere in its own right, as may be observed of the interest shown by the publishers (in North America as much as in Europe and Africa) of recent work by de Foy(1984) Bourdieu(1985), Moughtin(1986), Prussin(1986), Blier(1987), and Aniakor(1989), Lauber(1990), Geary(1988)\textsuperscript{149}, as well as by unpublished dissertation research projects; Farrar(1988), Aniakor (1978), Prussin (1973). This clearly represents a proliferating Western interest. It also represents an increasing reflection on other than one's own tradition, and an increasing reflexiveness, on the part of African scholarship itself. Nevertheless, such recent gains in the recognition of the architecturality of sub-Saharan African buildings seem to have been made only at the expense of failing to accord to Africa's architectural culture the same dynamic mechanisms apparent in writings on the architecture of the West, in which writing an allowance is made for historical change and transformation. That is, the recognition and description of the southern or coastal West African architectural object has so far been achieved through structures that create an analogue of what has come to be known as the 'anthropological present' (Fabian[1983]).

\textsuperscript{149} Although Geary might not claim the work as being about architecture specifically, it is in fact one which provides a brilliant model of how architecture might be properly understood because of the linkage in the book between architectural signification and the development of a local history.
Fortunately, the present study demands the revealing of how such a process was in place and at work very early in the 20th century, as might be observed for example in the writing of the anthropologist, Amaury Talbot. Such an analysis is rendered necessary in the body of the dissertation’s text by an attempt to establish a more accurate picture of architectural culture at the early moments of the period under study. It is therefore unnecessary to enter the modalities of such construction in any detail at this point. It suffices here merely to suggest that these anthropological constructions of timelessness, in which obvious modernizing architectural stylistics appear to pass unobserved, were, as this work attempts to show, neither always the result of a lack of an appropriate rigor in scrutiny, nor were they the outcome of an unintentional methodological flaw. Rather, and not uncommonly, it would seem to result from a purposeful desire to ignore and to write (or photograph) out, as much of the contrary evidence as possible.

For the moment, it is important to note that from the onset of interest in the architecture of the region, illustration has formed a critical dimension of its textual presentation. This is as clear, for example, in Archibald Dalzel’s early 18th-century work on Danhome (Dalzel [1793] op. cit.), as it is in the description of Asante in the early 19th century by both Bowditch(1819) and by Dupuis(1824), or Frobenius’s description of Yorubaland in the early twentieth century (Frobenius [1913]), or Talbot’s description of southeastern Nigeria soon after (Talbot [1926]). Many other examples could be given to illustrate these tendencies. Though to our contemporary minds the use made of illustration may appear natural as a way of proceeding, it is worth recalling that in the comparatively young discipline of anthropology (which is
at least as close to architectural history as could be travel writing, and which has at least as much reason to be anxious about the reader's suspension of disbelief), concern with detailed visual representation of the built environments which surround and even constitute their objects of study, is only a recent innovation.  

It is thus significant that as early as the late 1700's it seemed more necessary in travel accounts than it was in subsequent ethnographic writing to provide textual descriptions of African architecture with drawn illustration, many of which were entirely fictitious creations, not so acknowledged in the text (Steiner [1986], Prussin [1986]). It is therefore hardly surprising that with the invention of photography in 1840, it soon became a prerequisite of narrative-writing to illustrate the architectural description with photographs.

However, for all the advantages of this new medium, some special problems nevertheless faced the writer attempting to construct any particular view of Africa which accurately illustrates the text, and contributes to the believability of its particular object's claim to alterity. A drawing is of course much more easily manipulated to reflect a text, and the reader is always conscious of its fictive status. A photograph on the other hand, may be received by the viewer more easily as evidence of truth, even though it is nearly as easily manipulated (Geary [1989]) and therefore may be much more 'dangerous'.

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Even though Levi Strauss' study of Bororo society, for example, does at certain points concern itself with space (Structural Anthropology vol 2), he is able to indicate that a schematic abstraction of the real space suffices for analysis. Though he therefore does provide photographs of body decoration when this is the subject, no such real-life images are included for built or inhabited space.
For the early twentieth century writer, following traditions set by predecessors, it was important (for attracting subscribers to the project as much as for subsequent book sales) to construct an Africa whose cultural distance from Europe was wide and clearly marked. It is true that there were (and are still) many African societies which are truly marginal in the sense that they have had little direct or continuous contact with all but immediately (and equally isolated) surrounding communities. Still, it is also true that such 'ideal' communities are the exception rather than the rule, and within southeast Nigeria are virtually non existent. What the vast majority of early twentieth century travellers and ethnographers were faced with here, and therein lies its special difficulty, was that the groups they would have encountered were in fact societies with a long history of contact, often only indirectly so, and as much with Europe and the Islamic world, as with other places in West Africa whether on the coast or in the hinterland.

It was therefore the photograph’s challenge to efface evidence of this continuity with as much skill as possible, and to exaggerate any aspects of the setting in which the photograph was taken, that might ensure that it be read as primal, in order that the message of a static society caught in a mythical present might not be subverted. This seemed to have been achieved not necessarily by a manipulation of the image after it had been photographed (though Christaud Geary has shown that this was often the case\textsuperscript{151}), but by a careful construction of, and framing of the scene before the camera’s eye. This would for example have involved the exclusion of the

\textsuperscript{151} Geary, op.cit.
surrounding context, inclusion of objects which would normally not exist in a particular scene, an orchestrated staging of human subjects within the scene (including for example the direction of postures so as to take forms which would actually be aberrant for the culture), and the labelling of the photograph when it finally appeared in publication, in ways that are often meant to be misleading.

Text and Context: Recent Architectural Historiography and the Marks of Time

The process by which this significant historiographic and paradigmatic bias has inserted itself, often inadvertently, into more recent architecture history can be traced. A point of entry revolved around the question of how (once one is prepared to accept the traditional as it had been constructed) to explain some late 19th century and early 20th century West African architecture which defies the traditionalizing stereotype. This demanded the identification of a source outside the African locale, to which attribution may be granted, or from which the innovative impetus would have derived. Even quite recently, this theoretical arrangement continues to be indicated by a juxtaposition of two publications on the architecture of the region which is intersected by the contiguous modern states of the northern Ivory Coast, northern Ghana, and southern Burkina Fasso. Though of course outside the specific area in which we focus in this study, the publications African Spaces by Jean-Paul

152 To say that this work defied a subject's expectation implies a subject who recognizes the object for what it is on beholding it. Of course this rarely was so. Little proof, apart from the occasional anecdotes told me by some of my informants of white people's disbelief on discovering the buildings true provenance. The norm was in fact the unquestioned assumption that these kinds of building were an abandoned pieces of European history, a blindness which precludes the possibility of the object's staging of defiance.
Bourdier and Trinh T. Minh-Ha (1987) and *Architecture Coloniale en Cote d'Ivoire* edited by Salvaing (1985), published by the Ivorian Ministry of Culture, make different claims, each one of which has relevance to the process we seek to reveal. While the former publication is focused on exploring and analyzing the systems of meaning encoded within the formal syntax and ornamentational aesthetics of "traditional" West African architecture (Bourdier and Min-ha: 134-135, 187-190, 196), the latter claims to reconstruct the history of the architecture of the early colonial period in the Ivory Coast (Salvaing: ). Each, that is, sticks strictly within established, clearly marked, and apparently unbreached boundaries.

In the broad category to which *African Spaces* seems to belong are precursors such as the scholarly anthropological works of the German pioneer Leo Frobenius, and of the Frenchman Marcel Griaule. These were followed by other, stylistically more exhaustive works like Jean-Paul Lebeuf's *L'Habitation des Fali, montagnards du cameroun septentrional* (1961) and by the earlier work of Labelle Prussin as represented by her *Architecture of Northern Ghana* (1967), and by her unpublished dissertation *The Architecture of Djenne*. The group would also include more recent works like Chike Aniakor’s unpublished *Igbo Architecture: A study of Forms Functions and Typology* (Aniakor 1978) and Suzanne

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153 It has already been established that this is usually only a code for the pre-modern.

154 This category does not simply include works that are interested in ‘traditional architecture’ as such, but only those in this group that are interested particularly in the interface between formal and constructive aspects, with social and aesthetic meaning. This is the reason for excluding many works which are primarily studies (occasionally historical studies) of the technologies and techniques of building.

155 Frobenius (1923)

156 Griaule (1949)

Chike Aniakor’s *Igbo Architecture* is a richly researched volume, packed with information that only one immersed for most of one’s life in any specific culture might hope to match. Its provision of the names of the many diverse elements in an Igbo architectural ensemble will prove a valuable resource to scholars now and in the future. The overriding concern of *Igbo Architecture* seems however to center on mapping a geography of style (‘distribution’ in the work’s terminology), not unlike the manner in which this is found in the work of some European writers prior to the 1950s. What adds interest to an exploration that might otherwise have become a tiresome description, is Aniakor’s implied (but rarely stated) intimate knowledge of Igbo history, and of the many questions which this history continues to raise for its scholars. As such, the study of forms and their dispersal becomes meaningful for the suggestiveness it contains for the study of Igbo history, migration, and the transformation of socio-cultural forms. Such a physiological approach, reminiscent in some part of the writing of Amos Rappaport, does however contain drawbacks. The first one is that particular observations are made, and then dropped, with no sense, apart from the interest in a description itself or in a structure’s expressive function, of what larger significance might be implied, or of what explanatory insight to an overall question of meaning it might hold. A second criticism must

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158 To take one example, this present writer finds the observation that when many customary compounds are studied, it is noticed that the shape of the enclosing outer wall is always correspondent to the shape of the structure inhabited by the head of the compound, regardless of what shape the other houses in the compound (the women’s houses) might be. Of this he makes only that ‘This is because a man’s
be the approach it takes to inclusion; that is, to what rules govern the identification of some buildings as Igbo, and the exclusion of others. This determines for example the conclusion reached regarding ‘the impact of modernization on Igbo architecture’ which though forming the point from which the present dissertation departs, is framed in a manner that will be contested in subsequent chapters. For Aniakor, architecture in the Igbo region is clearly divisible into the indigenous and the modern. The moment of modernity marks for him a clear break; a disjuncture over which only very tenuous architectural bridges of history are buildable (pp. 296-297), beyond the record of the presence of an assertive European or Euro-Brazilian culture and its cohort of professionalized builders and architects, in the wake of whose culture all followed ‘with gusto’. This mutating culture gets a mention, but restricted as it is to a final chapter, its description house is considered the most important architectural expression of the compound’ p103-104. The subject is never returned to subsequently. This conclusion about the male’s ‘importance’ seems a rather obvious and uninteresting one (and may or may not in fact be true). What might have held more interest would be the question of why some compounds have mixed-form houses (differentiating by form the male from the female) and why some do not? So also would have been more closely intimate settings that would allow the reader to judge whether such a difference in form results for example from the fact that a particular person married women from another town with different architectural usages, or at a broader level, whether there is any correlation between the practice of exogamy, and the degree to which house forms might vary.

In a sense the kinds of questions which are imagined in Igbo Architecture result from the ethnographic frame which a physiological approach insists on; there is a general absence of the specificity of named individuals and of particular buildings set in very distinct political and historical processes of the village in which the building would have emerged, as the pervasive idea of an Igbo tradition is let to reign over all the material. In an unexpected way in fact, the work replicates some of the critiques that have been levelled especially at the ahistoric and non-individualized manner in which ‘traditional’ art is typically represented in the west. What accounts for this focus may be Aniakor’s own familiarity with the material, so much so that he failed, after a certain point, to separate the sounds and experiences of the places of which he has privileged knowledge, from the silence that a reader brings to the reading of such a text. Its quality however may also derive from a moment in American Africanist discourse, at which time the kind of detail which would be required to create such a sense of reality in the text, might have been thought unacceptable focused on local histories to sustain the attention of a non Nigerian reader (in fact this may well have continued to be the case even in the form in which it was (is) written, given that the volume has been slated for publication in Nigeria, rather than in the United States).

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possesses the sense of an aside to the main body of *Igbo Architecture*, even as its text indicates Aniakor's ambivalent sympathies towards this modern form.\(^{59}\)

Quite different from *Igbo Architecture*’s approach, even if it might not appear so initially, is Blier’s *The Anatomy of Architecture: Ontology and Metaphor in Batamaliba Architectural Expression* (1988). Departing from Aniakor’s typological concerns, it is unique for its interest in the actuality of the generation of meaning by the buildings she presents, within the communities which have produced and which use them. In Blier’s work, certainly, it is possible to understand at a detailed process-related level, the dense submerging of architecture within the daily life, and systems of meaning of its society in a way that eludes *Igbo Architecture*. Blier shows, rather than asserts or takes for granted, that the buildings in which she is interested, operate without question as (indeed are) architecture.\(^{60}\) By the conclusion, the captivating nature of this architecture and of how it constructs meaning apart, a sense of the whole story remains, in a manner that is memorable. Like the Aniakor text however, a sense of history (not considering here the cyclical enactment of daily or recurrent ritual) seemed to

\(^{59}\) At some points he seems to despise it, given his uses of quotations from writers like British architect Maxwell Fry, in a manner such as to leave the reader suspicious that are meant to speak for him. At others however, the tone is more conciliatory, observing how forms of everyday life adapt to this new architecture in such a manner as to retain some sense of cultural specificity, or how formal syncretisms are mixing indigenous forms with imported forms to produce new architectural ‘blend(s)’.

\(^{60}\) Indeed, by naming the semi-specialized creator and head builder of any one Batamaliba village as ‘architect’ (by translating a term from Batamaliba language into ‘architect’), she throws down the gauntlet; from which point it is clear that the reader will have to be convinced of the validity of such an audacious translation; this in a sense frames the work, and accounts for the uses the text makes of Lethaby, Rykwert and Vitruvius. Understood properly as a polemical strategy, one needs not over react to such a formation.
elude the description. Enamored of the analysis as this writer was, the question kept returning whether Batammaliba architecture could indeed be so timeless and stable. One seemed drawn to ponder whether this architecture had always been this way? Had its complex of significations always meant what they did in the late 1970s when the research work was done? Is there no political interaction with other non-Batammaliba communities by whom they are surrounded, no matter how distantly?*

As the summary of Aniakor’s *Igbo Architecture* was intended to suggest, similar questions do arise around the little material that does exist on specifically southeast Nigerian Architecture, and is not avoided by those scholars whose home this location is (Atuanya [1956]). Such material seems to accept the categorization ‘imposed’ by the earliest European writers down to some of its ‘show and tell’ approaches, in the sense that the evidence of their *strategies of writing* on 19th and 20th century architecture points to the absence of a critique (or reconstitution) of disciplinary methods inherited from the West. With the notable exception of the concluding section of the Aniakor text above, they fail to include buildings which are not of the 19th and 20th century customary type, even though (as this dissertation aims to indicate), such buildings were quite in evidence well before even the earliest texts mentioned above. An appropriate critique would moreover be expected to present an appropriate methodological response which would render the writing valid for the reality of the culture itself as for the western

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161 Certainly, the *form* of the architecture recalls many aspects of the architecture of other places in the West African Savanna. This would indicate the presence of contact in history. Such contact, moreover, may not be a distant occurrence, but may include events of encounter which occurred as recently as in the late nineteenth century (as seems to be the case for example for Nuna and Sisala architecture).
academy, abandoning the tendency to write in an expository manner
described in which no assumptions are made about the readers prior knowledge. Such writing would be tedious in the text on
architecture or its history in the west, and surely plays in like manner when African readers pick up the representations of local architecture in English, French or German works. A different approach therefore ought to be especially expected of African writers who would usually posses the added advantage of having had an extended first-hand experience and knowledge of the cultures under study, and who might thus have experiential access (at least) to its particular historicity. Interestingly then, what is true of anthropological work by non-African academic writers, seems also true for Igbo scholars focused on southeastern Nigeria itself.

It must be stated however that the aim has not been to claim that history is absent from the study of buildings in West Africa as such. The preceding paragraphs have explored the realm only of one side of the paradigmatic boundary. They have addressed writing that is focused on the so called traditional architectures of West Africa, a category in which the passages of historical time are not discovered, or in the worst cases in which historicity even as represented in ritual, is completely eliminated. To the category on the other hand to which Architecture Coloniale en Cote d'Ivoire belongs, and representing understandings of a more historical nature outside the Islamic context, are writings which have been strictly concerned with the architecture produced either in the direct service of the various Colonial administrations,

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162 In a manner that exhibits a local world to an exterior, never itself drawing the reader into the interiority of the object under study (thus one text is constrained even as recently as 1980s to nevertheless begin with extensive reviews of geographical location and terrain, rainfall patterns, humidity and other such 'factors', as if any scholar might be forgiven for not knowing where Nigeria is.
or in the enabling of evangelistic projects directed by of a white Europeans or white Americans (sometimes in opposition to independent but parallel Black African, Black American, and West Indian prosecutions of Mission). Rarer though textual examples are in this group, we may count Wolfgang Lauber’s *German Architecture in Cameroon, 1884-1914* (1988) and S. Leprun and A. Sinou’s *Espaces Coloniaux En Afrique Noire* (1984). In its reconstruction, the former history of Colonial-period architecture of Cameroon (like the previously mentioned work on the Ivory Coast), enlists buildings which are mainly put up by the pre-war German colonial administration, but also includes some buildings erected by local indigenous entrepreneurs (p89, 94), who, having found substantial fortune in their commercial activities, appear to want to announce their successes through the representation of a substantial architecture. Moreover, even though their creators were apparently conversant with some of the tenets of European architectural culture, these latter buildings are infused with enough of the idiosyncratic to elicit a hesitation in according them the status of the object that is possessible within the boundaries of a European cultural cartography. Nevertheless, this is exactly what occurs when Lauber, having described and recorded the buildings, allows them all to become subsumed under the rubric of things German.

What therefore links all these texts, as indicated by the variously sanctioned labels ‘Colonial’, ‘German’ or ‘French’, is the unquestioning assumption that they are either purely European cultural products, or that any architecture which is not static and traditional is therefore necessarily an offspring of the West.
The tendency (represented or implied by the above works) not to attribute to the African locale anything but that which is perceived to be the authentic traditional, is extended in a somewhat unexpected direction (and separately) by Marriano da Cunha and by Massimo Marafatto. The former's research and study, published as *From Slave Quarters to Town Houses: Brazilian Architecture in Nigeria and the People's Republic of Benin* (1985), unfolds a detailed, documented account of cultural interaction since the period of the trans-Atlantic slave-trade, between West Africa and Brazil, showing how from this contact a new architecture was developed in the context of a return to Nigeria and to Dahomey (now the Republic of Benin) by freed persons mainly of Yoruba and Fon ancestry. This otherwise fascinating and valuable research on the unusual Baroque-appearing styles adopted by repatriated post-Abolition Brazilian slaves of mainly Yoruba origin¹⁶³, is however marred by the non-dialogical nature of its explication. This leaves the impression that even in this situation, which is not a Colonial one per se (though it prospered under the British Administration of Lagos), and which no matter how fleetingly did influence the development of the new architectures of southeastern Nigeria (via the former slaving port of Badagry), one is again only faced with a kind of cultural colonialism or imperialism (Brazil on Nigeria), together with all the 'pacified' attitudes to invention¹⁶⁴ which this implies.

The same can be said also of Marafatto's work on the same subject, with the problem surfacing even in his attempt to

¹⁶³ William Fagg (1952) had first brought these buildings to the attention of scholars, urging then that it was a subject which deserved to be studied in detail.

¹⁶⁴ That is the passive, unsifted and uni-directional absorption of the culture of the Colonial power.
provide a bi-lingual title: Brazilian houses nigerianne: Nigerian Brazilian Houses (1983). Appearing at first glance to bear a significantly different meaning with regard to cultural property for its English-speaking readers (Nigerians) and for its Portuguese-speaking readers (Brazilians), the necessity for a dialogical approach to meaningful cultural interpretation and translation is conveniently avoided. On a closer reading moreover, it becomes obvious that for its English-speaking readers, the absence of a hyphenation between ‘Nigerian’ and ‘Brazilian’, signifies that the object is the Brazilian House in a Nigerian manifestation. It is not a study framed, as it could possibly have been by alternative conceptions such as the Nigerian-Brazilian house, or of the Brazilo-Nigerian house, which dialogical alternatives would seem to be more accurate representations of those who built them, and of those who owned them.

It is thus seen that for all manner of non-customary architecture, the assumption is that because the buildings which are contained within the category carry obvious traces of a historical process, they must be other than of Africa. Its corollary, typically, is that those kinds of building on which no such traces are observed (actually because of a lack of familiarity rather than because they do not exist in these other kinds of building per se) and which therefore appear to index an unchanging cultural universe, must be ascribed an authenticity which is therefore most representative of African Tradition. What the works reviewed (and the titles used to label their object buildings) seem therefore to index, is what must now be seen as the unsatisfying contemporary division of the field of the study of African architecture into the Empire Classical architecture of the various Colonial administrations, studied by architectural historians, and the
indigenous and traditional African architecture on which anthropologists in various guises are found to focus.

The theorization of this assumed cleavage in the object reality and the difficulty one should experience with accepting its claim, is perhaps nowhere better and more directly illustrated than it is by a statement in the publication on Colonial architecture in the Ivory Coast to which attention was previously directed. In describing a cathedral building at Daloa (fig. 16), its authors state categorically that:

...(elle) n'a rien d'africain et pourrait bien avoir été construite dans un petit village d'Espagne par example..."165.

This clearly delineates that which is authentically African apart from that which is European in Africa, and suggests that such a distinction is necessary, easy and normal.

At a purely theoretical level, the simplicity which allows such easy distinctions has been challenged by Jacques Derrida (1967: ) and by James Clifford (1988:1-17, 189-214), each in turn suggesting or acknowledging that such clarity is textually constructed, and that it is now known how such representations have little bearing, if any, to local realities as these are lived. It has even been suggested (Fabian [1983], Stocking [1983]) that such constructions functioned primarily to produce the kind of object in which disciplines like ethnography and anthropology could (and claimed to) encounter what is more recently identified as the Other. Vattimo (1982) has moreover disputed the very possibility of any encounter with the Other as Other, which therefore seems to argue for a historicization of

anthropology. Its corollary challenges historians to ethnologize historiography, a context in which it may be realized that the cultural hegemonies of the West and of Islam (and the mythification of their cultural products) never achieve the completeness of domination which is commonly assumed. Were this to be more generally recognized, it is probable that the products of the contacts between such hegemonic cultures and less powerful local ones may cease to be perceived as evidencing decline, disappearance or death. They would thus cease to be thought of as either inauthentic and unworthy of analysis, or as facing extinction and thus requiring static preservation. Guideri\textsuperscript{166} points out to the contrary that because such products (amongst which we may, at least tentatively, include the buildings which we will elaborate here) draw the very condition of their possibility from the more ancient so-called traditional basis, they may be regarded as a 'warehouse of residues' worthy of serious study. To this Vattimo adds that indeed such residues (or 'contaminations' in his own terminology) 'represent the truth of the primitive in our world'\textsuperscript{167}.

One may dispute some of the points that both Vattimo and Guideri make, particularly as regards the employment of a pathological language which continues to imply that the normal and the vital (opposing the contaminated and the residual) is the Western, thus marginalizing their Other despite the best of intentions. It nevertheless remains a plausible thesis, judged for example by the artifactual culture of muslim sub-Saharan Africa which through history clearly retains much that

\textsuperscript{166} Guideri, Remo (1980)

\textsuperscript{167} Vattimo (1982). Again, one might want to disagree with a terminological reference to 'the primitive' and its derogatory, evolutionary, or falsely ennobling baggage, without necessarily rejecting the overall conception of the phenomenon itself.
derives from pre-muslim tradition (Bravmann [1974]). The historical knowledge and understanding of the Muslim attempt (pre-dating any serious Christian equivalent in these regions) at hegemonic domination and control in West Africa should, on such matters, perhaps have bestowed upon Africanist scholarship a sense of interpretative caution. In many historical instances a transformed culture nevertheless retains more of its earlier forms than is imagined; in other instances, such say as in Asante, one observes the successful use by African culture of things Other (in this case Islamic), while indicating a resistance to being taken over by Islam itself in the process. In both instances nevertheless, the idea that the artifacts invented in either situation are therefore inauthentic is dispelled in African-Islamicist writing.

Of its Sahelian architecture for example, the influence of non-indigenously invented Islamic styles on local architectural development is now recognized, but rarely in the non-dialectical terms with which one is now faced in the writing on comparable situations (the African/Western or the African/Christian encounters) in which Islam is not involved. Yet, the dismantling during the colonial period of

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168 Referred to are the commercial, cultural and military contacts between non-Muslim West-Africans and Muslim North-Africans for many centuries preceding the nineteenth, through which the former gained knowledge of the architectural culture of North Africa. These interactions resulted from extensive trading networks which emanated from the forest zones of West Africa, and included a trade in Ashanti gold and in a later period included the trade in slaves (A striking example of this would be the relationship between the Ashanti Kingdom and the Sahelian and North African muslim clerics and scribes whom it employed (see Ivor Wilks [1969]). Ashanti royal architecture clearly contains stylistic elements which indicates a certain knowledge of North African architecture.)

169 Of course it may be argued that the structure of African Imperial society during these periods of increased contact with the Islamic world was such that the use of these ‘international’ styles was restricted (sometimes under the pain of death), to the service only of the buildings of the various royal estates. As such a colonial situation did not exist since such royal estates were in general not subservient to their North African commercial allies. With the late nineteenth century European
indigenous power structures which in some places is documented to have been evolving for several centuries, also meant that in these places political power became attainable for sections of society hitherto barred by custom from accessing power and achieving the status that this confers (Isichei [1975]). The display of affluence, paltry though such affluence may have sometimes been in comparison with what the Colonial Europeans could muster, ceased as a result to be the monopoly of the historical royalty that had survived the upheaval. In addition and by extension, European cultural influence in the sphere of architecture as in other areas, seems to have penetrated near-coastal West-African society to the same extent at least as had North African Islamic architectural culture in the previous centuries.

In this milieu then of a labyrinthine pattern of encounter between Brazilian, Colonial, metropolitan-European, North African and Sahelian Islamic, and 'indigenous' West-African forms of architectural culture, one can hardly accept the smugness of the official Ivorian view especially since it is in this context that emerges both the new-style buildings of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and the questions surrounding their historical significance and aesthetic import. This overlap interrogates the validity of essentialist notions of authenticity and the impermeable boundaries that have thus been established for architectural production in early twentieth century West Africa. In addition, the buildings provide a vantage point through which to enter into the complexities of what is sometimes termed

conquests of these states and ethnic groupings, and the concentrated dispersion of European travellers, administrators and missionaries subsequently, the context of cross cultural interaction was it may be further argued presented with a new historical reality.

Salvaing(1985) op. cit.
architectural acculturation, but which is perhaps better described by the term architectural occultation or occultization, the former suggesting the hidden-ness from view of particular qualities of a building produced in the context of encounter, the latter indicating a magical, uncanny aspect to what is produced in such an encounter. They will enable the viewing of the transformations, achieved through a socially motivated innovativeness of individuals, of what the local cultures or linguistic groups considered architecturally normal, acceptable or desirable. Apprehending this complexity allows moreover a substantially more valid interpretation than hitherto offered of the experience of modernity by some near-coastal ethnic groups with increased intensity from the mid-nineteenth century onwards.

171 Both terms deprive the product of an encounter of any particular vector (for example as tends to be true of the understanding of acculturation, in which one culture is typically seen as absorbing qualities of another, partly in the direction in which one tends to desire becoming like that other).
CHAPTER THREE

‘Used Architecture’, Cannibals, and the Coastal Town

The building, 124 feet long by 60 feet wide, with a Tower, 64 feet high from the ground floor, is the largest cement-block church in the Niger Delta and cost (including furniture) over £17,200 […] the heavy cost […] was subscribed by the Chiefs and People inspired by their Paramount Chief Daniel Kalio who died shortly before the dedication.

E.I.T. Epelle (1955)

From Dress to Architecture:
(Re)presentation and Misappropriation

The temptation has always seemed to exist, especially in the minds of those Western Europeans whose careers are closely linked to their countries’ Colonialism, to open a place like Okrika to ridicule. Much of Richard Burton’s writing as he travelled through West Africa in the nineteenth century, is replete with examples172. To make reference to an author whose writing is not often thought of in those terms though, the British adventurer Hugh Clapperton provides some telling examples. Writing in 1829 of a journey through western Nigeria, and of a stopover in the Yoruba village of Ile-Agbo (Clapperton refers to it, transcribing as best he could the sounds he heard in the calling of its name, as ‘Laboo’), several days journey northwest from the coast and from the old slaving town (and port) of Badagry, Clapperton states that Ile-Agbo’s Chief "…misappropriated the vessel in which he (the Chief) presented us with water to drink [since] Mr. Houston (a travel companion) recognized [it] as a handsome

172 See for example Mission to Gelele Burton (1864[1966]), in which almost one such comment seems to occur every other page.
chamber-pot sold by him last year at Badagry." [emphasis is authors]

The attitude that Clapperton reveals here is not rare amongst Europeans writing on Africa, regardless of whether travelogues are involved or not. This attitude implies that the writer's own use for, and understanding of an object, which object clearly may serve other purposes, is necessarily the only legitimate one. Rather, that is, than recognize that meaning is always historically and situationally constructed, and that there is nothing essential about the use to which his own culture puts the object, European commentators tend instead to resort to ridiculing the reinvention of the object, always from the base of Europe as the center of meaning production.

For Europeans of the later periods and especially of the turn of the century by which time the various colonies had been established, such ridicule seems more transparent in its display of a certain anxiety, than it might be in other times. Perhaps as an inevitable result of the individualized tensions of enacting a colonial project, comments about native propriety would subsequently extend beyond the pleasures of ridiculing, to a desire for control of the meaning that other cultures might extend to the artifacts of European provenance now appropriated into an African framework of signification. As will be increasingly clear, this framework often involved the reinvention of such an object within a largely localized schema, via a strategy of displacement.

The difficulty that many Europeans and Americans have experienced with this reversal of the vector of appropriation,

was best articulated circa-1900 by John Morel, who, disapproving of what he saw as the adoption of western attire by Africans, writes:

Why cannot the (Colonial) Administration and the missionary societies combine in some practical, positive form, to combat this curse of alien dress? There is absolutely nothing to be said in its favour. The West African looks better in African dress, the robe of the Mohammedan and of many pagan Africans. It is much healthier for him. It is preservative of his racial identity; and that is, perhaps, the most important of all pleas which can be put forward for its retention. With very slight modification—such as one sees among the native staff, and personal servants in many parts of Northern Nigeria— it can be made suitable for any form of labour, literary or otherwise. Clad in his national dress the African has a dignity which in most cases he loses almost entirely when he attires himself in a costume totally unfitted for the country, and hideous at best. Nothing is more pitiable than to visit school after school in West Africa, filled with... boys and girls in an alien dress, to see the denationalization process going on day after day and nothing done whatsoever to stop it.174

It would have been interesting then to discover the interpretative perspective offered, were a European to have been faced in the early 1920s with the pinnacled, three-storied house (fig 17) located at Okrika, one of the buildings that becomes central to this dissertation, and which is located in the near coastal town of Okrika. This house is one of the seven or so buildings that become central to the focus of this inquiry; the only one of the group which has a multiplicity of real and metaphoric linkages (as will become clear) to the universe of actual clothing generally, and of covering more specifically175. It seems likely that the

174 Unreferenced extract quoted in a footnote by Amaury Talbot (1913) Tribes of the Niger Delta.

175 Allusion is intended here to the covering over of the surface of the building by the repetition of floral ornamentation.
imaginary European's interpretation would probably have been little different from, if perhaps more strident than, the kinds of statements that has been reviewed in previous chapters, and which were made even by Europeans writing in our contemporary period about similar buildings in related places.

From a distance, this house does not appear unique for the European structures of the eastern coast of West Africa, apart perhaps from its huge size which surpasses any of the small number of Okrika town's large late nineteenth and early twentieth century buildings. Also setting this house apart is the silhouette of its roof-line which is dominated by what from this distance would appear to be a row of projectiles. Viewed, in other words, from any of the four roadways (these would most likely have once been footpaths, and would most likely have been so in the 1920s) off of which one has access into the block on which the house is located, it is simply a large, grey, rectangular, three-storey building, to which a second glance might not be given, were it not for its riveting and almost literal crown; a row of crenellations placed around the edge of its roof's perimeter. Even this second glance might yet perceive it as a rather idiosyncratic but nevertheless recognizable European house, perhaps what in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was known as a 'factory'; it may also possibly be regarded as the former residence of a European merchant, or the abandoned house of a one-time high-ranking Colonial administrator. In fact, as becomes clear subsequently, because the crenellations may not have been intended from the start to be a part of the building, the former may well have once been absent from the latter's roof-line. Both initially, and for most of the earlier part of the building's existence therefore, this structure would thus have
appeared even more normatively European at that moment of its practical completion in the 1920s than it does now.

On approaching the building more closely (fig 18), it begins to take on a more particular and distinct form, which with or without the crenellations, begins to dissolve its distanced European form. The rectangular envelope is divided vertically into a series of equal bays, defined by engaged pilasters. One pair of the sides of the building (the shorter sides), consist of four bays, each one containing a pair of rectangular window openings. On the longer sides, one half bay has been added to the length of the elevation, at the location which marks the center-line of the elevation, and the ground level of which marks the main entry to the building.

Apart from the rectangular windows (one pair allocated per bay at each floor level), the massive volume is only breached in any significant manner by the location of a veranda along part of the sides of two faces of the building. These verandas, which are framed by a short, arched colonnade, occur moreover at the ground level only.

The ornamental detail of the house may, as is revealed from this closer viewing, appear perplexing to the viewer, especially so were the observer to be an individual schooled on the norms of European style. This is because the house combines certain elements of an architectural vocabulary that are clearly recognizable as deriving from European practice, with other elements whose sources are not as easily identified. Furthermore, such unprecedented elements are given prominence through either being larger than life, or by extending beyond the boundaries to which they might be confined in European practice. This renders elements like the
crenellations at the top, or the relief decoration of the house's main body, unavoidably visible --one only from a distance, the other only when close up.

Among the elements that may be clearly identified as having, in this particular context (but not necessarily in other contexts in southeastern Nigeria), an origin in Europe or in the New World, might be included the following: firstly, the idea of a multi-storey structure, from which the building's towering presence derives, is not known even at a reduced scale in the pre-colonial architecture\textsuperscript{176} of the Izhon, the ethnic group to which the majority of Kirikeni or Okiriké (or Okrikans in the parlance of British English) belong. Secondly, this vertical multiplicity is remarked by the emphasis projected on its floor-by-floor division by the application of a surrounding external cornice wrapped around the whole perimeter; an articulation absent say from multi-storey structures customarily found amongst other ethnic groups with whom Izhon people may have been in contact (such as the Awka Igbo) amongst whom the multi-storey structure seems to have been known. The sectional form of these moldings, and their [morticed] turns around the corners of the pilasters are also European derived. Finally, the presence of a dado line at the uppermost level, as well as of a cornice supporting a roof which is seemingly a flat one, are utilized in this building within a European syntax.

Indeed the very difficulty of rendering such a description in anything but a specialized English vocabulary (it would be

\textsuperscript{176} For this aspect in particular, it may be reiterated that there is evidence to suggest that in other contexts in south eastern Nigeria as for example in the customary architecture of the Awka Igbos, as indeed in the architecture of the more northerly cultures of Hausaland or in Nuna and Sisala territory, the double-storey house appears to have been in use before the modern era.
impossible to describe the same sets of articulation for this house in Izhon) might be seen already as an indication of at least a historical connection of some kind to the architecture of Europe, or to the forms this architecture took in the nearby colonial town of Aba\textsuperscript{177} or of the older and more distant one of Enugu.

Moreover, two characteristics of the windows themselves not only derive from, but show a familiarity with pre-modern European architecture. These include the window architraves, which mimic the sectional forms of the cornice, as well as the cantilevering corbels (or brackets) at either end of the window’s upper part (fig 19). Here, they seem intended as support for the horizontal planks which (had the building actually been completed) would have protected the windows from direct sunlight.

Approaching the house from a distance, it is difficult to be certain of what the house is made. Aspects of its exterior depart from any building tradition that comes easily to mind. It appears at first as if it might be a rusticated cut-stone masonry building. However, a closer observation, paying attention in particular to the regularity and consistency of the floral ornamentation which is used to cover the entire surface of the building, suggests that it most likely was built of concrete blocks. Each block would have been formed in a single mold (or possibly in two molds) designed (and incised) to produce the floral ornamentation on one or two of its surfaces. It is much less probable that its ornamentation

\textsuperscript{177} Aba’s first colonial buildings would have been built in about 1904, when the ‘Native Court’ was established. The kinds of buildings with a grandeur that could possibly have influenced this house were however erected only after 1921, the year in which it became a so-called Second Class Township (Nwaiguru [1973] p75 and 94).
results from an individual's hand-crafted plasterwork applied to the surface after the building was up (or while it was being erected). This is judged by the degree to which the ornamentation is repetitive, and by the occasional non-matched abutting of sections of the pattern, which occurrence would not be expected in a process in which the entire pre-erected surface had been worked one block surface at a time. What is more difficult to determine is whether more than one kind of mold was used, since the placements of the pattern in varying locations and situations imply that there were either three molds developed to deal with all possible situations (piers, quoins etc), or that one three-sided mold alone was used in every situation, even when the relief (being located in a non-exposed location) might make the block laying process more difficult to achieve within more usual variation of mortar-joint dimension. Whatever the material for construction turns out to be, the wall certainly consists of equally sized units, laid continuously in staggered vertical joints, a masonry style that is common for brick and stone structures in Europe.

The design of the ornamental stencil for the cement-block decorated face is itself composed around a bi-axially symmetrical axis. It consists of a center marked by a form that is rectangular on plan, but which is serrated and sometimes also undulating in profile. This is surrounded by a near-floral scheme of sinuous scrolled lines, some of which end in a bulbous node.

It may be fair to compare this decorative 'stencil' with European and American examples which may be roughly contemporary with it, especially since the idea of a repeat pattern to a more extensive floral design is known to have
been popular, especially in terracotta, in places as different as Chicago, Paris and Vienna.

A comparison of these forms with the one applied to the Okrika house, suggests that one of the ideas which were current in European and American architecture of the 1920s, and which involved the employment of terracotta units that were bi-axially symmetrical, is the conceptual basis also of the Okrika house's own ornamental design. So also is the particular manner in which the floral pattern ends in a scroll-like swell, located to border the edges of the rectangular unit (see fig. 18). Moreover, the center of the unit (the point at which the axes intersect), is marked by an ornamental element, in the same way as it is for similar designs in the European pattern book. It is obvious for example that the stencil for the Okrika house is a more rustic, modern version of the kind of ornamental design represented for example (and only as a general reference) by one of the oblong panels that are found in Meyer's 1888 pattern book Ornamentale Formenlehre (fig. 20).

It therefore seems likely that the designer of the Okrika 'stencil' is not unfamiliar with some of these European or American ideas if only in a generalized sense, though in what form exactly these found their way to Okrika, is a detail which may never be known. With the European or American

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178 Here, reference is made moreover not to the high terracotta styles of modern architects such as Louis Sullivan, or Otto Wagner, but rather to the much more common of-the-shelf product which was purchasable from a catalogued pattern book.

179 Available in a modified English translation as Handbook of Ornament (New York, Dove Publications Inc., 1957.)

180 As will become clear however, after the British, Germans were the most influential Europeans here in the period before 1914.
examples, the ornamented block units are used to emphasize particular architectural elements of the building (such as a window or a pediment), or to articulate its surface (demarcating the meeting of wall with roof or parapet for example). What is however uncharacteristic of them is a departure from such restraint, and an extension of the ornamentation to cover the whole surface of the building.

Indeed in European terms, such a covering over might well disqualify the schema being considered ornamentation, since the latter would normally be understood as an embellishment to a fabric rather than the stuff of the fabric itself. At this point in this text, it would be premature to offer alternative understandings of the idea behind the ornamental scheme, except that here it may be noted in a preliminary sense that this all-over approach might, paradoxically (given the general source of the motif’s design), be thought to rupture this building’s supposed mimicry of European architecture.

As previously mentioned, at the roof level of the house are a row of objects (fig 21) which are difficult to name, because their origin is obscure. To label them as a balustrade seems inaccurate since they are much larger objects than balusters ever are. For the present, depending on what visual meaning might have been intended, the use of the term crenellations (or even of the term battlements) if one wants to think of

181 Perhaps with the exception of a few buildings in Vienna, most recently in the early century work of Otto Wagner, or of others in Europe (Tony Garnier) of America (Frank Lloyd Wright), each one of whose architect’s are known to have been influenced by Islamic architecture (the Viennese and France examples) or by Japanese architecture and design (in Wright’s case).

182 In a subsequent chapter an interpretation will be offered, especially with regard to forms of architectural (and body) ornamentation in south eastern Nigeria, which seems to lend support to this supposition.
them as defensive in even a metaphoric sense, or of acroteria
and pinnacle if one wants to be neutral, must suffice in order
to describe them.

Each pinnacle, apparently cast in cement concrete, stands half
a story high. They are linked together by a system of diagonal
bracing reminiscent of fencing. The difference between the
width of each pinnacle and the thickness of the braces,
suggests initially that the latter might be a temporary wooden
support. However they are also appear to be cast in concrete.
The complexity that would be involved in installing the whole
composition is thus doubly apparent.

The lozenge pattern effect of the bracing recalls a
concertina, and creates a tension between the apparent
regularity of the pinnacle spacing and the possibility that
they in fact become progressively more closely spaced as the
center is approached. This forces a closer inspection since
were the discovery made that the five central pinnacles are
spaced increasingly more closely as one reaches the central
one, it might be meaningful and worthy of further comment.
However, upon measuring the spacing, it confirms instead that
the spacing is regular and unwavering (this goes somewhat
against the visual impression). The suggestion of
extendibility or compressibility (reminiscent of the braced
structure that underlies a concertina) derives instead then
from a different placement of the braces themselves. They
start off at the ends of the row, bestriding the bases of the
pinnacles. As the eye travels in from the building’s edge, the
lattice of bracing becomes increasingly extended, so that
their feet fail to touch the bases of adjacent pinnacles. This
creates the subtle illusion of a narrowing of the spacing as
one approaches the elevation’s center line. However, based on
the evidence the building presents, it is not possible to understand how or why this difference in the lay of the bracing has come about, or whether it may be interpreted in any particular way.

The pinnacles themselves are distinctive both as objects and as installation, displaying as they do a significant sculptural complexity. They consist of three main sections; a rectangular shaft that is assembled from two equal sections, topped by a tapered pyramidal cap. The pinnacles are however placed diagonally, so that from the front we are presented with their sharp edge, and so that we are therefore quite aware of their massive nature (because both sides of the square are visible).

Cast together with, and around each half of the shaft is a hexagonal ring, whose own sides clash with the square section of the pinnacle it surrounds, the former having been placed diagonally within the ring. For this reason however, the edges of the ring are themselves aligned with the plane of the building’s elevation.

Furthermore, the pinnacles at each of the four corners of the house’s rectangular plan-form are different in several ways from all the other pillars in between them. Though the hexagonal rings which gird them appear to be the very same ones, the corner shafts themselves are fatter than the shafts of the other pinnacles because they are hexagonal in section while having sides of the same length as the square sectioned shafts. However, the pinnacles at the corners do have taller shafts, an extra ring close to its top, and a hexagonal plan (and again therefore larger) pyramidal cap to top it off. What these pinnacles and their assembly are meant to represent, or
what the source of their forms might be is unrecoverable from
the evidence of the building alone.

Even an attempt to speculate on these matters of meaning
ultimately proves to be futile (or difficult at least), as
the following illustration reveals. Given that at this point
in the narration, the date in which the building was erected
is not forthcoming, it is reasonable to imagine three
scenarios which may have provided plausible contexts for the
building’s inspiration. The creator (or creators) of the
building could firstly have had some familiarity or contact
with European architecture in the form of the pinnacles that
line the side elevations of European Gothic cathedrals and of
neo-Gothic buildings like London’s Westminster Abbey; a
contact which even if as minimal as that granted by a post
card, might well have been influential. In the neo-Gothic
building especially, the pinnacle was often simplified so that
its section was square or hexagonal, and that it terminated
in a pyramidal shape. This is found to be so for example of
the terminal buttress finials (or pinnacles) at Westminster
Abbey, London, and also at Battle Church in Sussex (fig. 22).
However, this could only be seen as a very loose
interpretation since the cap here in the Okrikican house is
different from this English model in important ways. It is
much more squat for one, and moreover, its base is larger than
the shaft on which it sits, which rarely if ever was the case
with the English Gothic pinnacle.

Though specific historical evidence of this is not known to
the present writer, the inspiration for the Okrika house’s
pinnacles might on the other hand be much closer to home; say
in the form of the late nineteenth century Gothic styled
CHrist’s Church Cathedral, on the Lagos Marina (fig. 23): A
case that is, of the high architecture of the Colonial metropolis being reinterpreted for domestic purposes in Okrika over 500 miles away along the coast. Certainly, this might be seen as an attempt which uses such an element (the pinnacles) in order to acquire the grandeur of the architecture of the cathedral building for purposes that are not easily predicted.

Taken together nevertheless, the Okrika building may yet sustain an hypothesis which thinks it to project the image of a not-so-vague European ancestry; or at least to project the image of a Colonial House possessed (what charm!) of certain idiosyncracies\(^{183}\). It could, that is, easily be passed over for a European building, perhaps a little idiosyncratic for the limitations of the place of its erection, or for the handicaps that its possibly Europeanized-African owner might have had in attempting to emulate the buildings of his supposed civilizers.

Neither the specific building from which the inspiration is derived, nor the transformation that the inspirational object has undergone in translation, is as important as the fact that in the creative world of Okrika, the boundaries of architectural typology, as ordered in the 19th century western world, is not recognized in this three storey house (though unlike some buildings introduced in a later chapter, what is proper to architecture per se does seem to be recognized). Its embellishment seems, in the use of pinnacles, to reject a restriction to ‘appropriate’ inspiration from the vocabulary of English domestic architecture, and instead seeks to borrow from the typology of the church building. It is in other words

\(^{183}\) This certainly is the manner in which the Manga-Bell palace in Douala (Cameroon) has been interpreted (Lauber 1988 op.cit.), as has also the Aka Lambert residence in Grand Lahou, Cote D’Ivoire (Salvaing op. cit, pp125-26).
most interesting for the possibility that here some aspects of an architecture which in Europe would be a marker of religious institution are combined with domestic architecture. This breakdown of the categories proper to the European world might be noted here, for it will become clear that this is one of the hallmark characteristics of much of the architecture unfolded in subsequent pages. This fragmentation and re-assembly according to different rules may be the closest this terrain of turn of the century southeastern Nigeria buildings comes to anything that might be labelled a style. If this were the case, and whether or not its creators were conscious of this, it might suggest that the typological and ontological content of European categories, were of no import in the context of this particular invention. It is this characteristic in fact that will demand an explanation.

Even the fact that this building is today occupied partially by a fledgling charismatic church, and that this congregation rents its space from the Nigerian family who appear to be its present owners, does not seem necessarily to contradict the assumption that the building’s cultural location (if not its origins) are in part European and that it would (or might) once have been occupied by Europeans. Given especially that Nigeria has been rescued from its status as colony for several decades now, there seems no reason to expect such a building to continue in the possession of Europeans, who after all, had subsequently ceased to maintain a significant presence here.

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184 In Okrika, such a presence seems, moreover, to have been only quite minimal, with Bonny having been the superior commercial power and more natural point of attraction for European traders, while from the installation of the colonial administration, the nearby location of Buguma, became the residential and administrative focus of a different kind of White presence.
The evidence of the present occupancy, it is suggested, is not likely to provide enough testimony to suggest that its original occupant would not have been European. This is because a third scenario may be imagined; one in which a formerly European owned building, has subsequently been acquired by a southeast Nigerian family, following on the heels of the withdrawal of its European owners during the periods of the 1950s when at the level of the Nigerian state at least, Independence was beginning to appear imminent. The acroteria which betray the surest markings of a non-European sensibility might then have been added only after this acquisition.

Certainly, for the European observer, especially if viewing from a distance (and for some even if viewing from close up) it would have been difficult to assume that the house in Okrika could be, in days gone by as today, in any way an 'authentic' part of Okrikan reality and culture. This latter view is, not surprisingly, confirmed in what little has actually been written about Okrikan life, either in the past, or today, by anthropologists and historians of culture, whether European, American or Nigerian. Neither this house, nor other similarly large houses in the town have made it into the pages of texts on Okrika. This seems to confirm the proposition that in the era in which it was erected (the early 1920s according to one informant), and judged by any standard inventible for Europe, the European observers visiting the town then would most likely have taken the structure for a Colonial building.
Indeed, Amaury Talbot, government anthropologist turned Colonial administration official\textsuperscript{185} seems to have made this seemingly easy classification, judging by what is included in his own writing. He seems to have had (or found) no reason to include this house, or other buildings of its kind in the Kalabari-Izhon region, in his description of dwelling styles and types in southern Nigeria\textsuperscript{186} and of building practice in Okrika specifically. His statement made of the architecture he found amongst Izhon-speaking Kalabari people of what is today the Nigerian state known as ‘Rivers’ indicates his framework:

The ‘bush’ Ijaw [i.e Izhon] live in wretched-looking, rectangular dwellings with walls consisting usually of sticks, palm mid-ribs or rough-hewn planks, with the interstices occasionally filled in by mud. The roofs are always of palm-leaf mat. The house is sometimes divided into two by matting, and at one end is the fireplace, over which are racks for storing or smoking fish. Among the richer Kalabari the houses are usually in three parts, the central or general room called Boikiri, contains the shrine to Tamuno. [...] In those regions, however, such as Abonema, where clay is available, square compounds are raised which enclose a large open space surrounded by clay walls or corrugated iron fencing, inside of which various houses are grouped; often these latter are of European pattern. Many chiefs possess "storied" houses of the bungalow type, and corrugated iron roofs are used by all who can afford them. At Okrika, contrary to general custom, it is the women who make palm leaf mats.\textsuperscript{187}

The ‘storied house’ type mentioned in the above statement by Talbot will be returned to elsewhere (see Chapter 9). For the

\textsuperscript{185} This is widely known now of course, but for the present writer, was made manifest in letters found at the National Archive at Enugu, one of which refers to him as the Acting Resident of Awka.

\textsuperscript{186} Talbot (1926 vl: 880-909).

\textsuperscript{187} Ibid, p888-889.
moment the reader might rest with the certainty that Talbot’s storied house is for sure not the kind that has been described here so far. Nevertheless, at least as far as Talbot is concerned, any house that is not ‘wretched looking’, of ‘mud’ and planks, and palm-leaf mat, must therefore be the European type. And, although it cannot be known for certain whether or not he did come across the three storied house in Okrika described earlier, it seems certain from the text, that he did visit Okrika in person. At least by proxy, or by omission then, the hypothetical reaction suggested as representing the likely European response to the house, seems confirmed".

Of course, in order to judge the legitimacy of such a response, much more needs to be discovered about the building, about its relationship to the town of Okrika as a place, and about the house’s location within the physical fabric and intellectual culture of the town. These issues will be revisited both later on in this chapter, and subsequently (chapter 6, 7 and 8).

St. Peters Church, Okrika
For the present however, another building in the vicinity of the one just described, a church building known as St. Peter’s (fig. 24), offers the possibility of imagining further the way in which the same categorical consignment spoken of in the above paragraphs might easily have been (and indeed seems to have been) extended other buildings. Its importance lies

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188 Given that the house is said to have been commenced in 1924, it is likely that it would have been under construction in the time that Talbot would have toured the area for. Nevertheless, as it is not the oldest such building in Okrika (which honor goes to the Koko house and one or two others that followed it) the point still appears to hold.
however in the fact that unlike the house at Okrika, this church building presents its viewer with direct, public declarations by those who were its patrons, which declarations seem (and this becomes evident) to posit themselves more directly as a challenge to the kinds of view that one might, especially if the viewer is of the West, be tempted to extend to it.

St. Peter’s Church, Okrika, shares with the large three storey house in its vicinity not only a common constructional material, and a similar approach to the use of the material, but also the same historical moment: the church building is said, by townsfolk, to have been commenced only a few months before the house.

The church building is, as will be shown just below, an uncannily faithful reproduction of a particular kind of European church architecture. Perhaps, it might be argued, this church building is a more accurate reproduction of the European church building’s form and fabric than is the cathedral building at Daloa in the Ivory Coast which was referenced in the previous chapter in a statement by Salvaing (1985)\(^{189}\).

For a like-minded Briton in fact, Salvaing’s statement concerning the Cathedral at Daloa (see fig. 16), and of which it was asserted had ‘.... nothing of Africa, and could well have been built in a small Spanish village for example...’, might easily be made also for St. Peter’s Church. All that need be altered would be the reference to Spain, substituting in its stead, a reference to either England or to Scotland.

\(^{189}\) See p____ , earlier on in this dissertation.
Certainly, St. Peter's resembles many an English or a Scottish parish church. It could easily be thought of for example as one of the many nineteenth century Scottish church buildings whose inspiration might have derived from St. Monan's (fig. 25) or the Inverkeithing Parish Church (fig. 26), both 14th century churches which are well known in Scotland, and which were available as models for many other churches right up to the early twentieth century and the architecture of William Lethaby. Such an assumption may even be lent a closer historical legitimacy, since it is known that in nineteenth century missionary work in southern Nigeria, the Presbyterians and the Methodists (both Scottish headquartered Churches) were initially very active in this general area (most specifically further east nearer, and including, the town of Calabar), and that therefore (if one assumes that its missionaries would also be Scottish themselves) it stands to reason that the Churches they would erect, would follow closely the lines of the church buildings of their homeland. This may be entertained for no more reason than that the Scottish missionary might be most familiar with the constructional processes of this kind of architecture (and might possess the corresponding skills to organize a repetition in Nigeria), more so certainly than if they were to attempt for example to recall the more strictly Neo-Gothic styles. This latter was after all becoming the preferred form of Church architecture in England, so that it may be argued that this fad accounts on the other hand for the more elaborate, more 'perpendicular style' forms taken by two impressive Anglican church buildings (previously referenced [fig.23]) five hundred or so miles away in metropolitan Lagos.

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Upon encountering St. Peters in Izhon-speaking Okrika, Rivers State, the above missionary reference to Scotland and England notwithstanding, one might in fact be forgiven for assuming (along with one of the present writer's earlier hypothetical scenarios), that this building is an early twentieth century product of a European expatriate community, given that there is in addition a widely published set of materials which passing for Okrikan early history and Okrikan ethnography\textsuperscript{191}, might appear to support such a supposition. Perhaps, it might be thought, this is one of the churches intentionally built and designated as exclusively for non-African use; for ministering that is to the white trading communities of coastal society\textsuperscript{192}. St. Peters Church might (though this might of course be in error) easily be posited as the church that the European community may have built for itself and into which the expatriate Christian community of other African (or Afro-Caribbean) places\textsuperscript{93} were 'privileged' also to be admitted. As will be obvious subsequently, such churches appear to have been established up and down the coast, with the general understanding that the local African populations, even if being persuaded by missionaries to convert to Christianity, were not welcome to these particular congregations\textsuperscript{194}. Members and attendants of the expatriate...

\textsuperscript{191} Discussed subsequently (14 pages from here)

\textsuperscript{192} The paradox of this segregationist idea was apparently not lost, as will become clear, on newly Christianized Africans at the time

\textsuperscript{193} Sierra Leone, Liberia and Jamaica for example.

\textsuperscript{194} Several such churches are mentioned over several centuries for the European forts and castles of the 'Gold Coast'. Indeed this is likely to be the place in which the idea of a segregated church was crystallized. In the context of the Niger Delta, one might think of the church St. Clement's of which Epelle (1955:15) writes: '...The church provided opportunity for worship by Europeans resident on the River (Bonny) as well as by the European passengers, missionaries, travellers and others to or from
church were not presumed to be part of the local missionary diocese. And, should this possibility prove not to be the case, another feasible explanation might be to suppose that if it functions normally in the African community today, then it represents such an expatriates-only church subsequently taken over by the larger local ministry, at the point when Europeans withdrew from these places.195 Failing that, one last explanation would be that it is a relatively recent building, perhaps dating to the late 1950s or the early 1960s, erected by a then fully westernized and mature native-managed Church.

However, such a characterization of the St. Peter’s building as Scottish, as the European church abroad, were it ever to be made, is challenged rather directly by a bronze plaque (fig. 27) that seems contemporary with the Church building, and which asserts (and in English no less) the following in unequivocal terms:

This tablet is to commemorate the efforts of the following Chiefs of Okrika and their people... who alone subscribed the funds to erect this church.....

after which it then lists the building’s patrons, chiefs and sub-chiefs all, including Daniel Kalio, John Fliberesima, and

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195 St. Saviours Anglican Church in Lagos may for example have been the last outhold of this idea, to the extent that up till 1991 (when a political struggle for control of the church seems to have occurred), it was legally not subject to the authority of the Anglican Church of Nigeria (though to all intents and purposes this had been so for many decades. It was only a dispute over leadership of the church (which dispute was tragically tempered with Igbo-Yoruba inter-ethnic rivalry), in which one group’s claim was bolstered by an appeal to the church’s independent status, that to the other group (about to be forced to capitulate because of a pending ruling from a Court in Lagos), countered by calling on the Military government to overrule such a ruling by Decree, based on a patriotically phrased question whether such a status was acceptable within the Nigerian state. Not given the opportunity to have the issue subjected as one might expect to the legal system and to the workings of the supreme court, General Babangida’s administration ruled unilaterally that the Church’s special status was rescinded. Though therefore played out ultimately between two Nigerian groups, it clarified the degree to which Europeans had established a Church separate from the larger church of which they had helped found in the missionary era.
Minanyo Adinemibo. The full list of names are recognizable as Kirikéni names (see fig 27).

It would perhaps not be valid to take this statement at face value by regarding it as transparent. It is difficult at this stage in the investigation to know what to suppose of the actual builders of the Church, since they have left little to identify them with specificity. Certainly, one admits that a nativity of a community of subscribers need not coincide with that of a project’s builders. Indeed, there are some in Okrika today who believe that Germans were central to St. Peters’ existence (that they constituted its designers, stone-masons and engineers). However, two earlier churches (the first in 1880) are known to have been erected here by the same congregation. For these earlier forms of St. Peter’s, the nativity of their builders is quite certainly local. Indeed the Church at Okrika (as a religious institution) seems to have been founded by a skilled builder. The first evangelist to Okrika (who became its quasi-priest), was a carpenter (Mr. Oruwari). He came from the town of Nembe (Brass) primarily in order to build an ‘English type’ house for Chief Ogan196, but had ended up also erecting ‘...a small church covered over with galvanized sheetings...’197 There is reason then to

196 The fate of this house is revisited in chapter 10. There, it becomes clear that this fate is in fact quite critical for one of the central arguments of this investigation.

197 See Epelle (1955: 31). It should be mentioned that Fiberesima (1990:81-82) claims without revealing his sources that a Mr. Cullum, British builder in Lagos, was first approached when the project for the present building was first formulated. He is said to have duped Okrika of £4,000 (4,000 pounds), having been paid for a building which he never produced. Fiberesima attributes the present building to a Messrs. Green & Co. Ltd (also of Lagos), who ‘built a magnificent edifice for the people’. However, the company’s country of origin is not specified. Having been once duped by a non-Nigerian who is said to have fled, it is reasonable in the circumstance to imagine Okrika next insisting on a Nigeria originated company. Green is, incidentally, a not uncommon Izhon family name (the Greens of Bonny, a dynasty of sorts in the history of western medical practice in southeast Nigeria, being perhaps the best known example). Green and Co. may turn out, despite one’s initially supposing them British, to been founded by Izhons.
assume that by 1923, the technology and building culture employed in building St. Peter's would not have been difficult to recruit here. This seems confirmed by the cluster of other denominational church building's in Okrika, two of which were founded around 1924 (fig. 28). Other issues may be camouflaged by the declaration crystallized around the term 'alone': Its assertiveness might suggest a ground that is contested not simply after the event, but at the very moment in which both the church building and the plaque are erected. 198

Fortunately, historical contexts exist to suggest the kinds of discourse against which (and in which) this statement might be placed to yield its specific meaning. The most likely origin for this inscription's tone is the dispute which had unfolded only a decade earlier within the Anglican missionary communion of this locality's diocese 199, over the issue of who should be appointed as the new diocesan Bishop, following the imminent retirement of Bishop Dandenson Crowther 200.

198 A degree of certainty surrounds the period in which the plaque was installed. It was probably installed as the building was being erected, because the church's foundation stone itself is dated July 5th, 1924, and is cast in a similar manner (and in the same bronze material) as is the plaque. The foundation stone was laid by a 'Lieut. Colonel Moorhouse, C.M.G., D.S.O.,' described as the Lieutenant Governor. The stone's text terminates with a biblical quotation, from Nehemiah ch.4 v.6, which states "...so we built for the people had a mind to work." [emphasis mine]. This verse may seem to contradict the independence claimed by the interior plaque itself. The reverence the former shows for a military ranked governor, and one whose name moreover is linked with a people who had a 'mind to work' (not to mention the problematic presented by the 'we'), is cause for pessimism. However, given that it is a situation circumscribed by Coloniality, and recognizing that the colonial state is separate from the trading and missionary communities who co-inhabited the coast, the interior plaque's force need not be lost. Moreover, as will become clear, the erection of such churches was often communally undertaken, employing volunteer labor. The biblical verse then probably refers to enthusiastic communal support for the project once its wealthier citizens were prepared to finance it.

199 At the time this was known as the Niger Delta Pastorate.

200 Dandenson Crowther was the London-educated seminarian, son of the Yoruba Sierra Leoni Bishop Ajai Crowther (see chapter 1). It will be suggested then that the tone of the 1924 plaque resonates with the ramifications of the dispute over the new appointment (detailed next), and that its pain still seems felt in Okrika and throughout south eastern Nigeria, even this many years later.
It seems that many of the then (1920s) new African congregations in southeastern Nigeria, and certainly the one at Okrika, insisted that Bishop Crowther, a Black Bishop, be replaced by another Black person and not by a white missionary as was being suggested from England, the claim which such protests communicate giving the impression that for the local Africans the appointment of a European bishop would be regarded by themselves as retrograde. This politics is not surprising, given that this diocese represents one in which for most of its history of mission, the clergy happened to have been either African or of African descent. That is, because Christian proselytizing here was achieved almost solely through West African agency, the religion was from the start ‘possessed’ by the community in a manner that would render it less alien than it would otherwise have been had it from the start been fronted, as was more typical, by Oxford and Cambridge trained white men. Here, instead, Africans had converted other Africans. This congregation was therefore more divorced from the connection to colonialism than is the case in other situations on the coast.

Indeed this resistance seems deeply rooted, judging by the fact that (amongst other things) it ultimately lead to a secession from the church of a significant section of its ‘flock’ in the founding of the prophetic and faith-healing centered Christ Army Church. Yet, if the appointment of a Black Bishop (A.W. Howell) to appease the remaining congregation might be satisfactory for one location, it appears that such an appointment was not a policy generally enacted, to the extent that at the end of 1921 ‘...there were some disturbances in some of the oldest districts-- Bonny, opobo and Okrika. The disturbances took the nature of some dissatisfaction of the people in their Pastors who were all foreigners, and necessitated the immediate presence and action of Bishop Howell who had scarcely settled down to work. (My emphasis) {Epelle [1955:57]).

There were apparently some populations that did not take this stand, but instead actively sought the offices of a White bishop. In the case of another coastal town, Opobo, its Igbo-born and Izhon-naturalized King, Jaja, went as far as to threaten a mass conversion of his people from Anglicanism to Presbyterianism, was Crowther not to be replaced by a white bishop. Such positions were however only possible at locations like Opobo, were a leader had acquired so much power that he could forswear dissent. Jaja’s motive in making such a demand appears to be based not so much on a colonial mentality, as on the shrewd connection he made between the presence of white missionaries in a location, and the
Moreover, in pursuing the demand for the continuation of the precedent set by Crowther, the larger congregation of what is now known territorially as the Rivers State (i.e. the Nigerian state named Rivers), then called in the Church Missionary Society’s stated policy that churches become financially and administratively independent as soon as they could. To the horror of Salisbury square (and Canterbury by extension)\(^{203}\), the demand became quite strident, and could, moreover, hardly be refused without exposing a racism which appeared to have been entrenched in the project from the start\(^{204}\).

It seems clear that it was in celebration of the ultimate achievement of this ‘independence’ that the plaque was thought a necessary object to be included in the church’s fabric. It may thus be confirmed that the statements affirmation is directed at keeping such a morale alive amongst Okrikans, as it also challenges the European, whether the Colonial person, the transient merchant, or the visiting prelate (at the time still European) of the wider Episcopate of West Africa\(^{205}\).

Returning to our interest in the formation of subsequent European views of African architecture, it becomes clear that the plaque seems to throw down the gauntlet, though not

\(^{203}\) See Ayandele op. cit., 226-227

\(^{204}\) Ayandele op. cit., p

\(^{205}\) Epelle op. cit., p57 describes this determination effectively thus: ‘January 29, 1929 [saw] the dedication of Saint Peter’s Church, Okrika.... There was a large concourse of people from the various parts of the country, including several Europeans. Before the dedication the Chiefs of Okrika, as representing themselves and the people of Okrika, made a declaration formally handing over the Church “in perpetuity” to the Niger Delta Church...’
necessarily consciously so, to the kinds of claims represented by the French-Ivorian project's hispanicization of the Ivorian church at Daloa. In fact, the texts both of the St. Peters Okrika church plaque and of Architecture Coloniale en Cote D'Ivoire seem to confront each other, and it seems possible to extract from their mutual contradiction a problem of cultural ownership. This latter issue will be re-encountered in subsequent chapters, and will be elaborated theoretically in the concluding chapter.

Clearly, the basis of the construction of the meaning that an architectural history of St. Peters might attempt, ought not to be, as it so often cannot be, separated from a local and contemporaneous interpretation of the object. The site of the production of St. Peters, including the texts by which it is orally and scripturally surrounded, and which text grants the building a meaning that differs considerably from what an imposed interpretation advances, needs inclusion whenever this is possible. As such, it will become obvious later on in this chapter that both St. Peter's Church and its neighboring three-storied house with which this chapter commenced, are linked in unexpected historical and textual ways to the context of other buildings in southeastern Nigeria, and perhaps more so than either one may be connected, despite the visual resemblances, to the buildings of Europe. Thus, other buildings than St. Peter's and the nearby house will intervene in the unravelling of this narrative and of the questions it poses.

In order to begin the tracing of such interventions, it is noted that it was from a long troubled and conflicted history of Christianity at the missionary centrifuge of Bonny (see map, fig. 29), that partly as a result of Bonny's Christians
fleeing persecution from the town's other citizens, or as a result of going up river to trade, the opportunities began to be offered up for bringing the message of the mission to other towns.

Mention needs perhaps be made, even if very briefly, of the diasporic history of the church in the Delta region from a Bonny locus, in order to contextualize the points entered into for Okrika itself. No narrative of Okrika's large scale entry into the world of international exchange would be tellable in fact without mention of the closely related town, Bonny, which lies further down (west) the same river on which Okrika is located. Due to the former's location, it has always had an advantage over other towns with entry into any network of coast-based international trade with Europeans, a geographical position which Bonny exploited successfully. However, Bonny was brought into regular conflict with Okrika over the latter town's constant desire to also partake of this trade, a conflict which sometimes took on the violence of a full blown war. Like other forms of exchange therefore, Christianity came to Okrika having first been introduced into Bonny.

The entry of the Mission into Bonny itself in the form of the Presbyterian Church operating from the coastal harbor town of Calabar further to the east, occurred at the invitation of Bonny's Amanyanabo, William Dappa Pepple. The protagonist was the now well-known Scottish missionary Hope Waddell, who himself had worked in other missions abroad, including a

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206 For a fuller and more detailed explication refer to Epelle(1955), Alagoa(1964), Tasie(1978).
previously successful career with missionary work in Jamaica. Hope Waddell is of course important for other reasons besides religious instruction, since he started one of the earliest technical schools in southeastern Nigeria, which fact is therefore critical for any understanding of the history of architectural culture here. For our immediate purpose, it is known that, seeking new terrain on which to expand the Presbyterian missionary project, on his own initiative he first visited Bonny in 1846, then again in 1849, on neither occasion of which there appears to have been any particular impact. Only after Bonny’s ruler, Amanyanabo (i.e. King) Dapper Pepple threw his support behind the new religion, was its success suddenly thinkable. In this regard, it shares much also, as will become clear, with the history of the Christian in-road into Okrika.

Amanyanabo Dapper Pepple’s conviction that Christianity might have something of value to offer his ‘subjects’ appears to result from an unlikely confluence of events. He had previously been exiled by the British colonial ‘administration’ to the Ascension Islands (in which he had remained for two years), because, and as has been the case elsewhere, he had offered resistance to British intrusions into his governance. Pepple was nevertheless apparently able to lodge a strong protest to Whitehall from his exile, to the extent that he was invited to London to plead his case.

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207 Waddell’s south eastern Nigerian project occurred in fact as a result of the constant pressure (and financial commitment) of Jamaicans of African descent (the vast majority in other words) who were members of his congregation. Jamaican social memory (and language) conserves a historical connection between themselves and south eastern Nigeria.

208 This aspect of his work is explored in more detail in chapter 6.
personally. In 1856 he was able to visit London specifically for this purpose. It seems to have been the impression made on him by English culture as he would have perceived it, and in particular the impossibility for him of disconnecting its state religion from its political power and its representation in grand buildings\textsuperscript{209}, that turned him suddenly into an ally of the missionary.

It was not the Presbyterians who would however benefit from the Amanyanabo's new disposition towards Christianity, but as might perhaps be expected in the context, it was instead the Church Missionary Society. Though only a sub-organization of the Church of England, (the Church after all of the British state), it is the case that this relationship would more often than not have given the Church Missionary Society leverage in interaction with the administrators of the colonial state that may have been more difficult for other denominations to achieve. In the person of the Sierra Leoni Yoruba Bishop, Crowther, the effective commencement of the sometimes traumatic, violent and contested growth of the mission in Bonny might be dated to 1864, seven years after the Niger Expedition in which Crowther had led an exploration of the 'interior', and which in 1857 had resulted in the establishment of a mission in Onitsha, the latter the other locus from which the expanding boundaries of the Christianized territory was traced.

If as the above indicates Bonny is then considered the center from which a new cultural idea disperses in the second half of the nineteenth century, the other towns that were soon influenced by Bonny's Christian community were Nembe, Abonema

\textsuperscript{209} Religion, politics and institutional architecture would have all been part of an undivided social topography of nineteenth century Izhonland.
and Okrika. Indeed, the Okrika Chief, Atoridibo, an apparently well known chief-priest of the local African religion (who was also a commercial business man, and apparently of Igbo ancestry), seems to have been on a somewhat routine visit to Bonny when he was struck by the orderliness of family prayer meetings of Christians homes, and by the philosophic role this daily ritual conferred on the family head (as preacher/guide to his own family). His was therefore a self-motivated conversion.

On his subsequent visits to Bonny, Atoridibo was accompanied by some of his new fellow Christian brethren who observed a larger Christian community’s existence for the first time. On their return to Okrika, they were filled with the joyful realization of how much a part of a wider community they were, to the extent that their evangelical tactics upon returning home were revealed in the new form of religious fervor they unleashed on the unsuspecting citizens of Okrika. This was in the 1878. By the time the Bishop of the Niger, Dandenson Crowther visited Okrika nearly three years later, the Christian population had grown rapidly, such that at the 1880 service he kept during this visit, some 400 people were in attendance, and it is reported (Epelle 1955:31) that by this time ‘A small church covered over with galvanized sheetings,

\[\text{The particular aspect of it he would have found exemplary, was that the family head would appear on such occasions to impart thoughtfulness and spiritual knowledge on a daily basis to his family in the form of a semi-formal instruction. Moreover, the prayer meeting created an opportunity for the head of the family to provide guidance to his household on matters (moral and ethical) related to action in what was then a highly transformative (and perhaps significantly more uncertain) world.} \]

\[\text{Fiberesima, op. cit.} \]
had been built by the Okrika Chiefs before the Archdeacon’s first visit. 212

What prompts the necessity for prioritizing local discourses in the attempt to interpret and to understand a building (searches for absolute truths may lead one astray), will be revealed by the way in which St. Peter’s itself seems to have been interpreted by other southeastern Nigerian communities. In one of the following chapters, for example, the town of Enugu Ukwu which is about a couple of hundred miles north of Okrika’s location, and in which another church building is located (Emmanuel Church), has its particular relevance. As will become apparent, the structure of the Emmanuel Church, Enugu Ukwu (fig 30) is formally different from St. Peter’s. Nevertheless, the design of the former is said, by some members of its community, to have been based on the latter; a fact which seems puzzling, given that the two buildings seem to share little in common when viewed simply in terms of their formal characteristics. The interesting fact then, is that just as Amaury Talbot the European saw a similarity between two buildings based on those buildings’ objecthood, so the Africans in this locality appear to observe a similarity between two buildings based apparently on the text surrounding each object separately213 and both objects together, and not (as is more generally the case) on a literal juxtaposition based on visual similarity.

212 It can hardly be gainsaid that this narrative clearly indicates that no non Okrikans were involved in its own Christianization and in the erection of its first Church building. Moreover, when a missionary finally did arrive in the town, it was in the form, yet again of a black Bishop.

213 The complex of oral narratives that recall the early period of trade with the coast, and which were used to offer answers to more specific, architectural questions which the present writer would ask.
This phenomenon calls for a momentary digression. The relevance of reference to St. Peter's in the face of another building which bears little formal resemblance to the church building of St. Peter's, indicates in very forthright terms that buildings do not come to us unmediated; and, a consideration of their mediating mechanisms must be incorporated into an attempt to understand any building with adequacy. Texts however may be uneven. One building may be surrounded by much written text, another by much oral text, and yet another by other buildings. Indeed, it might be claimed that the last category is the most proliferated for the buildings focused on here in the period that is of relevance to this work. For this reason, at least an equal attention seems demanded on the question of how buildings and their architecture may be rendered legible. And, this will form the focus of a subsequent chapter in which its problems become more critical. For the present, the main inquiry is resumed, and in continuing the discussion an attempt will be made to situate both the three storey building and St. Peter's Okrika within the kinds of building that surround them (analytically speaking and not necessarily in terms of their specific geographical locations), and to which they are historically connected.

St. Peter's Church building as a Problem of Colonial Inscription.

Though the idea of a tower was not completely alien to southeastern Nigerian architectural custom (Awka compounds are recorded to have included tower structures, fig. 31), within the compound as a security lookout [Dmochowski v 3]), the reader should not lose sight of the fantastic appearance the church's tower would have invoked for the local person who like most southeastern Nigerians would never have seen anything of its kind. Even for the Awka indigene in whose
tradition the tower existed, it would nevertheless be obvious that the church tower as a type was more gigantic than anything tradition would have erected. Nor should the familiarity of the present lead to a forgetting of the alternative colonization of aural space (and of a certain awe) which the sonorous church bell, perfectly in competition with the equally far-carrying ikoro drumming of the customary religious practices, would have instituted. As such, it can be imagined that the location of the church tower in relation to the church itself; that the degree to which the tower is intended as an independent, visible symbol of Christianity or as merged with the church's main body, as well as the degree to which is expressed the idea of the church as inseparable from the idea of 'towering', are attitudinal complexes which might seem to be communicable in church architecture.

Although (as will became clear) the bell tower located centrally over the main entrance seems most numerous as a type in the surviving architecture of this period in southeastern Nigeria, churches with the tower detached from the main body, standing separately at the side are not rare either. Nor are churches in which the tower is not only separated, but located a good distance away from the church building itself. However, for the early period on which we concentrate, churches with the tower at its side appear to proliferate the further south one is, and the closer to the coast that one travels. St. Peter's Okrika is a good example of this kind of church building. It is a substantial structure, larger than many of the churches in the region, and than any other described in detail as part of this work. Its main body consists of a rectangular basilica-style plan, ending in an apse which is in the form of a half-hexagon. The side elevation is divided into bays, which are single storey at the aisles, but double
storey with clerestory windows over the central nave. The front elevation consists of a vertical wall which terminates in the vertex of a triangular gable, above which a small cross has been affixed. Of St. Peter's, what strikes one is both the precision of its construction judged by its assemblage, and the architectural details which appear completely comfortable with, and knowledgeable of European architectural traditions. Not only are all the windows Gothic, but some of these are ornamented with floral rosettes, which for the centralized windows at the front and rear elevations become fully formed roses. In addition, they are articulated by such elements as a running architrave, which repeat the line of windows and doors when it enters their space (fig 32). The ornamental detail multiplies as the building is observed at a closer distance. From the crenellations at the top of the tower, to the stepped stone caps over the piers, from the leaded glazing of the windows, to the shuttering of the upper level window at the tower, the visitor is struck by its precise and confident European vocabulary (fig. 33). As had been suggested earlier, St. Peter's recalls then, and not without substantial success, any one of the many rustic Scottish church buildings of the late 14th or fifteenth centuries, as if up-rooted from its homeland and transplanted with few observable changes to its present Izhon site. The degree to which this sense is conveyed is unmatched by any of the other church buildings which will have been investigated by the end of the work.

However (and as has been detailed previously), this building challenges its observer more immediately than may others in its vicinity, not even allowing a momentary departure in which one might have savored (along with a then contemporary

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214 In particular, of the sort well represented by late 14th century post-Romanesque Scottish churches, St. Monan's Church, and the Parish Church at Inverkeithing.
European visitor) a self-satisfied and untestable speculation about its recentness. This is because, the interior plaque apart, the date of the church’s completion, 1923, is clearly visible from the street (fig. 34), installed for the world to see on a stone plaque which forms part of the building’s envelope, and at a level to indicate that it may have been inserted there when the church would have been about half way completed.

1923 is some eighteen years into British Colonial Rule of southern Nigeria. It is a decade after the completion of the idiosyncratic architecture of St. Saviour’s African Church, Buguma (fig 35), built a decade earlier. However, while the former fact might support the contention that St. Peter’s has got to be a European-built church for Europeans only, the latter building distinctly unorthodox though it is, by its nationalism (the African Church was founded after a revolt by black clergy against the racism they suffered within the missionary organization) contradicts the idea that Africans could not have been the erectors of St. Peters, even if its style is apparently taken verbatim from another culture.

It has been mentioned earlier that a tendency exists in English documents, especially when pressed by revolts against British impositions, to describe as savage, barbaric and primitive the community of Okrika, of Akwete, of Brass, of Bonny, and of many other coastal and inland people of south

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215 Records show for example a request from the Pastorate agent, Davison Showers on October 28, 1912 to be allowed to import, duty free from England, items of furniture for the church. Though we cannot be certain it is the seems likely, given the latter's grandeur, that the idea of importing furniture for its interior cannot be imagined for a lesser building than the structure now present. This suggests that, as indicated moreover by an inscription on the front, that the building has been in existence from as early as 1912. NAE: Riv Prof 3/6/260: Pastorate Church, Buguma.
eastern Nigeria in the first two decades of the twentieth century, by employing a plethora of dehumanizing constructs. One of them which is purportedly a description of Okrikar reality, was written in 1915, and may be worth quoting in detail:

Afterwards all [participants in a festival] went back to feast at the house of the juju, where many men were slain, roasted and eaten. Even now, very few people pass willingly near that place...The shrine was destroyed by order of the government about 1897. According to the authorities above mentioned and the former pastor, the Rev. J.A. Pratt, of Opobo, all of whom knew it well: "This place was full of human skulls, with which also the chair of the juju priest [...] was outlined. Two skulls were fixed thereon for hand rests, while two others decorated his foot stool [...] In this house there was always a supply of human flesh. At almost any time, when passing by, you could look in and see old men pounding meat. All prisoners taken in war were eaten there, bones and all."

The text above speaks specifically of Okrika, though at the time such discourse is usually directed at the eastern Izhon generally, attempting it seems to inscribe their identities as not only the locus of orgies of human sacrifice (and of course in this sense they receive no worse a mark than was ratched up for other places like Benin, Warri, Ibadan, Abomey and Kumasi to name a few) but in addition Okrika is said to be peopled by secretive but incorrigible cannibals, a claim unequalled in colonial representations of Benin and 'Coomasie'.

It is also with the knowledge that such descriptions and representations of Okrika were in circulation and on offer, and that they were on occasion produced by first generation Christian converts of Okrika, that we may read the plaque,

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and grasp its additional poignancy. These discourses may be seen to be also concerned with justifying either a missionary project (for which it seems to have been always necessary to ridicule and barbarize the target") or a Colonialist one. For the colonizing state in particular, its indigenous populations had to be portrayed as victims of an inappropriate phantasmagoric universe within whose context 'backwardness' could not possibly be stemmed without European intervention. These constructions are well documented.

In the particular circumstance of Okrika, it may be noted that European representations projected the reality of the events around the fenebeso cult and its practices which may or may not in fact have involved human sacrifice and ritual cannibalism in a particularly unfavorable light. This seems calculated to misrepresent the hermeneutical, religious universe in which 'cannibalism' (if indeed ever practiced here [Arens 1974], and judging by other human societies in which such a practice has been indicated [Sagan, 1974]) might have been performed. Fenebeso's misrepresentation is served up it would seem, only in order to dehumanize the Okiriké community. In this (colonial) process of writing, the historical contexts which, in part at least, might be responsible for the turn which native religious practices may have begun taking, seems to have been erased.

217 V.Y. Mudimbe has written an interesting treatise on this issue. (Mudimbe [1988]: ch3; 'The Powers of Speech').

218 Indeed the zeal of Okrika's Christians forces an impenetrable veil from our present location, from which to be able to infer the actual nature of Okrikian religious practice. Though a temple of skulls clearly seems not to be a fabrication, everything else surrounding as described in the text is obviously unreliable and positional.

219 The site from which the writing is produced is further more covered over. Its excavation reveals however, the power and the violence which accounts for the very presence of the missionary and of the colonial officer, and the simultaneous arrival of epidemic diseases like the small pox. It ought not
Likewise, always excluded in such texts are particular realities of place, including for example what will be shown by the end of this exploration to be its culture of architecture and the 'civility' this might indicate, and which would contradict or subvert the textual construction itself.

Christian Okiriké would therefore be located at the paradoxical position of both desiring to separate themselves from their pagan communities by disparaging them, while at the same time refusing to succumb to the rule of Europe, even in the region of Christian proselytizing, a realm which Europeans clearly seemed to think theirs. If we take the plaque of St. Peters Church at face value, and pay attention in particular to the phrase '...who alone...', Okiriké themselves in the period seem aware of the possibility that posterity might indeed take some of its own effort for those of the European, as this posterity absorbs Colonialist discourse about them. The plaque refuses the denial of their particular civility. It also resists the substituting of European merchants, European companies, European or American evangelists, or Colonial officers, for Okiriké builders and their patrons, in the reconstruction of the history of this period.

When the text of the bronze plaque is juxtaposed with an extract from the Talbot passage, more than a cursory investigation is demanded by their mutual contradiction. Furthermore, the last line of a previously referenced passage by Talbot²²⁰, ended with the statement that '[at] Okrika,

to be as difficult as is sometimes implied, to imagine the terror which epidemic illnesses, as far as we can determine unknown in such communities, would have wrought on these African populations.

²²⁰ See page 128 of this dissertation
contrary to general custom, it is the women who make palm leaf mats[...]. This statement, located precariously at the end of the passage (because it seems almost out of place there), makes the gender division of labor in Okrikan building practice an exception amongst the norm said at the time to be practiced generally in Izhon-speaking towns and villages. The puzzle introduced by the assertion that Okiriké built St. Peter’s Church, or at least paid for its building, and, by the observation that Okiriké women, not its men, made the palm-leaf mats for (early century customary) building construction attracts attention. Because it is contrary to practice in other Izhon places (two realities which might seem difficult to imagine for the same place"), it demands that additional exploration be undertaken in order to begin a more succinct framing of the problems raised by these contradictory texts. Moreover, it seems legitimate to then wonder what about Okrika’s apparent exceptionality might be of interest to this enquiry. Though, in other words, a brief general history of Okrika has been offered earlier on in this chapter (most specifically as it relates to its Christianization) more clarity is needed regarding what Okrika means historically and how such a meaning might allow the place, and its connection to the history of other places, to be better understood.

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221 Talbot (1926) op. cit., p888-889.

222 Certainly, the role of women in Okrika’s traditional building practices offers the tantalizing prospect that the builder’s of St. Peter’s Church included women: suggesting that Okrika women were occupying a different (perhaps less segregated, more powerful) position in social life than women are commonly assumed to occupy today in southern Nigeria. Were this to have been the case, it would contradict other colonial and Christian constructions, which generally imply that both presences were liberating for women.
Though Okrika was settled, according to one tradition in the eighteenth century, by fishermen of the Izhon ethnic group, by the nineteenth century it had developed (as did some other coastal towns) into a local form of the city state. Certainly, by the middle of this century, the extent of the town of Okrika, in which the area of both the three-storied house and the St. Peter’s church is located, covered most of Okrika Island, and had spilled over onto the mainland across its creek.

As a city state, Okrika had in the nineteenth century an institutionalized social organization that defies the kin-based, tribal and traditionalistic mold in which perceptions of Africa are often cast. Firstly, in the late nineteenth century, especially at the dusk of the era of the Atlantic Slave Trade, its citizenry is known to have become multi-ethnic, consisting not only of Izhon and Kalabari peoples, but most typically also of assimilated Igbos, Ibibios and Efiks, by now all actively involved in commerce and local politics. This social reality was made possible (and

\[223\] This version was rendered by Tamuno Adinembo, during an interview in November 1992. It seems to agree in a general sense with Amaury Talbot’s own narrative (Talbot [1932]. For other versions see Ogan ([1988]:5-7)

\[224\] This term is the English term used to describe the social and political organization of these towns, by its scholars (see for example Alagoa [1964]: Brave New City State, Wisconsin University Press, in which the term is applied to another one of the Niger delta riverine city states). As state, it shares some properties with say the Ancient Greek city states, or the medieval Hausa city states. Each however, is unique to its specific location and time.

\[225\] The island is a Niger River delta one, only about seven kilometers from the large modern city of Port Harcourt.

\[226\] This perception was obviously put in place by ideational descriptions by anthropology, to the exclusion of the reality of the locations so described, and of that reality’s ‘failure’ to match ‘ideal’ descriptions.
reflected) in the institution of the House\textsuperscript{27}, which unlike the model of rulership and social order in many other Nigerian places, is a system of hierarchical government, devised along commerce-centered corporate lines as opposed to kinship based lineage lines\textsuperscript{28}. Okrika was, and still is today, constituted (and structured) by a series of Houses, not clans, each consisting of non-kin segments ruled over by a chief.

The old commercial town of Okrika prospered almost continuously, up until the late nineteen forties. The beginnings of the decline in its economic power may be associated with the meteoric rise of the neighboring once colonial, administrative city of Port Harcourt, in the wake of the enactment of the latter's status both as a Nigerian port city and, additionally, as the site for a since realized project (1911 and after) to terminate the main North-South railway line of Nigeria's eastern corridor here.

\textsuperscript{27} This institution was both a highly progressive one, but could also be the location for entrenching conservatism (Alagoa[1963:11-33], Alagoa and Fombo[1972: 45-53], Fiberesima[1990], Noah[1980:25-27], Ogan [1988]). It thus behove the British administration to appease its corporate heads during the anti-slave trade pushes, which confirms that being in existence in Okrika, this town could not have escaped participation in the slave trade. No text that this author knows however specifically addresses the issue of the slave trade in Okrika. The present writers interviews in Okrika implicate Okrika in the slave trade without quite naming it, partly because it would imply (rightfully) that many Okirike are part Igbo. Okirike names however often betray the historical presence of Igbo speaking elements in its community. A well known example being its ambitious and popular Chief Ibanichuka (in Igbo this name is Ubanichuku, or Ubanichuka [uba ani chukwu ka]). Crowther though reports of his discovery of a n Igbo sold into slavery, and in transit at Okrika on her way (presumably) to the American slave market. See S.J.S. Cookey, 'An Igbo Slave Story of the Late Nineteenth Century and its Implications', in Ikenga, vol 1, no 2, 1972 (Nsukka, Nigeria).

\textsuperscript{28} Studies and descriptions of this system, as it is established up and down the communities of the Nigerian coast are rarely found outside more general historical or ethnographic reviews. Descriptions of the system by local historians can be found in Fiberesima ([1990]:4-11).
Not however for its role in the palm-produce trade of which it was a significant player\textsuperscript{229}, or for its linkage with Port Harcourt, nor with any other national role is Okrika commonly known and remembered today. Instead, and especially so for southeastern Nigeria regions just north of Okrika's delta location, its name has come to be synonymous with second-hand and used goods imported after the turn of the century from Europe, and which trade focused increasingly in the post Second World War period, on clothing. Thus in southeastern Nigeria beyond the coast, 'Okrika' means 'used' or 'second hand', and the town is best remembered for the pre-eminence it seems to have achieved in this trade. For large sections of the in-land populations of south eastern Nigeria, Okrika was therefore (as were also certainly the towns of Calabar, Arochukwu, and Abriba by the 1920s) the site at which second hand Europe\textsuperscript{230} encountered Africa.

Located in a culture which seemed to thrive on a mimicked reflection of that which was other than itself, one interpretation of the plaque (the one which takes it literally) seems confirmed in a manner which allows it to be entertained (at least) that both the house at Okrika and the Church may be buildings by and for Africans. Given their

\textsuperscript{229} Sue Martin's work for example appears to document and confirm the general impression derived from this writer's own research interviews, with regard to the role of the palm oil trade in Okrika's prosperity, in which men of Okrika played the role of middle-man between the inland Igbo-speaking produced areas, and the collection points on the coast (Martin [1988]). In Martin's work as in the present one, the Imo river towns of Ife and of Ezinihitte feature much.

\textsuperscript{230} This has a literalness which is also accurate. For, Okrika (like these other towns, was the place in which a representation of Europe in local terms came into existence, albeit after its image had been filtered through several prior representations. The European person or culture understood in the inland town then, might be one that a European person would have difficulty recognizing.
distance from Europe, and some of their idiosyncracies\(^2\) on which a remark has previously been lodged, one might then choose to interpret such buildings as the most present examples of the commerce in second hand culture that (at least as viewed from Igboland further north) was a significant part of Okrika’s raison d’être.

It may be however, that such an approach only replicates the European propensity to deride the uses to which other peoples might put things they themselves have happened first to use (or invent). It may, of course, be more fruitful to examine how other southeasterners may themselves have viewed the culture of (and from) Okrika.

No less interesting in other words than how Europeans may have perceived the three-storied house and the church of St. Peter’s would be a sense of how the other parties to the cultural interchange at Okrika (the Igbo communities that lie inland from the coast) would have viewed and understood the same Okrikan buildings. It was mentioned previously, after all, that for the southeasterners generally, Okrika was a place from which European objects were purchased for resale further inland, and that this trade was epitomized by dress. Buildings may therefore be an appropriate place to understand what this dynamic was\(^2\), while they (these particular

\(^{23}\) This writer is of course conscious of the fact that this term only has validity if the subject is viewing the building as if they were meant to be read as European. This position has to be occupied at least momentarily on occasion through many sections of this work, in order in fact for the kinds of arguments finally made to be makeable at all.

\(^{23}\) This is because buildings allow the confluence of a number of realms of social reality that one is not privy to in the study of other cultural objects and phenomena, whether one thinks of language and literature, of political history, or of art object. A fuller explication of this issue is addressed in the Introduction (see p9).
buildings and the research work that has gone into their representation in this work) also offer a more legitimate basis on which to conduct the architectural historiography of southern Nigeria.

However a larger and different kind of setting than can be provided by a further elaboration on Okrika's history, culture and urbanism, may be necessary in order to comprehend such a dynamic. That is, in order to provide a context in which to locate the house's gestures; of both the politics driving its form, and of what linked its buildings' conditions of possibility to the gestures and conditions of possibility of other buildings to which Okrika architecture might be related, other kinds of knowledge than is discoverable in Okrika cultural history alone, are called for in addition. This is undoubtedly important if, making assertions about domination and mimicry, one is to be able to confirm or deny the possibility that being situated in a colonial context, both buildings might be read as partaking of this politics.

Of Other Buildings and the Relationship to Okrika

It was indicated in the introductory chapter that although apparently invisible to those who study the architecture of

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233 This theoretical framing is elaborated and contested in the final chapter.

234 After Homi Bhabha (1994), it is not unreasonable to suggest that these two buildings might be interpreted in the manner of which he sees imperial culture's paradoxical relation to the culture of that which it seeks to colonize.

235 Both in the narrow sense for example of suggesting where the pinnacles of the house may be derived from, but also more generally in addressing the larger issue (more akin to a failed mimicry, judging by the impressions of some writers previewed earlier) of whether terms like Talbot's 'European type', declared with more derogation by others, are accurate representations of the histories of the building.
West Africa, there is an abundance of building from the seventeenth century, the eighteenth century and (especially) the nineteenth century which are similar to the two Okrika buildings just described in terms of their use of elements of European architecture and of its related technological frames. Many such sub-Saharan buildings then do, in all probability, raise the same kinds of issues. This allows the broadening of the field from which relevant contexts may be sought, more so because for southeastern Nigeria in particular, it is easily observed that there may be many more such buildings per square mile, than is true for other comparably large places. This is especially true for church buildings, though, it must be iterated, this is not exclusively so.

Typically, such buildings are not included in published texts about the cultures of their locations, even after those texts that have concerned themselves with architecture specifically are also considered. The calibrated difference between these other buildings and St. Peter’s Church, which moves them in the direction further away from a European aesthetic however makes it more difficult to assume, as will become evident, that these other buildings are European buildings to be passed over in African studies for being alien, even as the mechanics of its continued exclusion becomes more difficult to comprehend. Several of these buildings, especially the houses and churches built in stone, have survived the 1920s and 1930s in which the large majority of them seem to have been

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236 Which area of study is presumed to extend from the Sahel to the coast.

237 This seemed the case for Talbot’s description of Okrika, and in more general terms, is the lack found in architectural history (as detailed in Chapter 1) which has motivated much of the present writer’s own work.
erected\textsuperscript{238}. However, many of them have since been transformed by the covering over of their stone surfaces by a cement plaster, making it difficult therefore to contemplate their original design and state. Of those that have been unaltered, only minimally altered, or which survive in a photographic record (even when no longer extant), St. Simon’s Nnobi, St. Mark’s Ujari, Emmanuel Church, Enugu Ukwu, St. Peter’s Abagana, and St. . Ufuma may serve as a means of providing a background in which to understand church building in the period\textsuperscript{239}. While St. Peace Odenigbo house (fig. 43), the Uzoka house (fig. 8), the Adama Ojiakor house (fig. 6), the Ojiakor Ezenne house (fig. 36) and the Uzochukwu house (fig. 37) serve (amongst others) as corresponding settings in which to place the three-storey structure with which this chapter commenced. Additionally, a number of structures more easily designated ‘traditional’, including a women’s meeting house at Nnokwa (fig. 1), and a men’s temple and meeting house at Bende (all structures erected either in laterite clay, or in laterite covered wood frames), will serve to indicate the continuity between the new architecture, and the buildings with which they initially co-existed. This latter group forms the subject of a later chapter (chapter 8). The question that will be constantly borne in mind, in the course of these investigations, will be what to make of all these buildings? What linkages bind them, and what separates one from the

\textsuperscript{238} It is interesting to note that though a more complete search would reveal the survival of churches built completely of clay laterite from the middle Christian era (the 1850’s to the 1930’s), none was discovered during the undertaking of the research project. The Church buildings that have survived most typically from what seems to be an earlier moment in church architectural style (most recent churches are built in concrete blockwork) are the ones built in stone.

\textsuperscript{239} Formal variation amongst these stretches through most styles that one would recognize of European and American churches (though many are in fact not identifiable with Europe), and they are easily distinguished as such from a distance. Finally, though we make the Emmanuel Church our focus, in contextualizing it, we start with other church buildings, in order to enable the setting up of a contrast.
other? Once the Okrika plaque forces a rethinking, what frame can be overlaid on other buildings, even as a preliminary structuring before the analytical process commences?

To elaborate the nature of the problem, it is possible for example to approach the buildings in the enquiry alloyed to an Igbo view of Okrika, as if ‘second hand’ describes them most adequately. Thus they become attempts (some might even say failed or bad ones) to emulate European architecture, to which their very existence then is owed. They would, in the worst case, then fit into the kinds of views expressed by Clapperton of the chamber pot. They might, since clothing was also an issue of importance in Okrika, even call forth the opinions of John Morel. In other words, it might seem appropriate to regard them as extensions in the realm of building, of the scourge of denationalization that Morel seemed so bothered by. This architecture may be little more then than trade in second hand clothing writ large: the ultimate symbol of the loss (in Morel’s terms) of a group’s identity.

As a phenomenon however, one must grant the possibility that this architecture may be no such thing. Easy assumptions that they are ‘used’, previously occupied vessels in a grotesque, uninspired company of mime, may indicate instead one’s biases of perception, and of the tendency to frame unfamiliar (and uncannily familiar) objects in terms of the already familiar, sometimes without regard to appropriateness. At the heart of the ‘problem’ lies our reliance on visual similarity in the first instance, which in this context is made more problematic by the fact that the feint engaged in by what seems like a culture of mimesis, appears to have become the strategy of appropriation in certain places in the southeast of Nigeria.
at specific moments. Of the Emmanuel Church at Enugu Ukwu (fig. 5), which building is explored more extensively in subsequent chapters, it had moreover been hinted through its locality’s narratives, that this culture of mimesis does not necessarily replicate one’s own idea of similitude. More so than is the case for architectural historiography, the understanding of these buildings demands that one goes beyond the representation which the surface of these buildings might offer. Our attempt to be interpretative seems likely to be damaged therefore, were one’s familiar perceptive frames to be assumed at the outset.

It cannot be claimed at this stage that the offering of such a problematic was necessarily intentional on the part of the builders and their patrons. Nevertheless, it is relatively obvious that the Britons quoted earlier, seem uncomfortable with what they perceive as unsuccessful African attempts to appropriate or mimic European manners, and, perhaps, to fail to recognize (or refuse to grant) the object any authenticity, when what is assumed to be a reproduction comes close enough to the European ‘original’ as to be passed over.

The most reasonable solution, offering appropriate caution, seems to be to take the cues from the objects themselves. Since it is their history we seek, their own traces of a conscious historicity, whether inscribed in the object or in the text by which its cultures have surrounded them, may be the easiest way in, at least initially, without precluding the necessity to challenge even these constructions, once some analytical ground on which to stand has been found.
As reiterated previously\textsuperscript{240}, in practice this demands that other buildings be investigated whose understanding may contribute to an appropriate interpretation of both the pinnacled three-storey house and of St. Peter's Church. It also justifies their inclusion as equally important for this study. At the same time, since these two buildings may not be thought of as in any sense the core of this research project (they receive priority only in so far as they were historically prior to some of the other buildings explored later, and which arise in the same general moment) understanding them also contributes to understanding even these other buildings with which they are juxtaposed here, and all of which together form the physical evidence of the architectural culture itself.

In the next couple of chapters therefore, a reconstruction of the histories of other buildings is presented, in which process the reader is also familiarized with the historical documents, oral narratives, and contemporary discourse through which the buildings are (and were) perceived. Comprising two different ways of knowing the same physical object, it will become clear that this multiplicity is enriching, and that it is erroneous to attempt an interpretation in the absence of any one of these forms of knowledge. Armed with this knowledge moreover, the two buildings in Okrika about which more questions seem to have been raised here than answered, will be revisited in the attempt to see whether new interpretative perspectives have been opened by the work undertaken in the chapters that succeed the present one.

\textsuperscript{240} See pp.113,135 and 137.
Houses of Discourse, Houses of Living:

Understanding Difference

Hilde: Now you're thinking of her?

Solness: Yes, mostly of Aline. Because she had a life too just as I have mine. She had a vocation. But hers had to be crushed so that mine could flourish. Hers was cut down, smothered, crushed. You see, she had a talent for building too.

Hilde: She? For building?

Solness: Not houses or towers or spires....

Henrik Ibsen, The Master Builder.

Inyinya igwe
Afa oyibo gi n'Igbo bu basikolo
Basikolo
obalu uba n'udi
ma afa ndi lulu ya
Ma Lalii
ma Hakuluusu
ma homba
ma Hopa
ma Pijo-otu
ma ndi ozo afa fa gbanarili m kita
fa ncha bugbado basikolo

from Basikolo, by John Anenechukwu Umeh

A comment on the history of church architecture in the more inland places, away from the coast proper, and at least as this history is implied by the information made sensible so far, seems called for at this point, since this is the context

241 The emphasis on the word 'or' is the present writer's, and does not occur in Ibsen's text.

242 For translation, see bottom of following page.
in which the buildings explored in this chapter are located. The comment is offered not so much in order to provide a general historical background, but rather so as to suggest a different way of seeing and engaging this history and its wider implications. This alternative view of history allows it to be useful in understanding certain developments in intellectual thought in the period 1889-1939, which understanding might be next to impossible to recover in a subsequent moment, because the defining shifts in mentality with which the culture struggled to deal with in this moment would have reached an equilibrium. Having arrived at a new normalcy, the intellectual traces of the process undergone in the preceding upheaval would most likely have been erased.

Of Relevance to Emmanuel Church and to the idea of the Church. Following the previous exploration of St. Peter's Church, Okrika, and bearing in mind the non-validity in the context of certain orderings of architectural typology, it merits surprise that at the time of the establishment of Christianity and of the colonial state here, Izhon culture (and as will be shown also Igbo and Efik modern culture) had, so early in the history of this process of installation, formed a strong enough notion of what, for example, the architecture of the church building was, for so determined a departure from earlier native practices to take hold. Certainly, in the

243 Readers interested in discovering more about the history of the church in general terms during this period, have many publications to which they might attend including Tasie(1978) op cit., and Ayandele(1966) op cit.

244 The bicycle was for example regarded as entirely foreign, and of foreign manufacture. The extract from John Umeh's poem (translated below) which headed this chapter is a recent attempt to recapture the perceptive spirit of that moment. Though iron built churches had once bee as much imports as the bicycle, by the period in which this investigation is located, the church seemed well-nigh integrated into local culture, as well as produced within it.

Iron horse
cultural formation of this architecture, the idea of a church building seems well enough entrenched for us to be sure that there was in place a consensus with respect to what constitutes an appropriate representation of its type, and moreover, that this recognition occurs (or is negotiated) within the terrain of a still formative typology. That the latter had developed to the extent that it enabled the existence as will be shown of a large number of such buildings by the early 1930s, is even more unexpected. To the extent that the church buildings are recognizable as churches, the notion of church-ness, of the architectural and architectonic markers proper to the idea of a Christian ecclesiological architecture, must have incorporated knowledge derived from other places and sources, in which Christian architecture had already been well established, or in which it had been imagined.

Your English name in Igbo is basikolo
Bicycle
It is rich and varied in type
And in the names of those who build it
like Raleigh, or Harkelson (?), or Humber, or Hopper, or Peugeot
and others whose names escape me now
they are, all of them, bicycles

245 The history of the Christian experience here indicates how little a role (compared that is to the role of Nigerians themselves, and of Sierra Leonians) European played in the missionary and evangelical conversions of Igbo communities over time to Christianity. It would be inaccurate therefore, as will become clearer as the reader proceeds, to attribute the architecture of Christianity here to the presence of Europeans.

246 The significance of this may not strike one initially. However, one might, for example note that the architecture of the mosque architecture in China (a few of which the author has visited), looks more like a Buddhist temple in terms of its form, structure and ornamentation, than it does the typology of the mosque building in the Arab or Ottoman worlds. Chinese Muslims built mosques by employing the skills and traditions they were more familiar with. This is the more usual story. Early south east Nigerian church buildings therefore may easily be expected to utilize the architectural forms and styles of pre existing institutional buildings. That they appear rarely to have done so deserves explanation.
The evidence of early photography certainly suggests that from the very beginning, even when the material for church building was still largely limited to the laterite and/or wood frame, palm-thatched building, much about its architecture, if closely observed, departs from the architecture that is more customary. Lagos' earliest Roman Catholic missionary church for example (fig. 11), is built in materials that customary Yoruba architecture would have typically employed. One may nevertheless point to its formal qualities, and locate difference there. Most obviously, the pitch of the roof is uncharacteristically steep, and sits on a structure with high and exposed walls, despite the use of tied-together reed in the fabrication of the wall. Customary Yoruba architecture would have the roof coming quite low to the ground, giving less room height internally, but screening the wall from direct sunlight. Moreover, the 'thatch' roof ends in a gable, which again is rare in Yoruba customary architecture. Typically the preferred roof type would be the hipped roof, providing the same protection against rain-water damage on all sides equally. However, the Roman Catholic mission was distinct for involving a more substantial White presence than was the true for the Church Missionary Society through much of its history. In the photograph here, the presence of a bearded, white missionary is confirmed. The architectural difference that is observed here may therefore be acceptably explained by his presence. The priest who sits for the photograph may, in other words, have been the building's 'architect'. It is however much more difficult to make the same argument for the early laterite built churches of the Protestant mission, since (at least in southeast Nigeria most especially) many of these had members of their own ethnicity
as the leaders of the church\textsuperscript{247}. At Okrika certainly, the founder of the mission, Atoridibo, was an Igbo-Okrikan trader, whose commercial network extended south to Bonny. His co-evangelist, with whom the first church building would most likely have been erected, was said to have been a carpenter (himself mission-trained) from the more westerly coastal town of Brass [Nembe] (Isichei 1973:89).

An understanding of how the concept of the church building gained acceptance for its congregational community, needs to be sought. Though in this dissertation focus is not on this kind of very earliest church building (few if any survive even in the form of a photograph), the conclusions reached for the subsequent group of church buildings will not only deserve a similar explanation, but will also provide interpretative clues regarding what this process might have been for even the early clay-built churches of which they formed a replacement. In pursuing this possibility further then, a number of ‘interior’ locations will be explored next, whose old churches hold particular interest for this study. These locations include churches in the towns of Nnobi, Nnewi, Enugu Ukwu, Ujari, Abagana, and Ufuma; names which will recur in

\textsuperscript{247} In many instances, and as has been related in an earlier chapter, the more accurate description might be that many of the Protestant churches were lead by members of their own race; because even when, as the case seems to have been with Sierra Leonian John Christopher Taylor (see p 59), pioneer missionary of the Onitsha mission, whom the reader might recall was of Igbo parentage, it seems clear that though possessing an Igbo name for example, he had long since lost any cultural ability to be Igbo, and rarely spoke the language. Indeed Taylor himself, recognizing this, wrote to Venn the following: ‘There is a great difference between those who go to the Yoruba Mission and the Niger. The former return to their own home, meeting their parents or surviving relatives, whilst the latter though descendants of the Ibo (Igbo) or Hausa are perfect strangers to the country at large. There are only two in our mission (on the Niger) who are actually sons of the country.’ (Quoted in Ajayi, op. cit., p43). In these instances, the comparison may fit more accurately the view that the idea of the church was imposed from the outside, though here it differs from that of the Roman Catholic missionary in being Sierra Leone or Jamaica, rather than the French Alsace, Dublin or Rome.
the following text, and may be worth registering at the outset.

Of these, two buildings however occupy the center of interest for this chapter. The first one is a church building, the Emmanuel Church at Enugu Ukwu, a town that is part of the pivotal Igbo ‘clan’ of Umunri™, priestly purveyors of the ancestral religious practice which earlier extended its influence across the Niger, at least as far as the town of Ogwashi-Ukwu. The second structure is a single-level house (a bungalow), located in the equally prominent Igbo town of Awka, home to masters of metal working art and craft (perhaps from as long ago as the Igbo Ukwu of the 10th century A.D.), and the hometown of the Uzoka family who are the house’s owners™. The two buildings are explored separately (the chapter therefore consists of two parts), but are placed adjacent to each other within this chapter in order to insist that some of the more important issues raised in the larger enquiry are not bound to particular building types, but cross architectural boundaries and categories that one might be tempted to establish for the purpose of analysis. Nevertheless, it is meant also to suggest that the different institutional worlds to which each type belongs do influence the way in which the building may be understood, as much for contemporary scholars, as for the community which gave rise to it. Moreover, as a pair these two buildings may be thought of as being related in a manner which parallels the

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248 The standard text that is a good overall, if sometimes obtuse, introduction to the Nri clan, and to their centrality to northern Igbo culture, might be had in M.A. Onwuejeogwu’s, An Igbo Civilization: Nri Kingdom and Hegemony, Benin City (Nigeria), Ethiope Publishing Corporation, and London, Ethnographica Ltd, 1981.

249 Latterly, Awka is the state capital of Anambra state.
relationship identifiable between another pair of buildings; the ones located in Okrika, and explored in the previous chapter. And, though the structures in this chapter are not located in the same town, they are not separated by more than fifty miles (or eighty kilometers) as the crow flies, and (moreover) have broad historical connections in the period of their erection, which make the juxtaposition one that is not random.

Finally, it needs to be said that this chapter does not set out to compare the two structures particularly to the exclusion of the others. Rather, the insertion of the two structures here allows them in fact to function as anchors around which other buildings (and vaguely architecture-related representations such as advertisements for building materials and travelogues) are introduced and compared, in order to flesh out the realities of their historical contexts.

HOUSE OF DISCOURSE: A CONTEXT FOR EMMANUEL CHURCH, ENUGU UKWU

The architectural forms of both the old St. Simon's Church building (fig.) at Nnobi (now demolished and replaced with a new building), and of the St Mark's church building (fig. 38) at Ujari are rare in the 'interior', 'hinterland' church architecture of Igbo-speaking ozo-title-taking region\(^{250}\) of the pre-1939 period, for possessing church towers that do not sit over the front entrance\(^{251}\). That is, they both share this

\(^{250}\) This corresponds roughly speaking to the states of Anambra, and of Enugu, as well as to the northern zones of two other states; Imo and of Delta.

\(^{251}\) This does not contradict an earlier statement (c p113) in which it was stated that 'Churches with the tower at the side are not exactly rare in south eastern Nigeria', though it may initially seem so to do. The apparent contradiction is accounted for by the geographically more limited area (northern Anambra) to which the present statement refers.
singular formal characteristic with St. Peter’s Okrika, quite unlike the Emmanuel Church Enugu Ukwu, and what seems to be a majority of the other church buildings in this region. For these other church buildings, the tower is typically located at the center of the front entrance elevation, and under which tower one walks in proceeding into the main entrance porch towards the church’s interior. Given what was said previously and in passing about the relationship between Okrika Island, and the hinterland of the Ikwerre and other Igbo-speaking regions\(^{252}\), it is puzzling even if not wholly surprising, that the overall physical form of St. Peter’s seems not to have been the model of choice for the proliferation of style and type in church building.

More surprising however were the answers to enquiries about the possible source for the style and design of the church buildings in these other localities. The question itself was met firstly with incredulity, supposedly because the idea of the church is now naturalized to the extent that the question is now as difficult to conceive as is the formulation of its answer. When the validity of the question is elaborated, the response was most often either one in which the respondent insisted that the answer was long since forgotten, or more typically that the architectural idea for the building must of course have been that provided by a white European missionary, long since forgotten. The most important, and unusual response however was reserved for one building; Emmanuel Church Enugu Ukwu, the only church building about which specific reference was made to Okrika as source, and the one whose type seemed formally and visually least like St. Peter’s Okrika, speaking that is from the frame of a western

\(^{252}\) See p141 earlier on.
dispersal of architectural style (compare figures ---- and----. ). Both buildings are furthermore in fact not of the same fabric; the Okrika church being of prefabricated concrete block masonry which mimics a rusticated stone, the latter a rough cut, sand stone, laid as in a rubble-wall.

This is why it is particularly interesting that Emmanuel Church at Enugu Ukwu, a centralized-tower Church, is the only church building in the sample of which it was remembered explicitly or by implication, that the designs had been based on ‘plans brought from Okrika by people who traded there’253. The statement though not surprising for the reasons mentioned, is not believable in its entirety however. On being pressed further, it became clear that ‘plans’ referred not to anything actually delineated on paper, but rather refers to the idea or the memory of the artefact transported over space in the minds of individuals. Moreover, because the town of Enugu Ukwu is over one hundred and fifty miles from Okrika, the space between them would have represented at least an overnight, two-day journey, given that at the time this would imply travel by bicycle or by infrequent motor transport involving transfers between routes. If the journey was being undertaken on foot (and for many, such as the stonemason, this would have been the only choice), the journey would obviously involve much more time. Likely to have been built without architectural drawings of any kind then, the process of memorizing and transmitting was not one in which the object being borrowed from was situated close by, and which could therefore have been re-visited easily for reference should any questions arise during construction. If it is imagined that because the Emmanuel Church was built early on in the period

253 ‘O bu nu ndi b’anyi nanu azu afia n’Okrika....obu fa si n’eba mwa weta l’anyi pulani.’ Interview with Chief F.G.N. Okoye, an elderly member of the church, and one of the towns eminent citizens.
of the Christianization of Igbo land, and therefore in a period when the idea of the church building as an architectural type would hardly have been as specific or canonic as it subsequently became, it is difficult to understand how, in the absence of drawing, the design of St. Peter's Church, not to mention its processes of construction, could be remembered and physically reproduced by a community so many miles away.

In the local attribution of the Emmanuel Church design to Okrika (leaving for the moment whether this is totally convincing or not), an unfamiliar form of simulacrum seems at work from the outset given the significant differences between the two churches. The problem of grasping the nature of the divergence in the ways of notating similarity seems demanded. For the Enugu Ukwu locality, both in the past and present, such a perceptive system, grounded perhaps in the kinds of realities that surround them, may provide the basis for not only understanding this architecture, but for contesting the Scottishness or Englishness of any of them.

From the town of Enugu Ukwu in which the Emmanuel Church is located, it is about a forty-five kilometer journey by motor road to Ujari, and an even shorter journey to Nnobi. The settings for this proliferation of a new architecture, beyond, that is, the immediate vicinity of the coast, and, separated from it by large stretches in which this rush of architectural invention and production is not observed with the same intensity, is therefore a relatively small, fairly close knit, culturally interconnected group of communities. Any one of them, such as Ujari and Nnobi, mentioned above, or other towns like Abagana, Nnewi, Arondizuogu, Ogidi, Obosi, or Nkwerre,
could easily contribute a similarly rich spectrum and quantity of relevant information.²⁵⁴

Enugu Ukwu itself lies on the old road linking Awka to Onitsha (see map, fig. 12), and like two other towns mentioned earlier, Ujari and Nnobi, this settlement too has never been more than a large rural town²⁵⁵. Emmanuel Church is located on a site just off this road, on the apex of a slowly rising hill, which lends the structure atypical visibility. The building’s floor plan resembles a European basilica-style plan, as did St. Peter’s, Okrika, but is quite unlike either of the churches at Nnobi and at Ujari (figs 9 and 38), the interiors of which are large undivided volumes. Emmanuel church’s three-dimensional mass is headed by a front entry, leading under a centrally placed bell tower which acts as an entry porch, into the nave. In addition, the building has two side-entries²⁵⁶ each one leading into side aisles, the latter spatially defined by a row of square-section piers joined to one another along both of its boundaries by semi-circular arches.

²⁵⁴ The particular buildings presented here, are therefore selected, because of their historical connections to the coastal region (even if such connections appear hesitant), but also as a result of the discovery of such connection by happenstance. This is to imply moreover that many such historical connections are likely to be present and discoverable for many of the other buildings, but have, due to present constraints, to be reserved for future study.

²⁵⁵ It does however claim to be one of the towns founded by the Nri people, the Igbo speaking community who are first recorded in the 19th century as being ritual specialists, who iterated all over Igboland, and as far afield as Ithonland and Edo margins of the Benin Kingdom. With the Aro of Arochukwu, and the blacksmiths of Awka, we cover those Igbo speaking groups who more than others have a history of long distance travel, which predates the colonial period.

²⁵⁶ In fact, as the building is located on the site presently, one of these side entrances most directly faces the main road and the entry gate to the church compound. This side entrance is thus functionally the main entrance, the west entrance effectively functioning as entrance only during liturgical ceremony, such as occurs during every service, at the entry and the departure of the religious functionaries, and of the choir. It clearly also functions as entry point for the bridal train, during wedding ceremonies.
On the exterior, this basilica-style plan is recognizable in having a two-tiered fenestration; a lower set of large arched windows, and a second set of clerestory lights as one might expect to find, located at the upper section.

Other differences from both St. Simon’s Nnobi\textsuperscript{257} and from St. Mark’s Ujari may also be noted, especially with respect to the stone masonry. Though like both the latter church buildings the structural sections of the enclosing surface are articulated by slight projections beyond the wall surface as engaged piers, no distinction is made (as in St. Mark’s) between stone course-work that is structural, as opposed to stonework whose function is simply one of enclosure (that is non-structural).

Certain idiosyncratic aspects of the building nevertheless do link it formally to St. Peter’s Okrika. Perhaps the clearest hint of this is found at the apsidal end, defined on the outside, not so much by shape (the altar is placed on a slightly raised floor in the sanctuary formed by the rectangular enclosing walls of this end of the building) as by the fact that its ceiling is lower, and that viewed from the outside, a separate roof covers this space, giving it further emphasis.

Though the side elevations are simply defined by a rhythmic progression of bays, into which are inserted arched windows, both the front elevation (the main entry) and the rear elevation (the apsidal end) merit further description. The front elevation is, as has been mentioned, marked by the bell

\textsuperscript{257} This church is explored more fully in a later section of this chapter.
tower which bestrides the large, arched entry. The tower is not without formal complexity. It may be noted for example that it starts off as a square sectioned rectilinear volume, and then changes after the second level into an octagonal shape, with a pair of unequal and alternating sides. This is of course a stylistic feature of both high European church architecture, and incidentally also of the towers of certain village church’s in rural England.\textsuperscript{238}

The lower section of St. Emmanuel’s octagonal upper tower, repeats the two arched windows of its own main tower, but this is replaced in each of its octagonal faces by a single rectangular non-arched window. Separating this section of the tower from the white-painted pyramidal roof (concrete?) is a plain cornice, the border of which is marked by a regular row of modillions.\textsuperscript{239}

Returning to the tower’s lower section, it may be notable that its corners are each defined by a pair of piers, and that these (as is the elevation itself) are capped by a broken pediment of what in a European building would be considered of un-Classical proportion (fig. 39), in the center of which base is located a semi-circular section, which also is proportioned in a fashion that does not conform to European usage. Moreover, the unusual ‘fish-scale masonry’ courses at the top of the end bays of these elevations may also be worth remarking. The course-work (fig. 30)can be described, most briefly, as approximating the lines of a hand held fan,

\textsuperscript{238} One might refer for example to the lantern tower of the untypically large St.Mary and All Saints at Fotheringhay, Northamptonshire, in which this change from square to octagon occurs, and in which moreover the sides of the octagon, also of unequal length, also alternate.

\textsuperscript{239} This is the English architectural term for a row of brackets or consoles used to support the upper section of a structure’s cornice.
opening up as if hinged at the center-line of the upper part of the end pier. This appears to be a purposeful conception, as we find that at the rear elevation, at which the same problem of a sloping roof’s parapet wall is encountered, the horizontal runs of the stone courses are not altered (fig 40), being merely cut and dressed to maintain the run of the diagonal.

Several things about the tower, its stonework, and its setting within this elevation are striking. Firstly, it may be observed that the arch, though it has successfully supported the weight of all the mass above it, is not a true arch structurally speaking. This is revealed by the manner in which its stone courses sail horizontally past the curved crest, as one observes also of all the other arched openings of this tower. This is opposed to the normal disposition of a self-supporting arch, semi-circular in outline, and focused in on the circle’s center by the use of voussoirs, an approximation of which one finds employed in the arched windows running along the sides of the building, and about which comment is reserved for a later moment.

Moreover, the tower seems to have resulted in an unusual proportioning of window to wall in these front elevation bays, if this ratio is compared to the one utilized along the length of the side elevations. That is, given that the tower occupies almost a third of the whole front elevation’s width, what appears to be a determination to maintain the windows at a particular size, has resulted in their being squeezed together in the space that remains on each side. Or, to be a little more graphic, it is as if the tower has forced itself into the

260 Wedge-shaped bricks or stone blocks, used to construct arches.
space that they occupy, which imposition has caused the windows to crowd together at the ends of the elevation.

The rear elevation appears at first to be a simple affair (fig 41). A flat end, terminating in a gable, behind which a sloping roof abuts, concealed from view by the parapet upstand. However, this elevation is, unlike the front, articulated by bays which are themselves unequal (the end bays are significantly wider than the two middle bays). Windows of different and specially interesting shapes and sizes are located at this end (fig 42). At the lower level, windows are found in which an arched-mullion is embedded, but whose gothicized apices project into a decorative cornice, forcing the latter to wrap itself around the window, without being broken. Above these, and restricted to the central bays, one finds a second kind of window. It is an the arched window, which here again, as in the front, has its framing stone-courses running past the arch’s rise in horizontal lines. To the left of these arched windows (located that is in the lower section of the gable’s end bay), we find a pair of horizontal windows, very much in the shape of the window of the western Modern movement. Finally, it is noted that the center of this sanctuary elevation is unusual when compared to the normal European church building, because it is not marked by an apse or chapel, but by a buttress.

In a sense, this rear elevation, perhaps more than the front, begs for a closer reading of the fabric of the building, and to an analysis which may reveal unexpected information. The fact that the arches at both the front and at the rear are not true arches has already been mentioned. What strikes one, on

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261 One suspects in fact that for this reason, as well as for the location in which it is placed, this is an addition that may have been made as recently as in the 1970s.
looking at the building as a whole from a distance and judging by the arrangement of masonry around the window aperture, is that the arched windows down the side elevations (by far the larger number) are true arches unlike the front and rear windows. Moreover, it becomes noticeable that the stone courses are narrower in the main body of the building, than they are at the last bay abutting the tower, and at the tower itself. This suggests two possibilities. First, the building program may have been carried out in two phases. The later phase, involving the completion by a last bay, and by the building of the lantern tower, may however have involved a different building team, with different skills and approaches. A more persuasive possibility is however that the original building was enlarged, at which time an additional bay was added, and at which time also a lantern tower was added. This would best explain both the change in masonry-work style (the wider courses), as well as the false arches. The latter may for example indicate the presence of a reinforced concrete arch behind the stone facade that is visible.

History of Emmanuel Church
To provide a different kind of judgement on the possibilities raised, a historical basis for making an interpretation needs to be sought. It is known that even though a Christian mission had been successfully set up at Onitsha as early as in 1857, one did not exist in Awka, the second major town going east from Onitsha, until 1906. This suggests, given the previous reference to the location of Enugu Ukwu, that the latter would not have had its first missionary presence until just before or just after 1906. Indeed Ogbalu, probably following generally known oral histories, states categorically that the Church Missionary Society first established itself here in
1913 (Ogbalu 1982: 258), later by a few years than one might have imagined. Thus, the first church building in Enugu Ukwu, would have been built in 1913 or just subsequently, and, as is true of other towns, this first church building would in all likelihood have been a laterite-clay earth-walled structure with a thatched-roof woven from palm-leaf (fig. 11)\textsuperscript{26}. It is in fact known in the locality that the present Anglican church of St. Emmanuel, was commenced much later than this date, round about the year 1931\textsuperscript{263}.

Christianity seems to have had as hard a time in its initial establishment here, as it did, in most other places in Igbo land after its introduction. In Enugu Ukwu however, it was to meet even stronger resistance, a hardly surprising fact, given that the town is known to be of Nri ancestry and therefore itself at the center of the well-established pan-Igbo, native religious life, which had involved the extension of this belief system’s own ideas to other places\textsuperscript{264}. The reader might for example recall that Ogwashi-Ukwu, in which the introductory chapter attempted an understanding of its village temple, was itself the subject of an ‘Nri "missionary" enterprise’ with interesting results (see chapter 2). Indeed,

\textsuperscript{26} This seems to be confirmed by Omali-Okafo, op. cit., p 94. In describing amongst other things the granting of the site uwu nwifi, the ajo-ofia or ‘bad bush’ (forest in which evil spirits were believed to inhabit) to the Christian community who at that time were small and young, he states that in response to a visiting Archdeacon’s insistence that no church congregation would be sanctioned without the existence of its buildings, Enugu Ukwu’s Christian converts commenced to build one: ‘Both labor and building materials were provided voluntarily and the work commenced in earnest. This was in 1913, and the next year the Church was dedicated. For a community in which, prior to this, no stone building had ever been erected, it is unlikely that a structure, other than a lateritic, earthen one, could have been completed in such a brief span of time.

\textsuperscript{263} This date is not secure, unless one is willing to extend it in either direction by a year or two. It would therefore be accurate to say that it was commenced sometime between 1928-1933.

\textsuperscript{264} One of the more interesting contemporary debates for example involves a dispute as to whether Enugu Ukwu is in fact the head lineage of the larger Nri Clan (Umunri).
it is fortunate that the political milieu at the time in question is preserved for this work in Omali's (1965) text, in which is made clear the fact that the by now British-appointed Warrant Chief\textsuperscript{265}, persecuted the young men of his town who had an inclination to be interested in Christianity, and its style of education: formal instruction in a class room, which education often resulted in products who formed a political opposition to his authority as Chief (Omali 1965:95-97, Isichei 1976:151).

In this context therefore, the decision to build a new church building in the 1920s must be seen as one that would have served both a symbolic and a representative motive; one, that is which would have been directed at advertising the new confidence that the Christian community would have begun to experience in the period, but also which was directed at representing to the world of the unconverted, the modernity, and the power of the new religion over local ones.

In a sense then, it is hardly surprising that the materiality of the structure is as important as the actual style in which it is built. The representation of the separation between the old ways, as it were, and the new, had to be inscribed, where this was possible, in a most uncompromising way.

The decision to employ stone, in this context is important. As a building material, it is unknown in the general building

\textsuperscript{265} In Enugu Ukwu as in other places, the warrant chief was apparently only one chief of about three or so others who could equally claim the title of chief of the whole town. Though the Agwuna family is generally recognized as the authoritative chief of the town, there is evidence that this follows decades of contestation by other Enugu Ukwu chiefs.
practices of the southeast before the modern era, though the material itself had of course always been available. Chief Osita Agwuna III, the Igwe of Enugu Ukwu since the late 1950s, indicated that stone had been a material used in the restricted context of religious altars of a particular kind, but that even in this context, the structure remained a relatively small one, and perhaps one with which, given the non-inclusive nature of Igbo religious and sacrificial ritual, the majority of people would not have been familiar. In building a church out of this material, a structure that at the time would have been the largest and highest structure in this town and perhaps also in the surrounding villages, a somewhat restricted material becomes publicized, literally, while at the same time achieving a scale which for the locality was hitherto unknown. This would remain true even with the possibility as suggested earlier, that a tower was not included as part of the church until a later moment in time.

The idea of religion going public (in the sense of the temple becoming a place of public involvement) is further indicated by the fact that the effort to erect the church, tapping on town pride, soon became one in which all were involved. One

266 An archival record by a Briton (Talbot?) who was writing in 1906 for example, states under a section called ‘Habitations’ that ‘...stone built houses are unknown, and the use of sun-dried or roughly burnt bricks for building purposes has only been attempted in a few instances among natives closely in touch with Europeans.’ See Archives of the Royal Anthropological Society, MS 200 Nigeria, Southern 1906-7, p235.

267 Interview with Chief Osita Agwuna, Enugu Ukwu, August 12, 1992.

268 This research project for example indicated that this was the case for the erection of St...Church in Oraukwu, as well as for both St. Simon’s Nnobi, and St ... Abagana. Inter village-town competition in other words, soon ensured that once a church building project was embarked on by a locality, the desire to out achieve its neighbors ensured the participation of the community at large, who would always offer their labor free of church; regardless even of whether they were Christian themselves, (continued...)
assumes that by the time of its completion, the alleged superiority of Christianity, and of Christian civilization over that of the Nri and its religious 'hegemony' (Onwuejeogwu [1980]), would have been well-served by the new architecture.

The church's head stone-mason, as well as a large majority of his craftsmanly labor, appear to have been indigenes mainly of Enugu Ukwu and also of the neighboring town of Nimo. This locality (the fact that the builders of a basilica-style church here are all of an indigenous origin) is a fact which surprises even further. It is perplexing to imagine that for a town which had been Christianized for perhaps just over a decade, not only is the mastery of the idea of the basilica, of the tower, and of the relationship between them apparently in evidence, but so also is the mastery of the use of stone in building (which it is re-emphasized was not a customary building material). The names commonly associated with the building team are that of Thomas Isiadinso, of David Uchefuna, and of David Mmuo, the latter sometimes said to have been the contractor.

The biography of the former is explored in as much detail as possible in a later chapter (chapter 8), in a context of how that biography fits into the general historiography of intellectual thought in the southeast. It is in a sense of little relevance here, since the kinds of knowledge it offers do not contribute particularly to the history of the church

\[268(...continued)\]
and regardless of whether they were members of another, at the time still yet smaller, Christian denomination.
building process itself, and of the formation of its particular idea. 269

What deserves to be noted here however, is the fact that both individuals go by Christian first names, an indication that though they would have been adults at this time, they probably were products of a mission based primary school education. 270 Moreover, it is possible to establish that such an education was at the time unlikely to have been received within Enugu Ukwu itself, a possibility which implies that from a relatively young age, the lives of both men would have extended somewhat beyond their immediate world, unlike what it was for most of Enugu Ukwu’s ordinary indigenes, who at the time would not ever (unless they were involved in long distance trade) have been much beyond Enugu Ukwu’s borders, to the neighboring towns say of Nimo, Abagana, Amawbia and Awka by whom they are bounded, which towns own markets Enugu Ukwu indigenes would customarily have visited, and with which in-law relationships would have been established through frequent intra village-town marriages. Furthermore, it will be seen, in the inquiry conducted later into the life

269 As will become clear that is, the biographies detail nothing about the actual process of the building of the church, and of the way in which Isiadinso’s own career interweaves on anything near a regular basis with the possibility of the erection of the church.

270 It is however entirely possible that some adults would have taken on and used new Christian names upon converting to Christianity, it seems more likely that for the memory of the person to be transmitted by such a first name, this name would be one that the individual would have used for most of their lives.

271 It is known for a fact that the first graduate of the primary school system, who was of Enugu Ukwu origin, was Christopher Nweke Okafor, who was born in 1898. Assuming that he would have started his six year primary training at between the ages of five and ten, he would have graduated between 1911 and 1916. This seems to suggest in fact, that the two masons may not have been his contemporaries, but would have been slightly older than he was (if they were not, it would put them as head stone masons at the age of about sixteen, which seems unlikely). The implication, which for Isiadinso at least is corroborated later on, is that there education could not have taken place within Enugu Ukwu itself.
histories of some individual builders, this 'foreign' exposure was not always, for this period, related to either the missionary enterprise, to the colonial administration, nor to the itineration of the Nri priesthood, but not untypically was connected to a childhood experience of slavery.

It is indicated above that the builders of the church appear to have had experience beyond Enugu Ukwu itself. In addition, given the insistence with which it was communicated that Okrika was the origin of the design idea, it may also be assumed that the 'architect' (if indeed this person or persons were not the same as the builders), was at least equally well travelled.

The historical relationship between Okrika and the rest of Igbo land is not as widely remembered as its nature might demand. The history goes back beyond the 'second hand clothing' business mentioned of the period in which this inquiry is situated, to the earlier one of the palm-produce trade, and also of the trans-Atlantic slave-trade by which the former was preceded. Okrikan indigenes, as is true of the indigenes of many of the coastal towns like Bonny and Opobo, were also middlemen in the slave trade. More significantly for our study, at the moment when the trade in humans became illegal across the atlantic, (and when this trade was replaced by the commodities trade (most specifically the trade in palm produce, many of the Igbo slaves who were already members of the Okiriké community became in the 1830s and 40s employed as canoe rowers in the transportation (for their Okiriké masters), of palm-oil from the interior down to the coast. According to Isichei (1976:96) ‘...Some of them [the Igbo ex-slaves turned employees] were responsible for the actual bargaining [over the price for acquiring the palm produce from
their erstwhile Igbo brethren in the producing areas]- an occupation in which a man of ability could rise, in time, to real prosperity and power...’ to which she adds that many of these men, by now Christian ‘...were the first evangelists of Igbo land.’ Indeed Sue Martin for example writes (1988:29) that ‘One of the principal sources of the oil shipped from Bonny was the Ngwa region?’. Bonny, and later Opobo traders bought much of their oil in the Ndoki region, which at the time bordered the highest navigable stretch of the Imo River. Both Ngwa and Ndoki traditions record that the Ngwa brought their oil overland to Ndoki markets like Obegu and Ohambele: the porters in this trade being Ngwa women, escorted by men.’ Though she fails to mention Okrika by name, it is clear from the brief historical description offered earlier on in this chapter, that Okrika was hardly to be outdone in this aspect by Bonny.

Indeed the archive has yielded the fact that amongst the traders settled at the ‘waterside’ at Ife, a major inland market town on the Imo River73, were eighty-one adult males from Okrika (from Akwete there were only thirty six by comparison). Of Ife it adds moreover that ‘[...] there are riverside settlements of Okrika and Akwete traders who buy oil brought in from all the surrounding areas, and transport

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272 This is the first community north of the Izhon region which identifies itself without hesitation as Igbo (in contrast say to the Ikwerre), and through which region much of the palm oil trade to the coast passed. The region was also a major producer. The town of Aba, mentioned previously, has been since the early 1910s, the largest urban community in the Ngwa region (Nwaguru (1973) op.cit.).

273 As mentioned earlier, Martin (op cit.,) gives a detailed picture of the dynamics driving such sites. The 1931 Intelligence Report on the Ezinnihite Clan adds moreover that ‘Markets existed in almost every town in the area, and the larger towns had more than one [market]. The largest market is at Ife and since its growth there has been a tendency for the other smaller markets in the South of the area to close down. NAE OW DIST 9/18/43, page 34.
it down river in canoes. The [oil] market at Ife is over a mile from these settlements."\(^274\)

Though the historical moment in which both St. Peter’s, Okrika, and the Emmanuel Church Enugu-Ukwu arise lie well beyond the period described by Isichei and by Martin just above (as much as two generations later to be exact of the former writer’s description), it seems likely, given the later location of Martin’s work, that the memory of an Okrikan origin in Enugu-Ukwu may be based on some participation by Enugu Ukwu indigenes in the trade itself, or it may indicate that in fact the first evangelical presence in Enugu Ukwu was an Igbo-Okrikan one. Whatever the case may be, the notion that the Church of Emmanuel was in some way related to the church at Okrika is not an implausible one.

There are two buildings which may help clarify the history of Emmanuel Church somewhat. They do not, one might admit, establish direct historical links to Okrika as such\(^275\). They are introduced here because for one of them (investigated first) such a link is cited through an equally ‘other’ Igbo borderland middle-place. This place is Arochukwu, a town which appears to allow the history of the Emmanuel Church to be clarified, specifically via the career of the builder Isiadinso who grew up there, and whose building career (its details will be narrated much later) seems to have been connected to the above mentioned buildings which are offered next. One of them is the house commenced circa 1926 by Chief

\(^{274}\) See NAE: OW DIST 9/18/43, page 68 (appendix).

\(^{275}\) Though every indication is that further research would in fact yield concrete evidence that this was indeed the case.
Lazarus Agwuna II and occupied in 1929. It is located in the compound nearly adjacent to the church. The second, is the St. Peter’s Church, Abagana, about three miles up the road.

Chief Lazarus Agwuna’s house (fig. 43) was formally named the St. Peace Odenigbo House, during an apparently lavish opening ceremony. This house would certainly itself easily make the subject of an independent and more extensive inquiry. Here, it is introduced as an example of a building that is more clearly defined as having been the work of Thomas Isiadinso, one of the masons who, as already mentioned, apparently worked also on the Enugu Ukwu church. St. Peace Odengibo house’s style combines elements of the Colonial house with elements that appear to be derived from the combination of a local interpretation of the porched front entrance, with the elevation of a church. Aspects of this aesthetic may also be observed of other houses built by Isiadinso all over the south-east, from as far afield as Enugu-Ngwo (fig. 44) and Arondizuogu (fig. 45) to more closely neighboring sites such as the Adama Ojiako House (fig. 6) at Adazi and Chief Onyiuke’s Stone Palace (as it is called today) in Nimo, the latter being the oldest of the large houses he produced, and the one closest to Enugu Ukwu. Some of these houses are the focus of equally detailed studies in later chapters. They are introduced here, and only in passing to indicate the conservatism of the style, and its reliance on a simplicity, enclosure and massiveness that does not seem to derive from the more common type of colonial architecture, though we recognize some of its properties in the less

276 Lazarus Agwuna was the predecessor and father of Osita Agwuna (see p 158, n___).

277 This marks the first time as far as can be ascertained, that a house was ‘opened’ formally and with such ceremony in this region. Interview with Osita Agwuna August 12, 1992, and with stone mason Stanislov Azodo of Adazi Mnukwu, Saturday August 31, 1992.
frequently built styles that appeared in the then distant Colonial capital town of Enugu after the 1910s.

One of the indicators of this difference, which property is pursued in detail in a subsequent chapter, is the external surface of the fabric of the building. From a distance, it is easily mistaken for a brick house. On approaching however, it becomes evident that it consists of small units of a particular kind of stone, which units have been incorporated in the manner of a type of brick-laying tradition commonly known in Europe as the English-bond. Even closer to this stone wall however, the pointing strikes one as distinctive. By this, reference is not made to the thickness of the joints themselves (indicating that the units of stone are only roughly standardized), but (and more importantly) to the fact that observed in close detail, the joint pattern of this building cannot be interpreted in the manner which, as will become evident, seems possible for the fabric of other buildings of the period.

A church building at Nnewi, about forty miles away (fig. 47) and another at Ufuma, only a bit more distant from Enugu Ukwu, (fig. 48), both erected in the early 1930's from rough-cut local stone, warrant brief comparisons. Of the latter two, what remains impressed on one’s memory however is not (as with St. Peace Odenigbo House) the massiveness of the enclosing fabric, but the pattern-effect created by their emphasized mortar joints. This includes for Nnewi both the unusual rhythmic effect of the horizontal bands, and the seemingly bizarre patterns formed in the lintels over the vaguely gothic windows. At Ujari and at Ufuma, the patterning is even more

\[^{278}\text{Detail of St. Peace Odenigbo house masonry, showing type of bonding style employed.}\]
distinctive, resulting in many creative flourishes either in the wall itself, or in sections of it above the apices of some of the windows (figs. 49, 50). It suggests of course that the structural logic of a foreign technology is not what the masons at either site attempt to incorporate. If one attempts to read structurally the mortar patterns constituting the lintel, it would either seem to make no sense, or when it does seem legible (as in the outer course of the arch at Nnewi) it would seem to inform one that European arches are supposedly built of horizontally-curved bricks. Further, the mortar patterns ride over the pilasters literally seeming both to submerge them, deny them, and yet to contain them. In both instances, one might therefore, especially in contexts unfamiliar with the experience of masonry as such, accept that their surfaces may be comprehended as consisting of a visual 'net' within which the building’s mass is caught.

By contrast, the massiveness of St. Peace Odenigbo House is not dispersed in any manner. Rather, the pointing is delineated in such a manner as to suggest the idea of stacking (each vertical joint appears to have been turned slightly along a vertical axis, so that it extends over the surface of the horizontal line of the pointing below [fig. 51]). In this way, it seems to replicate and emphasize the structural logic of the masonry itself, in a much more correspondent and redundant manner, than does the pointing of the European English or Flemish tradition from which this local Enugu Ukwu preference might well ultimately derive. This stylistic property of the Agwuna house distinguishes it from the Emmanuel Church, in which the pointing is not suggestive of this structurality, and which retains (and emphasizes) the idea of the pattern alone. In subsequent chapters this
phenomenon will be reflected upon, and in particular, the aspect of it which in a future study, may allow the observer to track the style (and participation) of one mason apart from another.

Regarding the fabric of the St. Peace Odenigbo house, one final observation may be noted. The piers from which the arches spring are distinguished from the rest of the building's fabric, by not only being covered over by a coat of cement plaster, but by the use of a molded astragal over the line at which the juncture occurs (fig 52). The intention may have been purely decorative. It may however also have been directed at the idea that the building sits on a base; that in a sense the upper floor floats freely above this base, carried over by the series of arches. This has the effect of rooting the building securely to the earth: of in a way making the foundation visible\(^7\) by extending its height vertically above ground, assuring the onlooker that the massive double storey wonder is not about to come crashing down.

Indeed, this appears to have been a perceptual problem that owners of buildings such as this one had to overcome. It is narrated with reference to another building more specifically\(^8\), but indicates that the new building

\(^7\) This property also seems present in customary architecture, in which the foundation appears above ground as a plinth, and in which it is moreover usually emphasised by the application of a different coloring.

\(^8\) This building has ultimately not become a part of this particular work, but is narrated by Mazi Ezekiel Obiegbu (interview of Sunday July 19, 1992), a stone mason from Alor, a town in the same general area. The narrative described amongst other things, the history of the erection of a two level house for his brother. He had proposed replacing the early twentieth century custom of using of large planks for intermediate flooring, and suggested its being replaced by a reinforced concrete floor in which hollowed masonry units form part of the floor itself. His brother was apparently not able to comprehend how such a 'heavy' floor could hold up across its span, and only agreed very reluctantly (continued...)
experimentation may have been regarded with suspicion. It is then entirely plausible that St. Peace Odenigbo's front is rendered to communicate assurance. This possibility is further reinforced by the fact that once the corner is turned, facing the side elevation which would not be visible as one approached the building, the line of the rendering is dropped to a lower level, and to one moreover which corresponds to the customary height to which protective rendering in the 'traditional' house is normally applied.

Returning to an exploration of the house as a whole, it is observed to be rectangular in plan (fig 53), with a projecting two-level porch centralized over the entrance area. This porch is framed by a pair of staged pilasters which extend the full height of the porch. On the lower level, the porch is entered through an archway. Above this archway, on the second level, a pair of arched windows are located instead of the single large one below. The wall of the uppermost level, covering over the roof-attic space also appears to have been perforated, here by a single triangle-topped window (fig 54), which has since been filled in, as is obvious from the 'ghosting' which has resulted from the variation in the masonry style. Each of the three vertices of the porch's pediment is crowned by pyramidal concrete caps on top of which have been placed decorative concrete spheres.

From the porch archway, extending along its left side and its right side, is a veranda, bounded by a series of arches. This

\[\text{\textsuperscript{280}(...continued)}\]

to his brothers superior technical knowledge. Nevertheless, it is said that it took him quite a number of months to become comfortable with the idea of sitting below such a floor, for the constant fear that it was soon to collapse over the heads of those silly enough to site underneath it.
veranda also occurs along the full length of the rear elevation, without the break offered by a porch. No veranda is provided however along the two shorter side elevations.

Facing the front entrance archway itself, is a doorway which leads directly into the ground floor main reception area, which space extends to the rear side of the building. To the left and right side of the reception area, through doors in its enclosing internal walls, are a set of rooms, a pair on each side of the central reception area.

At diagonally opposite ends of the ground floor level verandas, a staircase is located, which rises to the corresponding enclosed passageway of the floor above. At this upper floor level, the layout of rooms is repeated exactly in the manner of the plan of the ground floor. However, the upper level possesses a different ambience. The effects of light and shadow are much more variegated, and the experience of its space holds more subtlety and complexity; unexpected changes in luminosity are encountered. This derives from the fact that the porch, and the veranda are not semi-external spaces at this level, but rather are now fully enclosed within the building envelope. This creates a sense of vertical layering, and of a recession of levels of natural lighting.

Indeed, it appears that this spatial modulation of lighting was exploited in the way the building was used. It certainly was a space that had particular significance. In the first place, the house's commissioning patron, Lazarus Agwuna, seems to have been intent on using the word 'portico' to describe

\[281\] This was originally a wooden staircase, but it has recently been replaced by a concrete flight of stairs.
the space. This fact was mentioned rather whimsically\textsuperscript{282}, indicating that the term continued to appear a strange one, and not an easy one to incorporate in the everyday mixtures of Igbo and English that independently formed the parallel and interchangeable media of communication at the time. The porch was moreover, the place at which informal family gatherings would occur, most particularly the place to which all would convene (having woken early) for morning prayers.

The centralized rooms also were given labels which are identifiably of European origin: viz. \textit{palo}, an application of the term parlour to a space in the house which serves a related function. Such names are employed unhesitatingly (today and apparently likewise in the recent past) when a dialogue was being conducted in Igbo, indicating the extent to which some European usages had become absorbed and normalized as part of the Igbo language.

It has been mentioned above that the disposition of walls, and of its perforations, results in an unexpected play of light and shadow on the surfaces of the wall. It is interesting therefore to discover traces of paint, by now quite faint, which indicate that all the internal wall surfaces of the building would have once been defined in specific colors. In the circulation areas, these appear to have been near white in color. In the internal areas, such as the \textit{palo}'s and the rooms directly off it, the white color seems to have been restricted to the upper third of the surface of the walls. The lower two thirds of the surface is painted in a different color, and as far as it was possible to determine, this seems to have been either a beige (yellow

\textsuperscript{282} His granddaughter, who is a graduate educator, and currently teaches at a local secondary school (or high school).
tinged) color, or a very light-blue color. It is of course difficult to be certain that these were the colors applied at the inception of the building. However, there was no apparent evidence of a layering of coats in the dilapidated areas. This may indeed indicate that the original colors are the ones that continued to exist up to the period of the Nigerian Civil War (some forty odd years later) during which period the bulk of the demise of the interior occurred (apparently as a result of the destruction of the roof from an explosive shell which landed on the house).

The aesthetic intent would therefore appear to be quite distinct from the one observed in a European Colonial building to which it might be compared. Indeed they appear to be quite opposite. The latter’s interiors tend to express the sense of ‘calm’ as Europeans experience this, consisting of monochrome coloring (usually off-white), the same color extending through every space of the interior. In such European colonial interiors, moreover, an abhorrence for high levels of variation in color and of contrast seems to operate, the difference in levels of illumination as one moves deeper into the building being achieved only very gradually. In St. Peace Odenigbo House on the other hand, light gradations are sharp, sudden and contrasted. It seems surrounded by the glare of the bright surfaces against the shadowed ones. Moreover, the application of multi-colored surfaces, changing from one room

283 Today, interior repainting might occur every ten years or less. It is difficult to ascertain what the practice would have been this long ago, but it is more likely that intervals would have been lengthier, and that the paintwork might have been expected to last for the life of the building (for the reason of its cost, if for no other reason.

284 The interiors of the Old Governor’s Lodge at Enugu were examples in which this preference is practiced. While this could be a result of a ‘modern’ taste in the colonial period itself, the changes in color at St. Peace Odenigbo house include changes halfway up one surface, a practice rare in even the more colorful interiors of pre-modern European country houses.
to the next, as it does vertically across even the surface of one wall, contributes to the enlivening of the surfaces and of the rooms so enclosed. The comfort with the clash of multicolored surfaces, as with multi-toned surfaces seems apparent, and locates the building well within the universe of Igbo aesthetic preference, even when such preference is only recognized by admitting that this moment is also one of its transformative periods.

It seems that when St. Peace Odenigbo House functioned as the residence of the Chief of Enugu Ukwu and of all Umunri, the house, a large compound, and other structures within the compound, were all surrounded by a 'traditional' laterite formed wall, with an entrance gate located to its north, and which entrance comes off the main road through the town. On entering the gate (inaccessible in 1992, because a new entrance had been created, still off the same road but in a more southerly location which de-emphasizes the mansion's importance because it opens into the back-yard) one faces the entrance porch (fig 55). However, on the left side of the imaginary line connecting the gate to the porch, was said to have existed the obi, a single storey structure, around which

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285 A not undisputed attribution one might mention; especially as the fracas over it involves a historical clash between the Chief, and Nigeria's premier scholar of Nri history, Omwuejeogwu (op cit.). See Agwuna (1982 and 1986).

286 According to Igwe Osita Agwuna (interview in Enugu Ukwu, August 15, 1992), it is the Umunri custom that every new Igwe, establishes his residence separate from that inhabited by the previous Igwe, usually the latter's father. Chief Lazarus Agwuna's Place, was therefore a relocation away from the residence of the previous Chief, and was located specifically in an area then considered on the periphery of the town (it was then surrounded by a lot of bush), but chosen for its strategic location to the main artery, then recognised as likely to play a significant role in the future economic development (and direction of physical growth) of Enugu Ukwu.
much of the activity of the Igwe-in-Council\textsuperscript{287}, as well as of the social life of the Igwe would have occurred. This obi building no longer exists within this compound, though evidence of its former location is still visible. It is not clear in what circumstance exactly the obi ceased to function, and was allowed to crumble. However, it is likely to have pre-dated the Civil War, and to have been a result of the sideways transfer of the Igwe-ship to the present Chief\textsuperscript{288}. Its demise, is therefore not necessarily an indication of a reduced significance of the idea of the obi in the Agwuna family’s social life, even though such a trend appears to have occurred in Igbo social life generally speaking, from the 1920s onwards.

The difference between the masonry style of the Agwuna’s St. Peace Odenigbo House, and that of the Emmanuel Church has been mentioned earlier. The former appears more closely to be a metaphor for a structure of sedimentation, and an accurate representation of the action of mass under gravity. The Emmanuel Church seems on the other hand to attempt instead a de-materialization of its own mass, in a manner not terribly dissimilar to the Nnewi and Ujari examples mentioned earlier. The pointing is continuous, giving very much the impression that what lies behind its own plane is somehow beyond the logic of gravity (fig. 56). This is further encouraged by the very tendency for the eye to be arrested at the surface, by the very attractive and dazzling quality of this line. Its pattern in other words has a somewhat hypnotic quality which

\textsuperscript{287} A phrase increasingly heard today applied to the group of titled men who form the town by town governing cabinet of a majority of Igbo settlements. The term serves well as a translation of nzie n’ozo, though it is clear it would not have been a term that was used in the 1920s.

\textsuperscript{288} He is a second son of Chief Lazarus Agwuna who occupied the position when his older brother took seriously ill from a terminal, debilitating illness
always threatens to capture its viewer\textsuperscript{289}. In architectonic terms therefore, the fabrics of both buildings are almost oppositional with respect to each other. Given that they occur in the same town, on sites literally adjacent to each other, and given that they were erected in the same period roughly speaking, one might conclude that they were influenced by very different traditions. Moreover, if the involvement of Thomas Isiadinso is certain for the Emmanuel Church, it is unclear from the information still available how much power in the direction of affairs at the church’s construction site he would have had in 1929. It is unclear for example whether or not Isiadinso was in fact the master mason with overall charge for the Emmanuel church project. For St. Peace Odenigbo House however, he was without doubt the head mason. Given this fact, and if the divergent textural qualities of the buildings indicate this, then it is clear that the Emmanuel Church comes from a site of tradition-invention that is distinct from that out of which the head mason of the house comes. And, although at this point nothing of the style of Emmanuel Church’s surface or ornament would convince visually that it is more of Okrika than is the St. Peace Odenigbo House, it seems possible to suggest, no matter how tentatively, that by a set of very different strategies, both the Emmanuel Church and the three storey house at Okrika share the tendency, perhaps unintentionally, to de-materialize their own masses by the ornamental strategies which hold the eye on the surface, and de-emphasize the structurality of the mortar jointing in favor of its visual effect. Furthermore, although St. Peter’s Church Okrika does not share this quality with the three storey house

\textsuperscript{289} It is accepted indeed that no local interpretation which would suggest this particular reading was collected, perhaps because it was not being sought at the moment, but not improbably because this interpretation may not be recognized there. A third possibility would of course be that no record of the visual reception of such a building in the 1920s and 1930s exists. This would certainly make interesting focus for a future research project.
in its vicinity, the other church in Okrika which dates back to this early period (1924) does, as do many other buildings on the island. Which is to say that although the earliest Church on the island is intent on asserting its massiveness, as does any church building in Scotland or England, the other Church buildings (and many private residences) seem rather to be intent on negating their own mass. These other church buildings all of which have centralized towers over the main entranceway could then equally well have been the ‘Okrika’ to which oral descriptions at Enugu Ukwu refer. And, it seems to be this anti-material, surface-ornamentational architectural aesthetic that also links the Emmanuel Church at Enugu Ukwu to Okrika in a purely physical manner\(^{290}\).

In a subsequent chapter, it will become clear that the apprenticeship of the master mason of the St. Peace Odenigbo House did not occur in Okrika, but as indicated earlier took place at Arochukwu. In a sense, Arochukwu like Okrika, was a point from which the European world commenced its journey into the Igbo ‘heartland’. Unlike Okrika however, Arochukwu’s culture is much more Igbo than one could justifiably claim for Okrika, the historical difference seeming to be the result of the fact that the Arochukwu, unlike Okrika, is separated from a territory peopled mainly by Efiks (Arochukwu’s other constituent community), by the clear demarcation of the Cross River. To add to this, Aro traders in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries rarely themselves came into direct contact with Europeans on the coast\(^{291}\), unlike the historical situation at Okrika. This may therefore explain partially the

\(^{290}\) It has already been pointed out earlier of course that as far as the interiors of both churches are concerned, there is much that the two share.

\(^{291}\) Dike and Ekejiuba (1990).
differences observed between the two buildings: between the church and the house. These differences seem to indicate the possibility that the producers of each of the buildings may have been introduced to the art of European building craft at different locations, in which differing 'traditions' of European building were on offer. Much, however, about the explanations suggested above may nevertheless seem inconclusive, given that they contain a number of explanatory gaps and suppositions. It may help, further then, to introduce another building to the discussion; one which though being itself a church, yielded more information than did the church at Nnewi or the one at Ujari, and thus may provide other kinds of comparative avenues not available in the above detailed juxtaposition of a house and a church building.

A comparison with St. Peter's Abagana

St. Peter’s Anglican Church (figs. 57, 58), in the town of Abagana so closely resembles the Emmanuel Church in formal terms, that it would be difficult to distinguish them were they stood next to one another (compare figs. 30 and 57). One is struck immediately more by the similarity between the two churches, than by their differences. They are both basilica-plan churches; both possess a clerestory level and lantern windows, both have a single centralized lantern tower of identical shape and fenestration; and both towers come complete with the similarly proportioned pediments.

However, the apsidal end of St. Peter’s terminates in a half-octagonal apse, roofed separately and at a lower height, more typical of west European orthodox Christian architecture, and quite at variance with the apsidal solution of the Emmanuel Church. At the apsidal end of St. Peters Abagana is found a constructive inconsistency which may well be meaningful. One
of the apse’s windows has a triangular opening, and a stone lintel laid to follow this form. A second window, adjacent to this maintains the same lintel, but is provided with an arch-topped window opening instead (fig 59). Furthermore, and at this same end, a chancery is incorporated to form a wing (again unorthodox). Apart from these apsidal windows which are unique in themselves, we find that in St Peter’s, unlike at Emmanuel Church, only one type of window, the arched window, is admitted, and that these are consistently true stone-course, save only for the ‘false arches’ on the tower itself. Finally, at the tower’s flanks, the triangular parapet walls that lend a buttress-like lateral support are punctured by an arched window placed at a slant. These appear to communicate a local understanding of the idea of a flying buttress. This feature does not exist in the Emmanuel Church. In terms of the previous suggestions for Emmanuel Church, St. Peter’s Church Abagana does not however appear to have undergone any extension since it was originally built, judging by the absence of any variation in the style, consistence and color of its stone masonry. However, and for the same reason as our conclusion at Emmanuel Church Enugu Ukwu, the tower appears to have been a later addition, though it is unclear exactly how much time may be assumed to have elapsed between the two phases of the project.  

In Enugu Ukwu, it is said that the people of Abagana, being envious of the work in progress at Enugu Ukwu, resolved to have a church themselves, and commenced soon after to build

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292 In this regard, it is worth noting that some now demolished churches, of an equally early period, say for example St. Nnewi, which is built in stone, is a close copy of either of the two Njikoka churches with the exception of a tower. It seems clear therefore, that the first space to be built was the functional one of the congregational space, and that this was followed, perhaps after the congregation had had a moment to recoup its energies, and its finances, both of which would have to be called upon by a project for the erection of a tower.
one, plagiarizing the ‘plan’ of the Enugu Ukwu structure. It is added that due to the fractious nature of Enugu Ukwu politics, and the comparatively stable and united voice of the smaller community of Abagana, the latter managed to complete their church building before Enugu Ukwu did its own, even though St. Peter’s was commenced after St. Emmanuel.

The evidence from Abagana, of a completely different kind, corroborates some of this, but tells the story in a rather different form. The building itself possesses clues that indicate the presence of builders who seem less proficient than the ones employed at the Emmanuel Church. This is prompted by a closer inspection. It was indicated in the previous page that the apsidal end of St. Peter’s Abagana incorporates window styles, and a location of spaces such as the chancery, in a somewhat *ad hoc* manner. It is recognized here in addition that at one end of the north-facing elevation, what appears to be a commenced but never completed arch is embedded in the wall (fig. 60), the regularity of the stone courses extending below the spring of this incomplete arch, indicating that this was the beginning of a doorway, subsequently abandoned, and substituted for the building’s corner. This may indicate a change in the original design; the church being ultimately smaller than it was once conceived to be. Another explanation would of course be that a mason assumed that the wall continued with another arched doorway, and that have commenced building this, his master-mason or other superior did, on inspecting the work and discovering this, promptly required the cessation of this arch, and its conversion into the corner. Moreover, a continuous vertical joint located between this unfinished arch, and a doorway adjacent, suggest another possibility. This is that the corner may already have been turned, before the extra length of wall
was begun and then halted abruptly. Which ever way it is looked at, this reaffirms the ad hoc manner in which the building appears to have progressed, apparently not being as fully conceived and thought out, in the minds of those executing the idea, as is borne out by the Emmanuel Church.

Four other kinds of evidence exist for St. Peter’s Abagana at the moment of writing, which do not exist (or were not available to the writer), for the Emmanuel Church. One of them is that, as was the case for St. Peter’s Okrika, the church at Abagana (incidentally the namesake of the Church at Okrika) has a series of plaques also embedded in the walls of the building, although none of them is in bronze293. The second kind of evidence exists in the form of the publication in 1984 of a history of the Abagana Church’s community from the days of its foundation (see St. Peter’s Abagana [1984]). The third form of evidence is the transcript from notes produced by the present writer, following an interview with an elderly man of Abagana who though now in his eighties was present as one of the church’s founding members, and has familiarity with the memory of the period in which the Church was being erected.

Of the plaque inserted into one of the walls of St. Peter’s Abagana (fig 61), it may be noted that this represents another occasion, following the tradition established by St. Peters Okrika, of affixing text to a building, a tradition which again paradoxically, the Emmanuel Church (which claims a relationship with the church at Okrika) does not follow. It can be assumed that this plaque is a foundation stone, though it does not state so expressly. Here, the script, all in English, informs the reader that the stone was laid on July

293 The plaques are all either cement or stone.
25, 1933. It is dedicated to a Right Rev. B. Lasbrey, D.D., the Bishop On the Niger, who was an Englishman. The Building Committee consists however, judging by the names, of Igbo only. The names are moreover arranged in such a way that each participant’s role is clearly legible. However, the role of Superintendent is both unclear, and unclearly attributed. That is, though it seems likely that ‘treasurer’, refers to treasurer of the building committee and not of the church, it is not clear why the catechist is not given a specific role beyond his church status. This may imply that superintendent refers also to a status within the church hierarchy, rather than to a role on the building committee. But, nevertheless, we are unsure who the superintendent is, since if it is the Igbo Reverend Umunna, then we wish to know what "G.T. Basden D.Litt M.L.C." ’s role is in this committee. Or, for that matter, what his role in the hierarchy of this church was. As it is, he appears above local status and hierarchy. Clearly however, this Basden is the author of several treatises on Igbo culture and its form of orthodox African religion, including the well known then legendary text the Niger Ibos 294, which text enters into the dissertation itself in the concluding sections.

It is interesting to note that Basden was said to have been a regular visitor to the house St.Peace Odenigbo during the period of its construction, though the narrator of this observation seemed to indicate that though these visits were ones in which the owner solicited Basden’s opinions and advice on how to deal with certain constructional situations (and not necessarily problems), that Basden was not the supervisor of the building nor the originator of the house’s design.

Nevertheless, it seems clear that in Basden, simply by reason of his being English, was recognized a source of knowledge on the process of building in the manner at hand, and that therefore the house was recognized in the moment in which it was being produced as being partly based on an appropriation of oyibo building traditions.

The individual narrating his personal experience of the construction of the Abagana Church, suggests on the other hand that Rev. Basden’s role in the design and construction of the church was a much more active one than the present writer was apparently assuming in his questioning. He remembers specifically that Basden did come armed with a building plan, and that Basden was also involved in the ‘pegging’ out of the land for the positioning of the building at foundation level. Moreover, he recalled Basden’s visits as ones in which the latter occasionally showed up to check on progress, and that this progress was more or less in accordance with the instructions he had left following an inspection made on the previous visit.

Yet a fourth view of the real context that surrounds the production of the St. Peter’s Abagana building and the

295 Even if this narrative is believed, it should not be taken to indicate that Basden’s presence was critical to the possibility of the church’s coming into being (or of the St. Peace Odenigbo house in the next door town at that). Indeed, by this time, Igbo builders were challenging the colonial administration directly, whenever the latter was inclined to give local building contracts away to a European contractor. A dispute in the nearby town of Umuoji (about fifteen miles from Abagana) makes this clear for example. Apparently caused by the District Officer’s impending decision to give out a contract for building a new courthouse to a European contractor, the people of Umuoji petitioned (in a letter written by C.O. Moghalu, who was paid for this service to the Resident at Onitsha) by asserting that ‘[they had] artisans trained by the Public Works Department who are competent enough to do the work and have asked the D.O. Onitsha (i.e. the District Officer for Onitsha Province, an administrator of rank below the Resident’s) to give the work to our boys to do, but he refused to concede[...] similar buildings have been constructed at Idemili, Ojoto, Obosi, Oba and other towns in the Onitsha district and the works were given to local contractors and we fail to see why in our case similar procedure should not be adopted. NAI: ON DIST 7/1/2 pp149-153.
foundation of the congregation, is contained as suggested above in the history pamphlet mentioned earlier, and its narrative differs in a number of significant ways from what has been presented so far. One of the interesting historical suggestions it makes (and in this case with greater certainty than the oral narrative at Enugu Ukwu, because of the detail provided in the former) is that the founding of the mission here was the act of other Igbo people from the already ‘planted’ towns that are in Abagana’s vicinity; namely individuals from Ogidi, Ogbunike, and Obosi. Thus again, the degree of the new faith’s alieness (whose reputation seems to have reached places such as Abagana well in advance of actual missionaries), would appear to be reduced by the manner of its introduction to this location. An additionally unusual aspect of early Christianity in Abagana is the existence here of a community of its Christian natives who lived in small groups apart from the rest of the town (History p9), apparently in order to create a space for biblical study, and also to separate themselves from the threat of molestation from non-Christians.

The History, certainly indicates the importance of the church building itself to the sense of Christian identity. That it was first located in the ‘bad bush’, the space of abomination in every Anambra-basin Igbo settlement, is instructive (if not unusual for early Christian history here). It indicates the non-traditionist connection early converts had with their

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296 Their missionary briefs were nevertheless directed by Archdeacon Smith from the Church Missionary Society headquarters at Onitsha. It may be presumed that he, in turn would have been either a black Sierra Leoni or a white Briton.

297 The idea of establishing the church here for example seems to have received much support from important personalities of the town, including many of its titled citizens. See History...p8.

298 See History p...
host community, but also the dialogue with 'evil' which, claimed by Christianity, allowed many communities to test the new religionists power and sincerity by putting them up against normally destructive forces. The text of History of Abagana continues by indicating that the first building was indeed a thatch and mud structure. Though it is not clear whether this structure actually existed during the occupation of the 'bad bush' site, or whether the bad bush site was quickly found to be unsatisfactory, and thus never occupied by the congregation, the text indicates a subsequent move first to a structure within the compound of one of its member's own residences, before finally occupying its present site, on land that was at the time in the midst of 'a very thick forest'. In other words, its final site was one that existed on the margins of the town of Abagana as originally constituted.

The historical relationship that existed between St. Peters Abagana and the Emmanuel Church at Enugu Ukwu is also characterized quite differently in the History of St. Peter's than the Enugu Ukwu narrative grants. Where that narrative implies Enugu Ukwu's leadership of the church, and its continued struggle to maintain that leadership against the constant pressure from Abagana (represented by the pace at which they completed their first stone church), the pamphlet History makes it clear that the reverse was more likely to be the case.

Against the foundation of the Church at Enugu Ukwu which is dated to 1913 (Omali-Okafor [1965]:94), the Abagana Church, also an Anglican congregation, is said to have been founded

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99 Its history results from a research project of sorts, and is therefore less likely to be narrating these aspects if they were against the specific facts that surround the moment.
in 1906\textsuperscript{300}. As such Abagana’s Christians would have had a six year head start on Enugu Ukwu’s Christian community, in the necessary reorientations involved in conversion\textsuperscript{301}. Moreover, according to the History it is to an Abagana indigene, Isaac Ezekwesili that Enugu Ukwu owes the ultimate establishment of its own Church Missionary Society mission station:

Abagana C.M.S. School was among the earliest in the region to become a Standard Six School. St. Peter’s Church therefore produced many Church teachers, and later school teachers, who took the Gospel, not only to various communities around Abagana, but also to various parts of Igboland and beyond. For example, Mr. Simeon Ugokwe opened the C.M.S. (St. Mary’s) Church at Ukpo, Mr,(sic) Isaac Ezekwesili opened the C.M.S. Church at Enugu Ukwu, Mr. Joseph Nzeako opened the C.M.S. Church at Ugbenu....... (History p14)

From all indications therefore, it seems unlikely that at the point some ten years after the mission was first established at Enugu Ukwu (and through a form of out-reach from Abagana), when the erection of the stone churches would have been commencing in both towns, that Abagana with its longer history of involvement with the church would be looking up to Enugu Ukwu for guidance of any kind.

\textsuperscript{300} By dint of the history of the spread of Christianity in Igbo land, the town of Abagana, has since become a largely Roman Catholic town. This may indicate that for much of its early history, the more important individuals in its society resisted conversion to Christianity, and that when such a conversion occurred, the politics of it was such as to make it likely that these influential groups would choose the rival church in which to lead their kith and kin into. This apparently differs from the early church history of both Nnobi and Enugu Ukwu.

\textsuperscript{301} It seems likely that the power of the nri religious establishment, as vested in the Igwe of Enugu Ukwu may well have been responsible for the fact that it took such an extended period for the religion to cross the boundary separating the two towns. Indeed, Omali Okafor has indirectly suggested this in his statement about the struggles waged by young men in Enugu Ukwu, and the rigid refusal to have his kingdom ‘poisoned’ by these new-fangled ideas which the towns chief expressed in vehement tones.
The discrepancy in both narratives is not that difficult to understand however. Enugu Ukwu, as a main lineage section of the Nri religious network, would before the incursions of Europe, have been regarded as the more important, more ‘senior’ more prioritized place. As guardians of tradition, it is clear that within the internal politics of such a community, the new oracle of Christianity was bound to have a more difficult time of settling in. Though similar struggles certainly did, as was indicated, exist in Abagana’s own context, the resistance here seems not to have been as stiff, and this ultimately is what accounts for the establishment of Christianity here before it was sold to the generality of Enugu Ukwu indigenes. However, a time would have come soon after, when for most Igbo towns in the area, it would have become clear that the future did not lie in resisting these new-fangled religions\(^{302}\), but in embracing its ideas, especially as this would have seemed to give one a better ear with the colonial administrators who resided in the vicinity. Moreover, a place like Enugu Ukwu would have, once the inevitability of the new situation became recognized, been tempted to catch up with and in fact to exceed the mother church Abagana, with whom all other significant relationships would normally require the subordination of Abagana to Enugu Ukwu. It is thus understood, that it may well have been Enugu Ukwu that rushed to complete its church, bidding to reclaim their customarily superior position and for reinstalling the status quo, than it was the other way round.\(^{303}\)

\(^{302}\) At many junctures all of the Church Missionary Society, the Roman Catholic Mission, the Salvation Army and the African Episcopal Church.

\(^{303}\) The History also informs its reader that a L100 prize was on offer from the Awka District Building Council (presumably of the Church rather than of the Colony) to any community that contributed the highest amount towards the erection of its church building (see p15). While serving to stud the landscape with church buildings (and thus to render Christianity visible in its new context) This (continued...)
In relation to the origin of the church's design, the History states uncategorically that Archdeacon G.T. Basden provided the plan of the Church building and construction work started about 1929. The foundation stone was laid on the 25th of July, 1933 by Bishop B. Lasbrey...’ [emphasis is writer's] and adds further that the master builders were all from Abagana itself. The status of the term 'plan' in such statements has been discussed previously, and it was concluded then that the term need not be taken literally. What is confirmed more significantly, is that Basden was involved to a significant degree with the conception of (and progress of) the work. This adds another level of difficulty to its relationship to Enugu...

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303 In an interview with Madam Janet Uzoma Ezekwesili (August 1994), sister-in-law of the pioneering Christian leader Isaac. Janet (née Ekpumobi), daughter of Obosi’s first ordained priest [Iweka 1924:101]) married Nelson Ezekwesili, Isaac's younger brother. She asserted unequivocally that what in fact had occurred is that the Church Missionary Society had provided a kind of archetypical plan for all new churches to follow, and that moreover different congregations were set in good-humored competition against one another by a scheme which promised a substantial monetary prize to which ever one of the communities was first to finish its church building in accordance with the archetype. She also recalls that the competition was as a result quite fierce between Enugu Ukwu and Abagana, but that Abagana ultimately won out.
Ukwu’s Emmanuel Church, since though they appear similar both internally and externally, it remains the case that Enugu Ukwu indigenes recall its own plan as coming as we have reiterated several times, from Okrika.

It would seem an extreme explanation to insist that the claim which asserts that the Emmanuel Church has an Okrika origin is merely an Enugu Ukwu myth (or even fabrication) meant to conceal the fact that the latter community ultimately were themselves the plagiarists. For though the Emmanuel Church departs in several significant ways from St. Peter’s Okrika, it remains possible that reference to ‘Okrika’ in such attributions, apart from the earlier suggestion which explains this as related to an immersion in a comparable narrative of the mission experience [see p__], is not directed at the specific church building described here, but to the generality of church buildings found in this region’s coastal, eastern-Izhon community. Amongst such a group of churches would be many hierarchically important ones, which also happen to have their towers centralized over the entrance, and in which group are included the churches at Buguma, Degema and at Abonema, as well as the St. Stephen’s Church, Ogoloma (a sub-section of Okrika) which church was commenced almost at the same time as St. Peters, and apparently in competition with it

To accept the alternate explanation, that Enugu Ukwu indigenes are involved in a kind of ‘cover up’ would moreover force a parallel acceptatance (because of the said involvement of Basden) that some of the buildings on which we focus are not

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307 The foundation stone bears a date of 1923, which would in fact put it a year earlier than St Peter’s. Ogoloma is a quarter which is in constant rivalry with the rest of the town (apparently a rivalry that extends to Okrika’s foundation, and which is aligned around the contestation of who the first settlers of the land of Okrika are.)
as locally reinvented as indicated in this text. Nevertheless, it is not the possibility of this that necessitates opposing the mythicization of Enugu Ukwu’s own story. Rather, such an opposition emerges because there seems to be a much less complex explanation for the different kinds of local knowledge on the related history connecting both church buildings, which confronts the scholar here. It seems more likely in fact that Enugu Ukwu did commence its Anglican church building before Abagana did. Basden’s involvement may therefore have been one of the Euro-cultured copyist rather than of originator. That is, it is more likely that the people of Abagana quite content with their thatch and laterite church, were forced from such complacency by the commencement of the Emmanuel Church stone structure. They, as Mother church to the Emmanuel Church’s congregation would thus have been roused from their complacency into desiring a church like the one they could already see going up in the neighboring town. It is against such a background that Basden may have been invited to contribute to the work, not so much as originator, as it would have been from knowledge that his own familiarity with European church buildings would ensure the rapid undertaking of their own project, and the possibility that they might yet commence and complete their church building within the time that Enugu Ukwu might complete the Emmanuel Church. Certainly, the uncompleted arch, ultimately embedded within the masonry towards the rear of the building at Abagana, suggests a building process that was undertaken in haste.  

308 Of course, the resolution of the problem of the confrontation between the two narratives, not to mention the two communities in competition at the time, is easily imagined. If it is assumed that Enugu Ukwu commenced before Abagana, and that Abagana nevertheless was resolved to finish its own building as quickly as possible (and if before Enugu Ukwu then even better), and also that Abagana though less gifted with skilled builders, nevertheless had the good ears of a European advisor, it is conceivable that both narratives are true, but only partial.

(continued...)

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One can only imagine the importance the building itself would have had for such communities, embedded as they were within larger kith and kin whose own religious loyalties would still have remained substantially indigenous. But perhaps an indication of its importance remains sensible even in the present, judged by the space given in the *History* to the physical structure itself, to the various spaces it occupied during its history (and the symbolism of these occupations and shifts), and finally to the histories of the individual builders who erected the buildings. Of the latter group especially, it is clear that a relationship between building the physical church, and building the congregation and spiritual community of the church, is analogized. Still though these church buildings have answered several questions related to the development of new architectural culture, their particular contexts do not yield a sufficiently rich narrative for several of the architecturally related questions to be answered with certainty, let alone the question of the meaning of the Church as an institution for the locality. For this reason, another church building's history, provides a further informational context by which to complement the picture

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If on the other hand one is prepared to agree with Abagana that in fact their church was commenced first, and that Enugu Ukwu was in a manner of speaking shamed (because after all in historical terms it ought to show leadership in all matters... even in the championing of a religion which challenged its own tradition, given its claim to headship of UmuNri) into producing its own building, then the confusion in Enugu Ukwu relating an Okrika origin may be one that, in the politics of the 1920s moment, has mixed the origin of the church as faith with the origin of the physical building as an object possessed of style, for a very useful purpose. Yet, earlier on, it was suggested that certain characteristics of the fabric of the Emmanuel Church make plausible an Okrikan source for its architectural aesthetics defined broadly, and more than is the case for other stone buildings with which the Emmanuel Church may be contemporary in the vicinity. Here, it might be added (to support the explanation on offer in Enugu Ukwu itself) that if the idea of 'Okrika' is then extended to include all the Kalabari places with which Okrika shares a cultural connection and history, then an additional layer of similarity than that established by either the surface of the enclosing fabric or by the spatiality of the interior of the building alone, seems credible.
formed so far. This church is St. Simon’s Church, Nnobi, introduced momentarily at the beginning of this chapter, as the rare example of a church building with its bell tower located not centrally (as has been the case for the two churches just explored above) but to the side, as is observed for St. Peter’s Church Okrika.

St. Simon’s Church, Nnobi
Several buildings in the town of Nnobi whose uses were purely secular, will form a part of this inquiry. In regards to the early new style architecture applied to ecclesiological buildings specifically however, Nnobi also happens to have had a rather unusual church building, which was demolished in

As will become evident, any reconstruction of the history of the building introduced next certainly comes with gaps. It has not been possible to construct an acceptably full history of any one building. The approach taken here is therefore to feature buildings for which though the whole story is known in general, particular sections of its history are known in more detail than is possible for another comparable building. The total picture that is formed in the end therefore will be one collaged from several. It thus represents no particular instance, but resembles all possible instances to a degree that allows its analytical usefulness.

No special historical relationship exists between Nnobi and either of the two towns Enugu Ukwu and Abagana, the latter two of which have close historical connections, largely due to their proximity. However, Nnobi was an important religious center in the pre-colonial era, being the physical and religious location of the powerful Idemmili Nwaonyusi, female deity of the Idemmili river, who was influential in towns such as Ogidi through which the Idemmili river flowed. There is some evidence to suggest, however, that in the establishment of the Nri ‘hegemony’, such powerful establishments could not simply be absorbed. In such situations, a negotiated compromise involving some form of coexistence, was often the solution. This may be the origin of a tradition, current up to mid 1930s, in which any installed Eze Nri would stop over at the compound of Eze Okoli for the enactment of certain rituals without which in Nnobi at least, his power or priestly status was apparently not recognized (personal communication from Nnobi historian C.C. Ezemye, historian at the Anambra State College of Education, and Chair of the now defunct Historical sub-committee of the Nnobi District Synod Planning Committee, 1992)). For this reason, Nnobi is sometimes entered in on the list of communities with ancestral links to Nri. Thus at a distance one may claim historical connection between Enugu Ukwu (an Umunri town) and Nnobi. However, such a connection was not so strong as to link the religious histories of both places during the introduction of the new oracle of the Christians (as it must have been seen to commence with) in any manner that is of overwhelming import. Moreover, Amadiume (1986) writes that Nnobi seems to have been conscious of the pressure from Nri, but maintains (or seeks to maintain) its independence as apparently represented in the saying ‘Nnobi does not owe allegiance to Nshi, but shows respect to the Adama’.

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about 1981\textsuperscript{11}, and which building (figs. 9) held some of the answers to the unresolved questions discussed above of the Emmanuel Church and of St. Peter's Church Abagana.

The church building demolished in 1981 was a Gothic windowed single-space volume\textsuperscript{12}, said to have been built in oven baked bricks. This is quite unlike the other churches described here. Even though the use of this material in church building is more common in the near coastal and coastal towns of south eastern Nigeria, it is (must in its time have been) unusual to find such a church building not only this far inland, but in a small rural town\textsuperscript{13}. Unfortunately, extant photographs, our main source for reconstructing the building’s character, show the building much later than the moment of its completion, after which time it is remembered that its surfaces had been covered over in a cement-based plaster.

The use of clay bricks apart, the building possesses four other distinguishing features that set it apart significantly. Firstly, the tower is more squat than the others we have reviewed, hardly rising above the highest point of the church's main body while being of a broader base. Unlike the other churches with a lantern tower in the front, this church’s lantern-tower stands, moreover, to the side of the front entrance, as it does in St. Peters Okrika, and which type is, as already indicated, rarely encountered this far north. Judging by the door at its bottom, it also appears to

\textsuperscript{11} This building had in turn itself replaced an even earlier and smaller building which had been erected in hand-formed clay-laterite.

\textsuperscript{12} It was not tripartite, having no internal piers to divide its space up into nave and aisles.

\textsuperscript{13} Of course inland urban towns like Onitsaha would have had several churches built in brick well before this moment.
be a tower that may be ascended, presenting the possibility that it was in fact a belfry\textsuperscript{314}. This tower's pyramidal-roof's eaves are not contained behind its parapet. Instead, and unlike what was seen previously, it over sails the walls of the tower so that it contains a significantly larger volume of space, suggesting once again that it may actually be a bell tower. This is a second distinguishing characteristic.

The building's side elevation is divided into bays by engaged piers. The lower third section of these piers are splayed at about 30°, so that at the base it extends out over a distance of about a meter and a half. The row upon row of these splays adds a character to the building which is not found in the other churches we have looked at. This third differentiating characteristic appears however to be much more recent, depicted only in the later photographs (fig. 62), but not evident in the one taken in the 1950's.

The final difference, and perhaps the most important one (because as the next building described indicates one may locate other Churches in south eastern Nigeria with a single steeple set to the side) is the church's front elevation, and in particular the triplex of curvilinear and approximate arched forms which constitute the upper part of its facade. Following its curve, it is noticed immediately that neither the partial side arches, nor the central arch is in fact circular. They are not, therefore, sectors (fragments) of a larger, complete, constructional (or hypothetical) circle. It was also not intended, given the degree to which its central crest is blunted, as a gothic arch.

\textsuperscript{314} Emmanuel Church for example has a belfry standing separate from the church building, and this belfry is, quite typically, architecturally unremarkable.
One might be tempted then to suggest that the arches are a failed attempt to produce circular sectors. However, the precision of the forms as they are, and the accuracy with which they are replicated across the front\textsuperscript{15}, reveal that the facade as it was, might have been an accurate realization of a quite intended form.

There are other aspects of the building which offer stylistic problems, if the attempt to understand the building proceeds, as it has in architectural historiography, from a European-based aesthetic frame. Not the least of these are the mixtures of a false basilica facade with the gothic windows of the tower; not to mention the main windows of the church building itself which conform to neither, its tops terminating in a rhomboid shape with slightly sagging sides.

Exhaustive searches for models on which the elevation may have been based, including both the possible and the unlikely have yielded surprisingly few sources. So far, no other church in south eastern Nigeria appears to compare with this church's facade stylistically speaking. And though one such church building must exist somewhere in this large region, its rarity is easily attested by the fact that the present writer did not come across it in over a year of constant rural and urban travel. Moreover, St. Simon's elevation does not bare a close resemblance to British, French or Italian cathedral architecture, nor does it resemble any one of the many kinds of European vernacular village parish churches (certainly no British ones). Curiously the only resemblance located, and only an approximate one it must be admitted, are in one way or another 'latin'. The most obvious relationship is to the

\textsuperscript{15} The replication of the same error would involve more skill than the idea of a mistake could support.
Italian Renaissance architect Mauro Codussi’s 15th century Venetian church, San Michele in Isola (fig. 63a). Such an attribution does seem as frivolous as it is unlikely, if only because the congregation dealt with here is Anglican (i.e. a product of the Church Missionary Society), associated with the Church at Canterbury, and not the one of Rome.

Other Latin places for which visual similarities can be located are South American, Brazil in particular, especially in the towns of its substantially African province of Bahia. The gable ends of many of its churches such as Our Lady of Mercy, in Porto Seguro (fig. 63b), focus around a composition of curvilinear pediments, whose admittedly more Baroque forms generally bare a resemblance to that of St. Simon’s. Indeed, much more than the Codussi Church in Isola, the churches of South America would provide the most convincing source for the style of St. Simon’s, given that here this style seems to have become entrenched, and that the Brazilo-Africans returned to Nigeria in substantial numbers in the nineteenth and early 20th centuries, and had a direct effect on the architecture of south western Nigeria. However, as becomes obvious subsequently, the history if St. Simon’s Church (and in fact of the Mission in southeastern Nigeria) indicates no connection to South America. Certainly, the Brazilian returnees to Lagos were not involved in particular ways with the missionary project in the Niger Delta. It does not appear moreover that South American missionaries worked as prelates of the early church here, and given the distinguishing

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Aniakor (1983, op.cit.:283) has suggested that the style did also spread to the south east, but this seems rarely to take the form of a specifically baroque-izing aesthetic; at least not one that allows an easy connection to Brazil, in the manner in which the buildings of Lagos and Badagry make possible. Moreover, the one architectural style which appears related, is shown in a subsequent chapter not to be linked to the Baroque Brazilo-Nigerian architecture, but to be a quite independent invention of a particularly talented local builder.
character of St. Simon’s, even such a generalized participation would fail to provide an adequate explanation. It would take the presence of such a South American person in the early Church at Nnobi, and one who would have participated in the building of the church here, to make Bahia a valid location for establishing claim.

Moreover, given as already indicated the strong connections between Yorubaland and Brazil\textsuperscript{317}, one might expect that were such influences to be noticeable, it would be more likely to occur in Yoruba Christian architecture than it would in its counterparts in Igbo land. Even in Yorubaland however, no easy examples come to mind\textsuperscript{318}, indicating perhaps that the new architecture in which Brazilian influences are observed seems to have been much more affective in the building of houses, and sometimes of mosques, rather than in the architecture of churches.

It seems clear that the church’s style was unlikely to have been a spontaneous invention of a mason working in isolation; an invention that only happens to resemble other architecture for the present day viewer because of his wider knowledge and the perceptual prejudices this may impose. In a manner of speaking however, one would expect such an inventor, to be much less restrained than St. Simon’s Church seems to have

\textsuperscript{317} Many Yoruba ex-slaves are known to have returned to Nigeria after the abolition finally took hold in Brazil. Yoruba early modern architecture has been much affected by this historical migration, and the work is reasonably widely published.

\textsuperscript{318} Ajaye (1965:50) indicates that at least one Brazilo-Nigerian person (a man who went by the name Pa Antonio) may well have transplanted such an ecclesiological architecture. Ajaye writes that ‘Pa Antonio[…] built a little chapel and there every Sunday he tried to re-create the religious ceremonies he had known in Bahia’. The manner in which the statement is made however indicates that this idea did not catch on, even were we to assume that the chapel itself was built in a Brazilian style.
been. The probability weighs in favor of the builder’s having been partly inspired by a specific pre-existent model. It may be however that one seeks a wrong model in the three dimensionality of a real building. Although the recreation of the reality of the circulation of images is much more difficult to attain than are forms which have more physical longevity, it is known that printed images were a significant source from which a local knowledge of Europe was constructed by Africans. At the broadest level, there is clear evidence that West African rulers in the nineteenth century were enamored of the printed image, and that visiting Europeans were often called upon, and in private, to display their realist images to the king. In the specific example of the south east the presence of the print as a trade item seems to be one that is confirmed although it is often unclear whether the print referred to is the printed fabric imported from European factories, or whether instead it refers to a photographic representation. Nevertheless, even the assumption that the printed image was also available as source for architectural knowledge at the time does not necessarily answer the question raised, given the difficulty encountered in locating the appropriate building as it exists in Europe, to which access may have been had by the builders of St. Simon’s in the form of an illustration or of a photographic image.

Another possibility may however be argued, and it is one that is certainly not obvious. If it is recalled that in an earlier

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319 Of course records for the existence of such items would tend only to be had for important personages of the time. The record does indicate for example that Gelele of Dahomey’s is reputed to have become fond of sessions with Europeans in which painted images of plants and animals in nature were shown him. Moreover, Hugh Clapperton’s lists of items he gave as presents to the chiefs of the towns he traversed on his travels from Badagry to Bornu often includes an item simply list as ‘prints’. Finally, lists in the gifts taken to the Asantehene according to Rattray.
comment, mention was made of the tendency for some local ways of seeing to pick out only linear-pattern aspects of even three dimensional objects not intentionally proposed as ornament. This was most crucial in the context of the mortar jointing of the Church at Enugu Ukwu in which the pattern of the mortar seems to become important. Another church building, and one in which this idea seems to reach an apogee, is located in the Otolo section of Nnewi, and is only referenced briefly in this work (fig. 47). In this building, the mortar pattern is picked out, and made to contrast with the stone work which it 'encloses' to an extent that is quite atypical. But the extent to which the pattern is the most important element in the aesthetic, is brought out most effectively around the window openings. In the arches which bound the upper section of each window opening, are found a series of stone pieces assembled in an arrangement that approximates the normal layout of voussoirs. However, rather than attempt to imitate the natural, structural, centrifugal lay of the joint lines which every such arch implies, the mortar patterns are transformed into a jarring, arrangement of angular figures, whose logic is independent of anything purely structural (fig. 64). For the mason involved in the construction, the structural logic seems surprisingly to be the least important quality worthy of expression. This gives the building a character that is uniquely its own, but more importantly, it indicates that a person of this culture might bring a different set of recognitions to perceiving a surface than would a Western person. Both, in otherwords, would see the same wall differently.

A realization of the possibility that the same object may be perceived in radically different ways by people of diverse
ultimately leads to what is perhaps the most persuasive resolution of the issue of architectural reference or inspiration as it applies to St. Simon’s. It is striking to compare the outline of the elevation of St. Simon’s with a drawn section of any European centralized church building which possesses a main dome on a short drum, and which is abutted by minor domes whose forms are interrupted by the central drum (fig. 65). In fact, the outline of the section matches the profile of the Nnobi church more closely than does any other form. Of course, it seems clear that no sections of Renaissance churches would have been brought to Nnobi for any reason. Such a possibility is indeed far fetched. However, this similarity does suggest a linkage between the Italian section and the Nnobi church, which must be explainable. Here, a non historical (strictly speaking) account is offered.

What the sectional drawing reveals clearly, is in fact the silhouettes one would recognize of the same church building viewed externally. This is to say that faced with either a photograph or a realistic representation of the Italian building, and were the viewer able to ignore (or fail to perceive) both its surface textural detail as well as the suggestion of volume which perspectival foreshortening and color modelling might enable, then the picture that results would hardly be distinguishable from the outline of the section; and thus as already indicated of the profile of St. Simon’s Church (fig. 9).

The question then is whether such a series of linkages can be established, or thought probable for Nnobi. There is certainly evidence that in other parts of West Africa, (and perhaps the

At the time of its construction the people of Nnobi would not have become as familiar with European ways of seeing as many of its citizens might appear to be today.
regions that border the Igbo area in which Nnobi is located),
drawn representations of church buildings were not unknown in
the context of the early mission. An actual example of this
in the particular context described is yet to be discovered.
However, amongst the popular publications of the Basel Mission
which operated in the Gold Coast and in the Efik and Ekoi
region of southeastern Nigeria (east of Igboland therefore)
was a newsletter which was in existence by 1887, known in the
Gold Coast as Sika Mpoano Kristofo Senkekafo (Gold Coast
Christian Messenger) produced for and by the converts, and
written in the local language (Twi in Kumasi). On its cover,
this newsletter regularly carried drawings of mission-related
buildings, most typically that of a generic church building.\(^{311}\)
Though this represents a different location and missionary
organization, and though no evidence of a parallel practice
is known to the present writer for the particular localities
in question, it seems likely that images of church
architecture either as photographs, or as drawings may have
circulated. In the form of distributed church almanacs, of
other kinds of missionary literature, or of British postcards,
these would at least have been available to the mission’s
operatives (wardens and school teachers) and officials
(priests and catechists) of any local church. The availability
of an image of a church building therefore does not appear
unimaginable. The other proviso, a subject likely to interpret
a three-dimensional image in the particular manner described,
is also not difficult to conjecture. In the town of Nnobi in
the late 1920s few if any individuals would have had

\(^{311}\) Kristofo Senkekafo (KS hence), vol II, no.1 of 1887 for example illustrates a large six-level
building (including attic dormers). It may be a trade-house and group residence of the mission which
combined mercantile activity with missionary work. KS vol vii, no.2, 1912 dons a triptych, each panel
illustrating a church building in various African coastal contexts. KS vol XIV, no.1, 1930, has a crisp
drawing of a church building, which though sporting certain Germanic details, could serve as a model
for any one of the church buildings explored in this dissertation.
experience of the dome as a spatial type. Moreover, few individuals would have been used to seeing photographic images of three dimensional objects. Finally and most critically, few individuals would have both experienced the volumetrics of the dome, and become familiar with its photographic representations of this spatial form. Faced with a photograph or a realistic representation of any church building, the possibility of perception and of interpretation, in any manner that would resemble the image any present reader could easily call forth, is simply not plausible. All perceptions would have to be based on pre-existing architectural and spatial knowledge. Thus, it may be asserted, that in the context of Nnobi in the late 1920s, any image of a European church consisting of a main dome and a series of supporting lesser domes could only have been imagined, perceived or visualized, linearly. The design for the upper end of the St. Simon’s Church gable, it is being suggested here, comes from an inventive (mis)reading which renders the form of the centralized European church in a manner captured by thesection.

This is an appropriate point at which to speak of the known history of the church in Nnobi, and thus of the extent to which the scenario constructed above might be thought credible. The history of the church’s congregation goes back

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322 This is to say that by this time it is not likely that an Nnobi citizen would be likely ever to have stood underneath the infinite space of a large domed structure. Without such a spatial experience, it might be assumed that there is no way by which such an individual would be able to interpret an exterior photograph of such a structure with reasonable accuracy.

323 Theoretically speaking the idea is already somewhat played out in European architectural theory by Wolfflin, whose vocabulary is borrowed here for different purposes.

324 Apart from the present writer’s own personal interview and conversations, this reconstruction relies heavily on the writing of historian C.C. Ezenyem.
to 1908 when the itinerant Ezebube, one of the town’s most well known leaders, who was also a dibia (or herbalist-doctor) and healer-priest, paid an appointed visit to the neighboring village of Obotchi25 (Iweka 1924[1985]) accompanied by his apprentice son Ezeokoli. Here, his son chanced upon an opportunity to listen to an exposition by an African catechist on the new religious message, and on the new way of life it promised26. Clearly a young man seeking answers to existential questions, and apparently more dissatisfied than his father was with the explanatory worldview provided within the context of customary belief systems27, his interest in these new ideas and possibilities seem to have been piqued. For the latter’s chiefly father, more impressed it seems by the New Way of Life than by the New Message of God’s Kingdom, Ezebube Akuma (Okoli) invited the catechist to Nnobi to preach the message there, but probably only in order that his community might (with him) behold the wonder of the larger world which they were part. According to a recent local and anonymously produced historical document, his anticipations were hardly disappointed. The catechist arrived at Ezebube’s residence

25 Transcribed and transformed to Obosi in central standardized Igbo.

26 One must imagine that this new doctrine would have been perceived as a competing practice, albeit one that would have appeared quite radical, and that Ezeokoli may have been attracted to listen simply because of an interest he would have in increasing his own knowledge (immersed as his apprentices world would have been in spiritual matters), which could do nothing if not increase his own success as a traditional priest and healer.

27 Not enough has been written about the mentalité which accounts for the possibility of such a sudden questioning by local communities, of the centuries old world view constructed by customary belief. However, coming only five or six years after the routing of Arochukwu by the British force, an Arochukwu moreover with which Eze Okoli had apparently had previous contact, there seems a possibility that such questioning is partly motivated by the inexplicable fact that a world existed elsewhere so powerful that it could reduce the existence of so omni-present a power as was the Aro hegemon, in a matter of a few days. Such social trauma must partly explain the subsequent success of Christianity. The god behind such a power as the Europeans could muster must have seemed imperative to comprehend.
"...with a white lady, Miss A. Hornby, the first 'white' skin around. Miss Hornby stole the show at once. She was riding a bicycle, had a hurricane lantern Okuonwufoluchi (lamp that was on from dusk till dawn), kerosene (mmili mmuo...i.e water of the spirits"\(^{328}\)) and matches ('oku mmuo'...i.e fire of the spirits)." \(^{329}\)

It was therefore probably the perception of the linkage between socio-economic development\(^{330}\) represented here by all these modern and magical commodities, and by the new cult of Christianity as it would then have appeared, which lead to the building of the first church building (a small clay and thatch structure on the palace grounds) attended by a congregation of eight. As the church’s population grew rapidly thanks no doubt to the patronage it received from Nnobi’s chief himself, the church was transferred in the following months to its present site. Although it is clear that the building with which this section is concerned is not the same one erected in 1908, the version focused on here was in existence by the early 1930s\(^{331}\). The church was therefore probably constructed in the late 1920s, twenty or so years after Mrs. Hornby’s technological extravaganza. The

\(^{328}\) One has to imagine the magicality of a clear, light, highly flammable liquid for local people used to providing light by way of a heavy, slow to ignite, dark, natural oil-fat such as congealed palm oil.

\(^{329}\) This narrative is repeated in a somewhat rewritten form in C.C. Enenyem [Chair of Historical Committee](1993): A History of the Anglican Mission In Nnobi. Onitsha, Nigeria. Orient Publishers (Nig).

\(^{330}\) Then, this was conceived of in terms of progress, or o ga n’iru.

\(^{331}\) A school headmaster from the neighboring town of Oraukwu, Mr. Ikegwuonu, who married in 1932, held his wedding at St. Simon’s Church, and remembers clearly that the new building was in existence by this time. Interview with Headmaster Ikegwuonu, December 1992. This is confirmed in the unpublished diary of school teacher Mr. Alfred Okoye, c1890-1969 (a teacher and church official in the same period) which mentions this wedding, and even indicates the use of an automobile to convey the newly-weds, which event was sensational for Nnobi at the time.
inextricability of the linkage between on the one hand technological and socio-economic progress symbolized by hurricane lanterns, matches, and the bicycle, and on the other hand by the new religion\textsuperscript{32}, is evidenced by the fact that the new Church, built of oven burnt bricks, originally unplastered and probably similar to the Church illustrated earlier, was constructed at the same time as the same Ezeokoli built his new two storied mansion on what had by this time become the grounds of his palace\textsuperscript{33}. Neither the individual responsible for the formal conception of the buildings nor the examples of already existing buildings which contributed to the moment of the church’s formal invention are as yet unequivocally identified. Nevertheless the names of some of the builders involved in the project are remembered locally, and unlike the case in other places we have looked at, they also seem to be natives of Nnobi, and include Matthew Okeke of Ndam, Thomas Akunna of Umuegbu, and Philip Obiagwu of Umuagu; all of them but one that is: For it is also indicated that Thomas Isiadinso, involved in the construction of the Emmanuel Church at Enugu Ukwu, was also involved in the erection of St. Simon’s. However, both structures (St. Simon’s Church and Eze Okoli’s brick mansion [figs. 9, and 66]) display a determination to identify themselves as non-customary, and as born out of familiarity with things of the modern world (typically assumed to be of European origin) and of its ‘New

\textsuperscript{32} Ezenyem, op. cit. One of the narratives included in this text tells of the conversion by Ezeokoli of an influential business man from Igbo Ukwu. The advantages Christianity could ensure, as presented by Chief Ezeokoli included ‘freedom from molestation’, a common problem faced by traders travelling through other towns and villages over which no legal authority presided in common. Furthermore, Ezeokoli seems to have suggested that conversion ‘...could help a person to become a court clerk or an interpreter to a colonial officer, a position that would make one become rich....’ See p22.

\textsuperscript{33} Eze Okoli was appointed Warrant Chief of the Nnobi customary court (which served several surrounding towns including at one time places such as Alor and Orakuw) by the British colonial administrators, thus ultimately subordinating such an individual to British leadership.
way of Life’. Moreover this is achieved in terms that, compared to the transformative but still recognizably ‘traditional’ architecture of the late 1890s and the early 1910s, are no longer simply narrational, analogical or interventionist. The tri-partite basilica-like division of the main elevation is clearly not derived from pre-twentieth century Igbo architecture, nor is the intersection of the three curvilinear segments which form the outline of the upper part of the facade.

The history of St. Simon’s is furthermore distinguished from that of the Emmanuel Church, because of the closeness between the personal history and progress of the fortunes of Eze Okoli, and the early history of this church. For unlike the situation in Enugu Ukwu where its most powerful men were against the presence of the church from the start, in Nnobi the reverse was mainly the case. The individual who was to become its most prominent Chief was, as indicated above,

334 See unpublished essay by present writer ‘Radical Progressivism; Nigerian Architecture Against ‘Tradition’.

335 This group includes the one individual, Igwe Lazarus Agwuna, ultimately recognized by the British as the Chief to whom the colonial Warrant was to be granted.

336 It is still disputed by some communities in Nnobi whether it was accurate at the time of the occurrence of these events, to render Eze Okoli as the town’s chief. They would rather he were seen as one of its many chiefs who was more politic than the others for having usurped and gathered to himself alone the power his father may once have shared with other chiefs in the constitution of traditional authorities. They claim that his increased power results from his allying himself first with the church, and then subsequently with the British colonial administration who returned his coaxing by granting him the right to rule the area as its supreme chief. The truth probably lies somewhere in between. It is clear that as the son of the renowned herbalist and priest Ezebube Akumma, he was associated with the latter who would have been as influential in Nnobi as might also have been two or three other important lineage chiefs for different reasons (including for example those who acquired significant wealth through either the nineteenth century slave trade, or the palm produce trade). Ezeokoli’s ascension to power over all other chiefs through a conscious seeking after British support, though perhaps unprecedented in Nnobi history, as in the history of other Igbo towns including for example the neighboring town Nnewi, all said no less valid than it could be for any other (continued...)
partly responsible for its ultimate Christianization, for which purpose it is recalled he sought contact with the long-established Christian mission at the nearby town of Obosi (Iweka [1985, 1924]). And, with the opening of the mission at Nnobi itself, he ensured not only its protection, but was committed to its active support. In the palace compound would have been sited other religious shrines dedicated to local deities. An unlikely spatial coexistence must then have been observable within any one courtyard of the palace’s interconnected multiplicity of courtyards.

Certainly, Ezeokoli was well-travelled for his time and circumstance, having visited (initially through accompanying influential person of the period. Debates around the issue thus invalidate themselves by suggesting that any other individual had more of a right to becoming Warrant Chief (or Igwe for that matter), instead of arguing the 'unconstitutionality' of any claim to Igweship of Nnobi in that period. See for example Amediwe [1983:295-296 and ch, 1984] who by on overly easy historiography accepts her informant's implying that the Nnobi village of Ebenesi is senior to its Ngo/Uluagu village (a claim disputed by Ngo informants, who saw it as bordering on heresy), indicating therefore that she would pay too little attention to the cautionary politics of any oral history, and would assign to another 'big man', Eze Okigbo, Nnobi's 'rightful' headship [ibid:124]. This would ignore the problems presented by the still too easily accepted narratives of settlement central to Igbo oral history, in which every town is said to be founded by a group of brothers (ostensibly the founders of its villages). A day will surely come when the deeper meaning of such narratives will be uncovered, and when our debates will cease to be based on taking them literally. It might, for example, be revealed that the naturalism of 'founder siblings' and 'seniority' is instead (in its origin) code for the political history of a social milieu. Debates about the real meaning of Ezeokoli's name (ere translates as 'king' in Igbo), are argued in petitions and responses to the District Officer between 1933 and 1938 (NAE ON DIST 7/1/2 p 87 and p226-227), with one group of petitioners insisting that Ezeokoli is no more meant to be Eze, than is any female named Adaese would be considered a princess (present author's analogy). Such names, it is argued, are common given names with no recognized status. This latter argument is persuasive. Another one, which is much more extreme (and for that much less persuasive) is perhaps useful for assessing the frustration which Ezeokoli's success invoked amongst his competitors, who write that 'Aku-nua was a settler from a neighboring town. He had a son OKEKE whose title name was Ezebube, an ordinary titled man and a native doctor who roamed from place to place in pursuit of his vocation. His son Okoye or Okolie (from "OYE" or "OLIE" a native market day) whose title name is Ule-akuku, an ordinary titled man, followed his father's vocation as a native doctor.....' [emphasis is present writers]. It is extreme then in suggesting that Ezeokoli was in fact not an Nnobi indigene (or that he is somehow less Nnobi than his rivals, which version of history would seem unfounded. Ezeokoli's political skill is indicated by his success in having turned such disputes to his advantage.
his itinerant dibia\textsuperscript{37} father Ezebube) such trading towns as Onitsha and Arochukwu, as well as the ancient city of Benin\textsuperscript{38}. The former two had a long history of indirect contact with European culture seeping up from the coast. The latter would have impressed the other African visitors, and may have provided a powerful model for Ezeokoli to emulate.

The presence of the person of Ezeokoli at Nnobi, a young travelled man with an inquisitive and philosophical mind, who (at least in the early stages of his career) was searching for answers to the experiences of his troubled times, might be seen to account for the difference in the way modernity entered Nnobi. The buildings which form the inhabited spaces of the palace, display this difference by not only the materials in which they are constructed (brickwork and prefabricated wood\textsuperscript{39}) but by geometricity of the forms which constitute the mansions as a whole. It is indeed interesting that the social, political and intellectual climate of the period is ignored in writing about Ezeokoli and the pressure which motivated him. However, for any Igbo person, it seems easy to understand that a recognition of the locality of one's previous world view, and which locality might be thought to explain the slow demise of its constituted authority under threat from a foreign power and set of ideas, may have led to a gradual but certain rejection of the authority of local knowledge by large numbers of its citizenry, and the enthusiastic incorporation of the traditions of other places, in its future-directed reconstitution.

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\textsuperscript{37} Traditional doctor or herbalist

\textsuperscript{38} In which he seems to have had access to private audience with the Oba of Benin in person.

\textsuperscript{39} The latter is said to have been imported from the United Kingdom.
The unusualness of St. Simon’s Church, the Eze’s Church, can thus be understood in this context. For the Igwe, as for his congregation, it might have been doubly important to install a church architecture that did not merely conform to the stone built centrally steepled architecture that had become the authoritative style. The possibility that a strenuous attempt to invent something different, and perhaps more other (in this context more European) seems a not unlikely project. The precise evidence of this is lacking, and will be difficult to recover in any eventuality. Still, was there a place in which such a departure was to occur, was there a rural location in which access to images of European architecture was likely to be had if desired, was there a community whose world view was motivated by the amazement at modern technology, and was there a place with a tradition of independence in traditional thought (even in the context of a pre-European-presence Igbo politico-religious world) Nnobi would seem to have been such a place, and the architecture of St. Simon’s its suitable ‘device’ and product.

All the above buildings, and the social, historical and political context in which they must have arisen, and whose reconstruction has been attempted here, indicate an appropriate complexity. The historical moment in which were produced both St. Simon’s Church and the Emmanuel Church at Enugu Ukwu; and the other buildings including St. Peace Odenigbo house, forces us to see them as participants in an

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340 The accuracy of this identification is indicated by the fact that St. Simon’s was apparently nicknamed Uka Ezeokoli, especially by the subsequent and increasing congregation of the Roman Catholic Church.

341 This rather appropriate term, for thinking of the use of the architecture’s originality for symbolic purpose, is borrowed from a section of Enenye’s (op. cit.) text, in which the only section to feature a photograph of the building, is titled ‘Other Devices and Organs giving Strength and Stamina to the Nnobi Anglican Communion’.
ideological struggle over the space in which proposals were made for adequate ways of encountering the other; the colonial European modern world which the future seemed bound to confront. That is to say that we do not speak in a context of a secured and victorious Christianity, but of one in which both the Church and the church building may be best understood as in a process of insertion in a milieu defined by what would have been understood as competition between different cult institutions or oracular establishments (in which the Church as modern cult certainly must be included), for the ultimate control of the beliefs, divinatory dependence, and loyalty of the populations. Each such establishment sought dominance by the promise of effectiveness in dealing with the new situations and problems presented to southeasterners in the first two decades of the twentieth century. It can also be appreciated that in this setting, an appeal to an aesthetic that could claim to derive from a distant location, seemed critical for an architectural representation of the effectual nature of any particular 'cult'. It is also in this context that the belief by some citizens of Enugu Ukwu that their church was of distant Okrika, the latter viewed as a place sown into the web on internationalism, makes sense. Moreover, regardless of the actual stylistic source of which Enugu Ukwu's Emmanuel Church derives 'in fact', it is possible, bearing in mind the parameters defining resemblance in this oral context, that indeed the Emmanuel Church is similar to the St. Peter's Okrika. St. Simon's Church only adds to this a more secure, architecturally redundant form of similarity.

A HOUSE FOR LIVING: THE UZOKA HOUSE

As was intimated at the outset, the Adinembo House in Okrika, and the church of St. Peter's Okrika, both built in the same period, apparently share much in common, in terms both of
their general approach to uses of material, and of their apparently determined mimicry of European architecture.

The implication seemed to be that the issues raised by the architecture of the early-modern era in southeastern Nigeria, are not limited to a particular building type. And even though we commenced in this chapter with a concentration on church buildings, the evidence available suggests that architectural innovation also extended to other types of building, most particularly, in the architecture of the house.

It surely will be admitted that understanding another house, and especially what such a house shares with the church buildings in its own vicinity, might contribute to elucidating the relationships between St. Peters Okrika and the Adinembo house, apart perhaps from what a juxtaposition of houses with each other per se, may tell us about the changing ideas of house, of house-ness and of home itself.

As will be the case in other chapters as well, the inquiry will attempt to move between different types of buildings which help in the development of the inquiry.

The Uzoka House (figs. 8 and 67) is labelled here to correspond with the name of its original owner, as was the naming practice with the previous house in this work. It is a small and rather special single storey building in the town of Awka, which was built ca.1924\(^2\), and is separated therefore from Emmanuel Church by the same chronological gap known to exist between the Adinembo House and St. Peter’s Church Okrika. Moreover, the house is situated just off the main road

\(^2\) Madame Uzoka remembers it in the manner that when she was herself born into the world, she came upon the house....to which she then calculates that 1924 therefore sounds accurate.
that runs through Awka, the same road on which are located (five miles or further up) the two churches of St Peter’s Abagana and the Emmanuel Church Enugu-Ukwu.

The building itself has several characteristics that are not observed of the other new style houses (including those in this study), and which therefore make it distinctive. It is provided with a series of acroteria, which, unusual in themselves in the context of the house, are moreover glimpsed at a distance, and rather tantalizingly (because the house itself is not yet visible) as one walks or drives along the main road off of which a side road gives access to the house. Not the least of these unusual characteristics is the manner in which the building is placed on site, and the choice for the location of entry. The plan of the house is basically T-shaped, with the front of the house located at the foot of such a ‘T’. From here is projected an unsheltered balcony which extends in front of the house’s body, the footprint of the house plan therefore approximating a narrow lozenge.

The main entry into the house is achieved from the side of the projecting section of the building, after mounting three or four steps, and arriving at a level which eventually leads both to the living room and to the balcony. The latter is framed by a balustrade, consisting of a closely spaced row of concrete balusters (mimicking turned-wood equivalents), framed by a hand rail which is in the form of an architrave.

The three acroteria which one glimpses from a distance are all mounted at the front elevation, which itself is composed so as to suggest that it is a two level building. That is, the facade consists of a lower level where two rectangular windows which terminate in a blanked-out equilateral triangle are
located. The tips of these triangles intercept and deform a bulging and substantial cornice line. Above this is a second level, with smaller windows of the same style. This may have functioned as ventilation for the roof space above, rather than as living space, since this represents the gable end of a section of the roof. The whole composition is then framed at the edges by two piers, divided laterally into stages (which roughly correspond with the allusive levels of the house). At top of the pier endings are placed the acroteria, with the third one placed over the apex of the gable. Interestingly, the tip of central acroteria is not higher than that of the two surrounding ones. The placements are such that all three pinnacles maintain the same horizontal level (fig 68).

The acroteria themselves appear to be cast in concrete, in the form of narrow triangular wedges standing on their shortest sides (in this sense it does not correspond to the expected three dimensionality). Viewed from the side, the profile of the wedge would be no different from the pier below it on which it is carried.

The positioning of these acroteria only over the piers, or at the apex, implies a certain structural literacy. The acroteria, as heavy objects are located only at the places in which they are carried most efficiently. In fact this structural literacy is represented more directly in the fabric of the house. Here, a distinction is made between structural elements and envelope, in a manner recognized in other buildings of the period, including St. Mark’s Church Ajalli. Here however, the difference in material (the piers appear to be baked brick, whilst the rest of the enclosing fabric is stone) is not articulated by the difference between the rigor
of horizontal layering and the chaos of stone-rubble. The stonework of the house is laid in the same general manner as is the brick. Rather, functional difference is indicated via the contrast between the density of layering. The structural brickwork is 'deposited' much more closely, while the stonework is much less dense". At the upper level of this elevation however, the effort appears to have been abandoned completely. Everything is built from stone, and all are laid in exactly the same fashion.

The other elevations of the Uzoka house (fig. 69) are however much more clearly articulated, a fact made possible by the introduction of a third building material. The brickwork piers are a dark grey color, quite distinct form the larger reddish-brown laterite clay blocks that are utilized in the intervening wall sections, and which set up a clear and consistent rhythm. This rhythm, is further emphasized by the visibility accorded the window openings by the decorative plaster surrounding the triangular lintel of the window.

Both the top of the walls and their bases are framed by substantial cornices. The upper cornice is located far enough down from the actual termination of the walls to render the former visible below the line of the roof’s fascia.

The interior of the building, both the floor plan itself, and its spatial articulation and elaboration, is also equally intriguing.

343 This is unlikely to be a result simply of the fact that they are different materials. It was seen previously that a number of stone houses mimic the brick house by having the stone units from which they are constructed broken into small pieces each unit of a size that approximates to the size of brickwork.
The plan is T-shaped, which, combined with the location of the front elevation on the face of the leg of the T, makes the comparison to a church building, seem not unreasonable. The leg of the T is, moreover, the location of the point of entry, and of the living room. From the entrance door, one enters directly into the living room, a small space surrounded by windows on all three external sides. Located at the end of this room opposite the front elevation is an arched transition which appears cut out from a wall which would have separated the two spaces and which does not extend the full width of the room. This archway is defined by the placement at their edge of two dwarf columns from which the line of the arch springs. Through this we enter a second room, the view from whose windows indicate that its wall is not the exterior wall. That is to say that the rooms at the rear of the building border a veranda, but one that is completely enclosed by walls, and provided with windows. From the left side rear room, a door leads to the narrow back yard. The rear elevation however gives nothing away regarding this back passageway. To all intents and purposes, the windows appear as if they illuminate rear rooms.

It is therefore a not unsophisticated arrangement of spaces, combining elements that are 'traditional' (the sheltered balcony) with those that are not (the balcony is enclosed, so that it functions as a corridor, and is undistinguished on the outside elevation). Its newness is expressed externally, as is its siteing which being (as mentioned previously) just off the old main road would have been located away from the historical center of Awka, intent that is on a relationship
with the world beyond Awka, as this would be offered by what then would have been a new major roadway".

The town of Awka itself has historical significance in Igboland, as the place in which metal working and wood working were highly specialized, and well established by the colonial period". Awka produced itinerant craftsmen who were generally widely travelled for their time, and many of whom settled in other communities as producers (for such communities) of metal artifacts, from the functional to the religious. In 1908, a civil war in Awka led to its occupation by British forces.

344 This dissertation cannot, perhaps regretfully, enter into a presentation of rural and urban history of the locations that surround many of the buildings, which might provide a useful spatial background against which to comprehend the buildings further, with regard especially to what factors might determine the choice (or availability of the site), and of what particular choices might mean in a more generic sense. With regard to roadways specifically, it might be mentioned that for this period they would have had much more significance than might be suggested by the simple idea of a means of getting from one place to another. Given the scholarship on roadways in contemporary Africa, it is likely that these sites also gave access to a whole universe of mythology, of performance, of the unexplainable, and of rumor (Auslander [1992]).

345 This is a generally known fact in Igbo land, and is for example expressed in the epic narrative of Ameke Okoye which states:

Oge μbu avu
Oka na-akpu nya bu uku
Oka mee iwe anyi ji eme iwe
Oge Oyibo na-abiaroo
Oka ka anyi ji avu maka ogu
Oka ka anyi ji avu maka iwe bu iwe nii
Eji egbo azu

In the first time [early days]
Awka did mould iron [Awka specialized in blacksmithing]
Awka had all we (Igbos) needed to really do things
In the time when whites had not yet come
[It was at] Awka that we went to see about war
It was at Awka that we went to see about that thing
With which we fish [fishing line and hook?, fishing spears?]

[Igbo text is from Azuonye and Udechukwu (1984), English translation is present writer's [which varies slightly from the transcribers' translation.]

Scholarly assessments of this claim also abound, for recent research on the subject see Neaher (1976).
operating out of a base in Onitsha. The intervention led to a British decision to maintain a permanent presence here, which later resulted in its becoming the provincial capital town, after the introduction of the British colony. It is therefore not surprising that the confluence of their traditionally ‘internationalist’ culture, with the extensive access to other places that European colonial administration’s presence enabled⁵⁴. Awka in other words, became a sort of relay station, the provincial point, through which European culture was introduced into this part of Igboland.

It is not clear why it took almost half a century for the Christian missionary project to extend from Onitsha (where the mission had been present from 1857, to 1903 when the Church Missionary Society started working in Awka, towns of separated only by a distance of about twenty five miles. Whatever the reason, it seems that once the new religion’s proselytizers arrived, one of its first converts was the young John Uzoka, who, according to a plaque erected in his honor (and to his memory) in the interior of the neighboring St. Faith’s Church, was born in 1897. He is well remembered in Awka today as one of its first Christians (fig 70). Given the date of his birth, Uzoka would have been under eleven when he was ‘converted’, and in this sense, the parallels between his life and that of Nweke, the subject of Omali-Okafor’s study is remarkable.

John Agbata Uzoka would therefore have been literate from a young age. Nevertheless, and perhaps indicative of the

⁵⁴ Omali-Okafor for example, in the autobiography of his father’s life (an Enugu Ukwu indigene who then went to live in Awka) indicates that the far away places of Asaba, Benin and Lagos suddenly became accessible in a way that they could not have been previously, to a resident of Awka.
strength of the customary tradition, and the degree to which even a Christianized presence could influence it, John Uzoka did not follow the desired (and recently available) career paths like becoming a teacher or telegraphic operator, court messenger, or clerk of one kind or another. Rather, he seems to have taken instead to the traditional trade of blacksmithing, for which Awka was famed over southeastern Nigeria since the mid eighteenth century and, probably well before. Uzoka’s specialty seems to have been in the production of iron gates, in particular brilliant forms, of which his daughter spoke with great pride.

The Commonwealth Exhibition of 1924 and the Uzoka House
Of a place known primarily for its long established craft of metal smithing**, a place moreover in which the provincial site of the colonial administration was located, it is not surprising that it found easy favor in the process of selecting those Nigerians who would represent this region of the British Empire at the 1924-25 British Commonwealth exhibition held at Wembley in London.

The selection process involved scouting after local talent by resident District Officers, under instruction from the Regional resident, in this case the resident located at Onitsha. It is nevertheless surprising to discover that Jonathan Uzoka made it onto the final list given that he may have been no more than twenty-five years old at the time, and given that, as is the case in most apprentice-based systems, age and experience were hardly separable from ability and merit.

347 Baikie’s 1856 comment on Igbo ability at the forge, and Major Leonard’s 1906 comment locating Awka and Nkwerre specifically.
One explanation may be that the older men may not have been enthusiastic about the prospect of travelling to such distant and unknown places, and that it took a fearlessness (or lack of caution) more typical of a of the younger person to desire a part in such a project. Another reason may be that as one of the few literate individuals, one who could negotiate European ways to an unexpected degree, the District Officer may have thought it prudent to include a few such persons in the entourage, in order to manage more easily, the kinds of difficulties that the group as a whole may have encountered constantly in the form of the shock of the unfamiliarity of a place and its strange language. Whatever the case actually was, it is apparent then, that by the time this process was underway in the town of Awka, Mazi Uzoka was already well enough known as a blacksmith, to merit being selected for the final list (this list involved a pan-Nigerian selection) of craftsmen of various kinds to represent the culture of Nigeria abroad.

The details of the final selection process appear to be unrecoverable, as are any documented accounts of the impressions these individuals formed of the place in which they remained for several months. That it must have made a powerful impression seems clear, as such exhibitions were calculated to impress even the British people on whose behalf it was mounted in the first place.

The exhibition grounds covered several thousand acres, and included a stadium as well as the pavilions of the various Commonwealth nations, from Australia and Canada to Bermuda and the Gold Coast (Ghana). The place in which Jonathan Uzoka
would have spent most of his time, would of course have been the Nigerian pavilion.

In fact, the West African pavilions were distinct from the pavilions of the other countries in one particular way. They were erected in the form of an ancient African walled city, complete with entrance gates and towers, all constructed out of earth. The Nigerian pavilion in this enclosure was the largest, and was juxtaposed with the pavilion of the Gold Coast and of other countries, all covering a space of about three acres. Flanking this walled city were the pavilions of Bermuda, of East Africa and of South Africa.

The larger grounds, judging from the plan of the site, included a railway line which stopped just behind the East African Pavilion, as well as a large artificially created lake upon which the Canadian and Australian pavilions, separate large scaled classical buildings, faced. It was a large, busy, crowded place, in which the African craftsmen such as Uzoka, would have spent the day employed in the creation of objects, in the process of which they (the craftsmen) were exhibited to the public gaze.

A description and impression of the exhibition, particularly as seen through African eyes, survives in the form of a report given by a Somali visitor, and perhaps comes closest to the kind of account a Nigerian writing at the same time may have given, had such a document survived.

Jonathan Uzoka's written archive was destroyed during the Nigerian Civil war. It is nevertheless interesting to discover that he conserved his personal written documents, and treasured them greatly. Madam Uzoka, John Uzoka's daughter now in her late sixties, seemed very aware of the tragedy of this war time loss.
The Somali writes, in a text that generally seems worried and hurt by much of his experience in the United Kingdom, that "...Here we saw big machines moving by themselves and all sorts of strange and wonderful things. I felt overwhelmed by it all. It appeared to me as if the world had been made for Europeans, who had only to stretch out their hands to bring before them, as if by magic, all the products of the universe." They were unhappy about the fact that living individuals were put on display as if they were objects or animals, albeit given a context in which these individuals went through their craftsmanly work, or enacted their modes of living. They apparently were outraged by the '...holding up to Public [sic] ridicule of Africans at Wembley'.

And, while all these criticisms of some of the choices made for representing Africa are certainly valid, they seem to tell only a partial story. For Jonathan Uzoka, the experience was an apparently positive and even liberating one. He seemed to have been able to do some travelling while in the country, in which process, Edinburgh seems to have had the most significance; a significance that affected completely his own world view.

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349 See Richard Pankhurst (1967).
350 Jeffrey D. Cranley (?) reports in a note found in the collection of the Cricklewood library in London, that Public Records Office document C.O. 555/7 May, 1924 contains this report on the complaints by the Union of Students of African Descent.
351 A post card from the exhibition for example shows a Ghanaian women bare-chested, standing in a setting in which are placed bunches of plantains.
352 It has been impossible to verify whether the exhibitions organizers in anyway may have arranged trips and visits for the participants, or whether Uzoka went travelling on his own initiative.
Especially interesting is the impression that the architecture of Scotland seems to have made on him. In particular, a building which the present writer has failed so far to identify, is related as being a large ‘single-storey house’ (Nigerian English for a two level house) set up on a hill in Edinburgh, and apparently known as the New Castle. The said New Castle is supposed to be a royal residence, in which Queen Victoria apparently stayed during visits to Edinburgh.

Jonathan Uzoka may already have been thinking of erecting his own house back in Awka upon his return. Whatever the case was, he was motivated to make sketches of the building, including an attempt to reproduce its layout on plan. All this he brought back with him to Awka upon his return, and on these impressions and sketches, he based the idea of the house.

The idea of the house having been based on ‘Queen Victoria’s mansion in Edinburgh called Newcastle’ is at first difficult to comprehend, even far-fetched, despite the informant’s insistence and conviction.

The only royal residence in Edinburgh that can be identified with a hill, is the massive and dominant Edinburgh Castle which sits on a broad hill high above the city. The most perceptible architectural quality it offers is that of its ramparts and walls, both of which wrap around the base of the hill.

Again, as a result of the civil war, these drawings were apparently destroyed during the Nigerian Army’s siege of Awka in 1969.

The claim of a formal resemblance between the castle on the hill in Edinburgh and the house in Awka only seems to have been further confirmed for Mme Uzoka by a visit to Scotland she herself was able to make in the 1970s.
castle. Above these, and inside their enclosure, are located a collection of buildings, all built in the baronial style of the Scottish castle tradition. This architecture is not an architecture of spires; the only architectonic elements that even approximate this, would be the tall pointed roofs that sit over the circular plan towers that cluster amongst (and often at the corners) of the conglomeration of its structures.

Looking more generally around Edinburgh, one indeed might identify in a broad sense, aspects of the city’s traditional architecture whose difference from customary Igbo architecture, might have struck a visitor from early twentieth century Awka. The first one of these is the triangular gable end.

Roofs over the customary houses of Igboland always oversailed the vertical walls, and probably for very sensible functional and preservative reasons. Constituted in fiber-stabilized laterite, their longevity would have depended on their being protected from the danger of torrential rainwater. In time, this results in an architecture in which the roof comes to be the dominant form that defines the appearance of the building.

While Edinburgh possess an urban landscape that does not lack the buildings with such a roof type, there is here also the substantial presence of buildings that terminate in a gable end. These gables are generally triangular, and often stepped, presenting a face, visible and unobscured by the shadow of a roof, that might easily be recognized as a location for a potential architectural statement. In Edinburgh however, such a potential is not taken up in any dramatic form, certainly not to the extent, for example, that one sees it in the
gabled architecture of Holland, and of Amsterdam in particular. The drama of the Uzoka house, to the degree that it includes the pinnacles, and located in the manner they are, does not seem to come from these houses alone.

Edinburgh in the early twentieth century was certainly dominated by spires. The generality of its church buildings are of a Gothic style, and therefore typically possess piers which are capped by pointed spires. However, more so than is typical, some of Edinburgh’s major church building are dominated by these spires to the degree that they almost completely dominate the buildings silhouette. Certainly, a church such as St. Giles exhibits this quality—none more so than the Cathedral of St. Mary’s, in Edinburgh’s Melville neighborhood. The view of the church from the street (it is located in the middle of an island on Melville Street(?)) presents the observer with the cathedral’s short axis. As a result, the spires (of different sizes rising through several levels, and triangurally, to the large dominant central one) dominate the view, and strike the observer as its most powerful characteristic.

The degree to which Edinburgh may thus be identified with the pinnacle and with the spire as a formal object, is perhaps nowhere better represented than by the gate piers that bestride the entranceway into Moray House in Canongate (fig. 71). These objects, over two stories high, are one of the memorable sights of the city, particularly so because they occur in a street whose enclosing buildings are domestic and intimate in scale.

It has been indicated that there is no way, at this point of plotting exactly what it might have been that brought Uzoka
to Edinburgh, nor do we know where he stayed, and what places he visited. There is no indication that he may have known any of these buildings specifically. They are only introduced here to insist on the texture of the city, and the general impression it is capable of transmitting.

The issue of the one specific site, Queen Victoria’s New Castle, still disturbed. Until, that is, an aerial photograph of the Edinburgh Castle is presented to ones gaze (fig 72). The Castle, as already indicated, sits on a hill, a hill whose horizontal profile is roughly elliptical, narrowing towards the entrance side of the site. Because the hill is surrounded on most of its periphery by an escarpment and by the Castles stabilizing stone ramparts, the Castle is, for the tourist approached up the slowly rising street called Castle Hill Rd, which terminates in a large esplanade, the typical medium sized parking space in which visitor buses let of their passengers. At the end of this esplanade is a wall, which suggests an enclosing gesture towards the space by its two end sections being bent slightly in the direction of Castle Hill Road. The space therefore is read with ease as a part of the castle. What an aerial photograph makes clear, is that all these, together, in some way resemble a gigantic ship. The topological plan certainly is shaped not unlike a large ocean going vessel. Most striking, is the realization that such a scheme allows the esplanade to become, quite literally, the imagined ship’s ‘platform’.

The description of the Uzoka house, narrated in the way it strikes the person approaching it, was commenced with the impression one gets, of its front balcony, as being the bow of a yacht. The balcony of the Uzoka house seems therefore to be an attempt to produce the esplanade of the Edinburgh
Castle. The Edinburgh Castle must be Madam Uzoka’s Victorian ‘New Castle’. Once this is revealed, it becomes striking that in fact the Uzoka house, is an attempt in the provincial setting of a then rural section of the small town of Awka, to replicate the whole of the Edinburgh Castle in miniature.

The details clearly come from other places, from the buildings and its acroteria described for the surrounding town of Edinburgh, but not impossibly, also the church buildings in southeastern Nigeria itself, most probably the Cathedral at Okrika. And, although little has been discovered about the actual building process involved in the erection of the church, beyond the fact that its head mason hails from the town of Nibo or Nise, it is clear that Uzoka himself made the sketches for the house, and that he employed this trained stone mason from Nise to build it. The Uzoka house may thus represent one of the earliest local separations between the architect and the builder in terms in which the contemporary period in southeastern Nigeria is now more familiar.

The Uzoka house then is a complex object, poaching constantly from a wide and varied experience, and remembered as similar, not in the particular manner in which our contemporary mind thinks the similar, but in a much more poetic, much less direct way, that evades a strict recapture. In this sense, it replays to some extent the mode of judging similarity that had been encountered previously in the Enugu Ukwu reference to the church at Okrika.

Reference was made earlier to the fact that in the customary architecture of Awka and of the neighboring town of Amawbia, the multi-storey structure was established in the form of the
tower, located in the compounds of some of its more affluent citizens, and which functioned typically as a look-out tower. Awka and Amawbia therefore certainly may be thought of as locations in which skill in customary building was also highly developed. It should therefore not be particularly surprising to find that in the period of the early twentieth century, many of the non-customary buildings that would contribute much to a study such as this one were not uncommon in the town. The presence of a highly developed group of customary builders, may be a good basis on which to expect that whenever new ideas are introduced or invented, they might proliferate at such a location more rapidly than in an otherwise less specialized, less interactional town. Most of these non-customary buildings were destroyed in the Nigerian civil war, but many still remain to be seen in the form of the bombed-out shell, such for example as the Okoli house (fig. 73). These buildings indicate that this town did excel in its interest in non-customary architecture, and it proliferation may be accounted for by the intense competition between the various villages, and their 'guilds' of specialized craftsmen.

The recognition of a style in the building as being specifically Victorian, may therefore be nothing more than an expression by Uzoka of the powerful effect the exhibition itself may have had on these African visitors perception of Great Britain as a place than it is any architectural identification that would be coherent within the categories of British architectural history. Identifying his house in Awka as 'Victorian' may therefore indicate a desire to identify (as have a wide variety of the production of objects in this period) with the person of Her Majesty Queen Victoria,

\[355\] It is interesting that none of Awka's Colonial buildings may compete in grandeur with those erected in the new non-customary manner by Awka indigenes.
and the greatness with which any object might be imbued by the claim of a connection to the former’s realm.

Based simply on appearance and historical possibility, there are in fact other buildings all located in Nigeria itself, that may more easily be claimed as a source for the architecture of the building. The acroteria in the front of the house, as well as the plan shape of the building, seem more typical of church architecture than it does of domestic architecture. More importantly, some church buildings whose early congregational history is inextricably tied to the history of the early church in southeastern Nigeria, bear a resemblance to the Uzoka house. One could site the cathedral at Akwete, and the Akwete Christian community as an example. Akwete is a riverine town near the coast, whose history dates back to the same mid-nineteenth century period during which Christianity was introduced to many nearby coastal communities. Though the mission to Awka was primarily out of Onitsha, it seems entirely likely, that in the itineration of Awka craftsmen and traders, not to mention the in-land journeys for trade of Akwete indigenes, missionary contact between Akwete and Awka cannot be ruled out. Jonathan Uzoka may have travelled this far, and may well have known this church building.

The resemblances are quite close. For not only does the T-shaped plan of the Uzoka house, very atypical for the Igbo house, recall the cross-plan of the church building, but, moreover, if one considers the gable front end of the Uzoka house particularly, its resemblance to the elevation of any one of the gable ends of the Cathedral at Akwete is quite striking. Considering any one such gable, and especially the section of it which corresponds to the central aisle of the
church plan, which extends vertically at the center of the gable, we note that both its ends are surmounted by pinnacles, and that the apex of its pediment is also surmounted by a miniature tower, albeit an acroteria that is somewhat enlarged.

It is interesting that the church in Awka town itself, of which Mazi Uzoka was a founding member (St. Faith’s Church, Awka) also shares with the Cathedral at Akwete, a basilica-style church plan. However, this local church does not come with pinnacles attached to the ends as they are in the more distant church Akwete. It therefore seems likely that this motif which we find in the Uzoka house has origins in a building not in Awka or in its immediate vicinity, but one at some distance away. And, this inspirational building may not be the Cathedral at Akwete itself, but would be a building that shares much in common with this cathedral, as well as including the Castle in Edinburgh.

In an earlier chapter, it was mentioned that the acroteria of the three-storied house in Okrika suggest in their perimeter disposition, the possibility their derivation from Gothic architecture. If the suggestions we make for the Uzoka house are also accurate, it seems to suggest that for the southeast Nigerian builder, as well as for his patron, the idea of architectural appropriation, though not as free as it seems to have been earlier on in the century (in which for example, and as will be explored subsequently in the dissertation, the sculptural qualities of a car engine appear to form the inspiration for the sculpted relief ornamentation of an entranceway dwarf wall) was loose enough to allow cross
influences between buildings represented as typologically distinct in the architecture of Europe.\footnote{By this is meant that, though it is possible to site a rare example or two, there is no real sustained evidence of a Gothic architecture beyond its form in the religious building.}

The use of acroteria in the Uzoka house and in the Adinembo house at Okrika, in this regard seems to derive from a parallel desire, and one that appears to be possible in the context of the southeast Nigerian culture of the early twentieth century and with this culture’s intersection with the customary building universes of the nineteenth century. This seems particularly likely given the lack of separation known to exist in traditional culture between the temple and the house. That is, one form of temple, the Igbo obi occupies a building in the house (or compound), which though distinct in style from the other structures with which it was enclosed, nevertheless was the place regarded as the dwelling of the husband (again male most typically\footnote{Ify Amadiume’s Afrikan Matriarchy: Male Daughters, Female Husbands (London, 1984) studies forms of Igbo family structure which recognize the reversal of ‘normal’ gender roles. (See also Amadiume 1983, and 1987).}), and the head of the family. The temple was therefore at the same time the main dwelling, and the place in which visitors were received, entertained and conversed with, most typically (but not exclusively) where these were men.

Conceptual and Ontological reorders:
The House and the Church
Perhaps the extent to which therefore the house and the church were not regarded as much separate entities as Christians in other places might more normally assume, is indicated by both the following brief philological digression, and a related architectural observation.
The Igbo word for house is uno, or ulo, depending on dialect. For church building it is un'uka, and for the domestic house and home, it is uno obibi. The former term translates, almost literally as the House of Discourse (ikali uka means for example to hold a conversation). The latter term translates as House for Living [in], which translation holds added interest because the kin-centered temple shrine, in which the head of the household, and of the extended family) resides, is a distinct type known by the term obi, obu, or ovu. Though we cannot reconstruct the history of either term here, it is clear that the term ul'uka (and uno-uka) is of recent invention as translation of the English 'church'. Of course the church is the furthest away from the notion of discourse and conversation that is thinkable, whether or not the latter term is thought of in its European or in its African forms. This terminological invention is therefore interesting, given the rigors of Christian religious ritual and the institutionalized forms of prayer and speech which it requires. One might venture to suggest, that as is true of many aspects of West African culture, participatory practice is more strongly insisted upon here than it is in European forms of a parallel culture.

It seems likely that in this term in fact traces of the very earliest form in which Christian services would have been conducted may be found. Open to the general public (and often for the more evangelical preachers an activity conducted in the open spaces and market squares of the village), and thus

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358 This is confirmed more recently by the use of the term uno ekpele for the more radically Protestant churches in which prayers, faith healing and visionary ideology dominates practice. House of Prayer (its literal translation) describes accurately the most pervasive activity that occurs within the liturgy of such churches.
directed at a community that would still have remained largely skeptical. The term indicates that the space of the church would have been a space of persuasion... a space of philosophical argument, a space for exploration of existential matters, and a place in which such matters could be voiced equally by any member of the community. The early period church service would then most likely have been much more of a space of negotiation (and of persuasion and cultural seduction) than is imaginable presently. Many of its attendants would have been attracted by the dazzle which church liturgy and performance displayed regularly. Indeed in Nnobi, a story is frequently heard of a memorable occasion in which a group of dibia, priests and attendants to the many shrines located at Ngo (one of the villages of Nnobi) had been specially invited to attend services. On this occasion, it is recalled that the Anglican priest’s sermon was constantly interrupted by these men who had not been socialized into the decorum of the sermon, and who therefore felt, quite naturally, that the Anglican priest’s statements could be challenged at the moment they were delivered. Apparently, a major philosophical debate ensued, and it got louder and louder, till the dibia, convinced of the ridiculousness of the preacher’s positions, stood up and took their leave. This was a dramatic example, but may well lend support to the idea that church services may have been more dialogical (more like

\[359\] Of course it is obvious that in the Ozo society in Igboland such matters would have been discussed, albeit within the bounds of customary Igbo world views. However, the selectivity of such an institution, would imply that the serious discussion of such matters were not available to the ordinary non titled adult.

\[360\] At St. Simon’s this included in one stage, the inclusion of a Salvation Army style brass band, a visual and aural feast of which kind the town would have not seen before. For the sheer razzmatazz of such occurrences, many would have been attracted to the church out of a sense of curiosity rather than from a sense of spiritual conversion as such. It most be emphasized however that these kinds of individuals would nevertheless not have formed the majority.
discussions), and that churches may have been regarded much
more like meeting houses, than they are the theatrical and
non-participatory liturgical spaces with which southeastern
Nigerian congregations have become acquainted since.

The Church as Ancestral Meeting House?
The architectural parallel to the altercation previously
related will be pursued in more detail in a subsequent
chapter. What it seems to indicate however, even in this
moment by which time it is quite secure as the dominant non-
governmental institution in southeastern Nigeria, is that the
cultural space occupied by the church remained a contested
space, and that indeed this extends an earlier situation in
which the physical space it occupied was initially a contested
one (see chapter 9). Given this likelihood, it may not be as
ridiculous at it sounds at first, to suggest that the church
became successful as an institution, by the fact that as House
of Discourse, it was able to annex at least some of the
cultural and social space occupied by the customary
institution through which this role was fulfilled: the
architectural structure and parallel conceptual idea known as
the obi\textsuperscript{361}, which for the moment, and as mentioned previously,
can usefully be thought of as a domestic reception house cum
domestic ancestral shrine.

The present writer's particular interpretation of the history
of the obi, as architecture and as idea, in the face of new
forms of modernity indicated by the proliferation of non-
customary architecture, will be offered in a later section

\textsuperscript{361} The term is not to be taken for the other term Obi, which is the title for the King or Chief of
several towns in Igboland, especially those whose history seems to suggest a greater connection to
Benin than do those whose primary allegiance might be to either Nri or to Arochukwu viz Obi of Onitsha,
Obi of Agbor.
Presently, a particular aspect of this structure, relevant to an understanding of the church as both a physical, architectural structure and as a societal, cultural phenomenon, will form the present focus.

The Igbo obi, it is observed, is surrounded by ornamented carved panels\(^2\) (fig 74), which in the areas marking the altar itself would have consisted particular iconographic motifs. These include a symbol that appears to be in the form of a pair of ogene (or dumb bells), another that is in the form of a zig-zag in whose triangular enclosures a perforation is opened (fig 75, 76). Scholarly interpretations of the meanings of these symbols do not appear to be published. For our purposes however, their specific meaning in the context of their function as elements surrounding the shrine may not be critical. That is, regardless of their specific meaning within the traditional obi itself, it would enhance (rather than disprove) the significance of the startling, revelatory and critical discovery detailed below. The apparently symbolic motifs with which one is familiar by their extroverted display in the context of the obi, are found dispersed in miniature all over the upper levels only of the church buildings external fabric; specifically these were found on the Emmanuel Church and on St. Peter’s Abagana. Usually located at the vertical joint between two stone-bricks, and especially at those locations where the unevenness of the "brick's" edge results in an unusually wide joint, these very motifs, seeming curious here, are sometimes present, incised into the mortar in low relief. Specifically, the motifs were found applied the higher up one looks across the horizontal courses (fig. 77), with the result that although their numbers increase the

\(^{\text{2}}\) For critical descriptions of these screens and panels see Jeffreys (1931), Aniakor (1978:198-201), Neather () and Bentor ().
higher up one looks, they become invisible to anyone who should chance to look up from the ground. For these two church buildings indeed, they occur mainly in the clerestory wall section which rises above the columns enclosing the aisle to support the roof over this section of the plan, enveloping that is, the processional route that the church father's, and the choristers (or brass band as it seems more often to have been in the 1930s Church Missionary Society originated church) would enter and leave the church; the boundary as it were to the liturgy. These motifs therefore become most plentiful at a level in which they become virtually invisible to the congregation circulating the building, and in a location that can be thought to circumscribe the most crucial moment of the service.

Two of the motifs are particularly distinct as shapes. One appears to be in a shape that approximates the letter X, in which the central part of the figure is filled in to form a thickened curve at the lower and upper sections of the intersection (fig. 78). A second figure, appears in the form of an upside down V shape, with both the ends and the apex thickened (fig. 79).

Having been persuaded as to its existence therefore (and without making any specific suggestions regarding its possible interpretation) the elderly man from Abagana who was involved as a young boy in the building of the church, was at a loss to offer any suggestions as to the meaning of the symbols. They are basically not remembered by those still living.

Indeed, it took a strained pointing out from the ground (and an observation through the telephoto lens of the camera with which the work was being photographed), to convince individuals who accompanied the writer that he was not imagining things.
How then are these discoveries to be interpreted? Have these marks any significance? Is it approaching plausibility to suggest, as is implied even in the manner that it has been described above, that there is a kind of spiritual subversion intended?

A less radical interpretation ought to be entertained. One may interpret such a discovery as indicating that for the builders of the church (all of whom it must be recalled were Christian), understood the church building as paralleling the obi; as a space of a specific ritual or spiritual significance. The church building was, so to speak, quite possibly conceived in terms of its being a men’s domestic meeting/reception/temple house writ large; an interpretation which may well explain the invention of the word uno uka [un’uka] as an appellation for Church.

Mention has been made of the obi in the preceding text. As is indicated in the subsequent chapter in which the obi is explored in detail, the motifs on the churches appear to be miniature reproductions of the ornamentation and symbols that are found on the decorative wooden screens which enclose the obi structure of any family possessed of a titled family or lineage head. Considering that such obi’s also served to varying degrees as communal temple houses, one explanation for the motifs as they have been applied to the Church building is that the application represents an insistence (contrary to the expectation of the missionary like Basden who, might perhaps not be expected to mount the scaffold, and may thus have remained on the ground), that the church is really a new obi. Moreover, given that in fact religious conversion often came close to being defined along kin based/lineage based
allegiances, and rarely on individual revelatory experience\textsuperscript{344}, the idea of the church as a lineage obi, distinguished only by allegiance to a new god, seems a not unpersuasive possibility. This moreover, is the only explanation that is convincing for the fact, still true today, that the Igbo word for church (the building) is uno-uka\textsuperscript{345}, and for the Church (the congregation) is Nzuko-Krist\textsuperscript{346}, literally the Christ-ian Meeting, conjuring up images that are perhaps much closer to the numerous, conversational and informal fellowship meeting groups that are popular in Nigeria today, than it does the idea of an established church.

Two explanations therefore seem possible for the existence of such traditionist symbols on the body of the church building, if any of the points raised above are elaborated. The first is that some of the early Christians may have resented the attitudes towards their own culture that missionary rhetoric tended to utilize. The symbols may, especially given their

\textsuperscript{344} Thus wholesale conversions, or defections from one denomination to another are recorded for many communities, around disputes that may or may not be religious in essence. An early well known case occurred in Brass in the late 1800s (see Alagoa [1963]). For Nnobi, this is recorded for the village of Awuda, whose own chief being in constant opposition to the assumption of leadership by Ezeokoli (who he seems to have regarded as an upstart), promptly saw to it that most of his own sub-lineage took up Roman Catholicism (for a perhaps biased, but nevertheless informed account of this process, see Ezenyem op cit., pp18 &19). This tension remains in Nnobi up to the present moment.

\textsuperscript{345} It is interesting to compare this with what seems to obtain in Yorubaland. In Yoruba speech, the word ‘church-i’ is the most likely word that would be used in conversation. A more careful speaker intent on not using this common term borrowed from the English, would say ile-adura in its stead. Ile Adura translates into house of prayer, and thus is a literal parallel to uno-ekpele in Igbo. It is reasonable to imagine that the idea of the ‘church’ was therefore never as normalized, never as absorbed into being Yoruba, as it was into being Igbo, and thus the retention of the Anglicized term in the everyday speech of the former.

\textsuperscript{346} The Bible Society of Nigeria: Bible Nso. This term is used repeatedly in this Igbo translation of the Bible. See for example Nkpughe 2.29 "Onye nwere nti, ya nu ihe Mo Nso nagwa nzuko Kraist", which translated from the English "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches." Revelations 29.2. Authorized King James Version. (Underlines, for comparison, are by present writer).
location (which would for example therefore render it invisible to visiting prelates and high officials from Europe, as well as to the regular visitor like Basden, who presumably would be unlikely to mount the precarious scaffolding that would probably have been used in the construction) be a form of resistance, an attempt to force the building to play the role they might have expected it to play in their lives; becoming an obu for the public discourse of the lineage, regardless of the fact that such discourse now represented a new way of thinking the spiritual. It may also therefore have also been a way of asserting that the church only existed as a result of the precise sanction of the ancestral, a fact whose enactment in other historical contexts of late nineteenth century Igbo history, is attested to. The church being made over into a non-alien phenomenon.

The final possibility, that it was a form of spiritual subversion, meant to 'cast a spell' on the church, and to lead to its eventual failure and downfall, seems quite unlikely, at least as far as the evidence available suggests. The mason and carpenter builder's of the church were in the main the pioneers of the church, its pillars so to speak in the locality in which the erection of the building was in process. That such an oppositional undertaking would have existed in the context of the southeastern village town in this period, amongst this particular group of individuals, does not sound convincing.

It is thus seen that in both the Emmanuel Church in Enugu Ukwu, and in the Uzoka House in Awka, two buildings on which focus was concentrated in this chapter, the exploration of the building's histories, makes them more open to interpretation and to understanding than might at first appear
possible. They indicate for example that the idea of a vernacular architecture might be a quite unreliable one, and certainly so in the context in which the inquiry was carried out. The historical reconstructions have also afforded a glimpse of the formative worlds of some of the individuals involved in their creation, and have given insight into how the local idea of architectural similarity is constructed. As the narrative progressed, the historical construction in themselves have moreover enabled an increasingly clear perception of an object whose coordinates though following unexpected trajectories, is nevertheless one that once mapped, reveals that the architectural similitude that local perceptions claim and recognize, though different, may not be as unfamiliar in its constitution as might at first be thought.

Given the above then, the interpretations offered for the architecture of the Emmanuel Church, and earlier for the Uzoka house’s universe of invention, both seem persuasive. The kinds of elisions involved in borrowing aspect of Church building in the context of domestic architecture can be accepted as having become to a large extent naturalized in the second decade of the twentieth century. Similarly, the church seems to have taken on aspects of the Igbo obi, the semi-domestic semi-religious structure that was once the architectural center of Igbo extended-family life. Igbo culture thus seems, at this moment, to be struggling to prevent the fissure between the notion of the house as a place for living in, and the house as a place for gnostic and political discourse.

The meaning of the Church as an institution for the locality obviously could not have corresponded with what it meant for the English congregations of Great Britain. Although, in the
politics of the locality, some aspects of tradition ceased to hold the same power over the intellectual mind of the community as it may once have had, this in itself by no means indicated a total rejection of culture, or of the sense that the southeasterner (Izhon, Igbo, Efik, Ibibio or otherwise) was still able to exploit even the colonial situation to his/her advantage in competing with, and challenging, European dominance. Indeed, architectural aspects of the Church as a building-type, indicate the space a mental map in which its social significance was located in the 1910s and 1920s. Earlier in this chapter, these were entered with specific historical detail. The matter will be returned to at a more interpretative level in the final chapter. For the moment, it may be pointed out that the demise of the physical obi, the communal and familial meeting house (and residence of the head of the household), as an architectural type (if not as a linguistic object) is paralleled in this moment by the increasing presence of the Church. This is customarily taken as an indication of the break down of traditional society, and its replacement by an alien culture. The erroneousness of such an interpretation is one of the results that this investigation hopes to have established by its end. For the moment, it needs only be stated that previously unremarked clues from the architecture of the Church itself, indicate a different narrative.

In the following chapter, another set of buildings, which offer the possibility of other historiographic entries into the same issues raised here, and which at the same time have historical connections to the other buildings in this inquiry, are investigated.

367 Such, for example, that it becomes possible, for individuals (no doubt egged on by emotionally unpersuaded mothers), to have begun publicly to question the custom of twin infanticide.
CHAPTER 5

'Hideous Architecture':
Schemata for Poaching In A Scottish Reserve

But Negroes in trousers can also be found in parts of the town a long way away from this particular part[...] The European veneer which here and there has not even stopped short at the introduction of horrible roofs of corrugated iron, gets thicker in the neighborhood of the railway station, and makes it difficult to distinguish what really is original. But the admirable old thatches, made of mighty palm leaves[...] are more noticeable towards the Oranja quarter.....
Leo Frobenius, from The Voice of Africa.

....A number of people have heard about me (but never from me), talk about me (but never to me), and judge me (but never the real me). At home in Nigeria, when europeans drive past in a car, my (Nigerian) companions sometimes jest, 'There are your people'. Back at school in England, at the occasional materialization of another African face, my (english) contemporaries used to chuckle, 'There's your brother'.

Dilibe Onyeama, Notes of a so-called Afro-Saxon.

Two sites, neither of which seem ever to have been owned by either the Colonial administration or European concerns present in Nigeria in other capacities, are still occupied by the families who own the buildings located on them. These sites offer unique opportunities for comprehending the modalities of architectural style over the period of the study as this was realigned around a new local focus. The uniqueness of the opportunity arises because the Ojiakor family compound at Adazi Nnukwu, as well as the Onyeama family residences at Eke, contain two buildings, each pair of which was once commissioned by the same individual, over the period of study,
offering therefore an opportunity to see the historical unfolding and/or transformation of architectural preference.

For the sake of brevity however, the Ojiakor site and other buildings in its general vicinity rather than the Onyeama site, will be the center of attention, both because the former are more easily located (historically) with the other buildings investigated so far, but also because, the buildings at Eke are not surrounded by comparable buildings of the same period around which to assess a context

As has been indicated, the selection of which buildings to describe here proceeds loosely. The examples do not cover the geographical area known as southeastern Nigeria with equal density. This is partly a result of the historical reality. Many regions in southeastern Nigeria did not appear to have an interest in the production of the kinds of building which form the context of the Ojiakor house, until after the period of our interest. On the other hand, for many of the regions that did produce a non-customary architecture earlier than the places represented here, the buildings themselves have long since vanished without a trace, or when they have survived are isolated in their context. Here, because other similar buildings are unidentifiable, the contexts lack the kind of density on the ground which allows the reconstruction of the

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368 This situation results in fact from the power of its late owner, Okwuluora I, Igwe Onyeama of Eke, who decreed that no one else was allowed to erect such buildings in his 'realm' (Onyeama [1982]: pp71-72). It is hoped however, that at a future date, a separate study will be dedicated to these buildings, and to their history. Although there are some small scale buildings of a slightly later period which would make interesting study (including the houses occupied by the Owu family, and by the Anigolbu family, these families are related to the Onyeama family quite closely, and derived the wealth which allowed the erection of these buildings largely as a result of their association with Chief Onyeama. [Interview with the current Chief of Eke, Okwuruoha II, Eke July 15, 1992, and with another Eke indigene Oro Nnagbo, Warri, December 17, 1991]. This is not the case in the context say of the Ojiakor house and the buildings in its own general vicinity.
kinds of interconnections which make their erection possible (inter-communal, inter-personal, and trade related). This was not however always the problem. In certain instances such as would be true for Calabar, Bonny and Ikom, buildings from these places are included in subsequent interpretative analyses because of their criticality. They were not however made central to this study (as they may be to others subsequently) because of the limitations that language difference placed on the research project. The one case in which this was done, including both Igbo and Izhon examples, results from a special effort, and one thought to be important for the sake of a clearly suggested historical interconnectivity.

The Ojiakor House and Some Related Building
The town of Adazi Nnukwu\textsuperscript{369} in which the Ojiakor House is located, has never been, as far as we know, more than a rural settlement, although there was a time when the road that passes through its outskirts and that connects it to both Onitsha and to Awka\textsuperscript{370}, was more important than it is today.

Here, in a still forested section of the town, one finds the simple but meticulous building represented here (see fig. 36). A two-storey building, its lower floor is of stone and

\textsuperscript{369} Pronounced as an elision of Nne Ukwu...mother of Ukwu, and not Nnukwu (as in the tone changes used in teh Igbo word for large).

\textsuperscript{370} Both Onitsha and Awka are historically important towns in Igboland, the former being the site of one of Igboland’s older city states (and in modern times site of West Africa’s largest market). Awka on the other hand has been famed at least as early as the early nineteenth century, for it metalworking crafts and for wood carving. It has been capital of the state of New Anambra, since 1992. Awka is of course the same town in which the Uzoka house is located, and in which Omali-Okafor (and probably some of the individuals critical to the building of the Emmanuel church at Enugu Ukwu) may have had their first contact with the world beyond their own village.
brick, its upper floor of wood, and its roof of corrugated iron.

The lower level is enclosed by a masonry wall, in which a distinction is made, by material as by how the material is assembled, between pilaster and wall. The former consists of rectilinear brick work, whose regular, horizontal mortar-joint lines contrast with the less regular more lyrical rubble-stone masonry in between, an apparent reference to a distinction between structure and non load bearing in-fill. The pilasters are crowned by a corbelled, two course 'capital', emphasizing further the former's role as carriers of the timber-fabricated upper level placed over them. They also are intended as decorative elements, which may be judged by the dado line (continuous pedestal) further down (nine brick courses from the bottom), formed similarly by the protrusion of one row of bricks.

Though the building appears as a symmetrical structure from a distance, it displays a certain asymmetry as one approaches it. It is found for example that the brick pilasters constitute five bays, and that they are unequal, save for the two end ones. The middle pilaster is not central. Its outer edge marks the axis of the wall itself, on the other side of which extends the entrance to the lower level.

And even if now dilapidated, we may note the wooden stair flight that leads one up the first level from a four-riser concrete base. Unlike the pilasters, it is however symmetrically located, marking precisely the center line of the front elevation.
The staircase, as positioned, is a dominant feature of the building's composition, consisting almost a third of the volume of the upper floor level to which it gives access. It is therefore a very visible element, protruding like the beak of a large bird, and up through which visitors would have progressed to disappear into the unseen room/rooms, out of the view of those below.

The upper level to which the stair flight leads also has bays which are symmetrically placed around the axis. These bays are not of equal length. The three central bays (one of which is the entrance door) are smaller than the bays at the extremities which are larger by one half, judging by the disposition of the windows: three at the end bays, and two each for the three smaller bays. The two side elevations are themselves symmetrical, consisting at the ground level each of two equal bays (that is to say that their axes are marked by a central column), in each one of which is located a window with a lintel in brickwork. These windows are edge-matched with two smaller windows similarly placed in the upper level.

The wooden enclosure which forms the upper level is a highly perforated surface on the front and back elevations, but is completely unpenetrated on the sides, apart from the windows, which are themselves literally cut out and hinged back to the opaque surface from which they are formed. At the front side of this upper enclosure, one finds that the lower section of the wall is louvered continuously. The upper level contains the hinged inward opening (only) window flaps, the latter easily distinguished by its more closely packed louvering, relieved occasionally and horizontally by one louvre which is fabricated by a diagonal cross hatching of wooden slats.
Access was not granted to the interior of the building, but due to its small size, we may suggest that only three possibilities exist for the internal layout of the floor. The first possibility would be one in which on rising through the stair flight to the upper level, one enters through the doorway to be faced by a single large room extended to all the four enclosing walls, through whose slats, the daylight outside would filter to light up the dim cool interior.

A second possibility, is that one does indeed enter into a large room, but that this extends only across the zone marked below by the two centrally placed and unequal bays, and from the very front of the building to the similarly perforated rear wall. However, from this room one would have access through doorways to enclosures on each side, each either a rectangular enclosure extending also from front to back (that is one on each side of the larger central room), or to four square-shaped enclosures, two on each side of the central room. A third possibility is that the doorway opens into a central hallway, on each side of which is either a single large room, or two smaller rooms, forming either an axially symmetrical room arrangement around the passageway, or a bi-axially symmetrical arrangement of four rooms.

The exact same series of arrangements may be imagined also for the floor below. Indeed a reconstruction of its plan suggests few other alternatives of any significance.

And yet, given all the above, and the modular regularity of the timber-enclosed upper floor, we have to wonder what the source or intention is for the irregularity introduced in the
bay spacings at the ground level\textsuperscript{371}. One possibility is that because a doorway had to be introduced for access to the interior of the lower level space, there was a conflict between the desire to locate this doorway centrally and the structural preference for the column to also be located centrally. Once a prior decision had been made, for whatever reason, to construct a four bay structure in which the bays were initially thought of as equal, the resolution reached, given the conflict, appears therefore literally to have been to allow each demand to meet the other around the vertical central axis.

Another possibility is that the irregularity results from the construction process, and from the still developing skills of a constructional group experimenting on and learning from the experience of departing from the customary. If for example the idea of the central axis was just discovered, this may have been marked, during the preliminary setting out of the structure, as a pivotal line. From this point, the corners of the building may then have been measured. If the two corner piers were then built by measuring in the thickness of the pier (two bricks laid end to end) from the corners, it may easily be imagined that on commencing the 'central' pier, the idea of center-line was not grasped enough to make the adequate displacement to the axis proper before the erection of the column commenced.

Either way, there exists a suggestion that the upper level was clearly and precisely thought out (perhaps even pre-

\textsuperscript{371} The assumption is not that measured regularity is inherent to south east Nigerian architecture, though this is to an extent likely. Rather, it is only to observe that the building itself has two bays (the end ones) of exactly the same dimension. Its builders were therefore able and desirous of building by mensuration.
fabricated), and that the lower level was at least for some time, seen only in terms of its being the preparatory base, on which the upper section, perhaps seen as the house up the stairway, was to be installed. The dimensions of the wooden upper level may have been what the lower level was prepared for; because its regularity is undisturbed by the irregularly spaced piers of the supporting base below it, the latter of whose spacing may have been initially intended to correspond to those of the timber-frame mullions above, but which intention was subverted by an error of setting out.

The roof of this house is a hipped-roof\(^\text{372}\), of apparently high gauge corrugated iron (judging by the flatness and continued sturdy look of the roof in comparison with the corrugated pitched roof of another house adjoining it), with a significant overhang effectively shading the windows from direct sunlight. It also appears to be surrounded by an eaves-cornice (also of iron) which doubles as a rainwater gutter, discharging through a downpipe at the right side corner. Protruding just below the cornice, is a fascia board, apparently of wood, to which the cornice itself is affixed. This fascia does moreover, whether or not this is the intention, extend the depth of the shading which is provided by the roof.

Taken together, the building is a precise statement, apparently well thought out, and informed by a definite pleasure in the aesthetic. It is clear for example, that the irregularly patterned stone-masonry of the lower floor (a

\(^{372}\) This term denotes a roof with four slopes as different from the simpler roof with only a double pitch and therefore making necessary a pair of walls ending in a triangular shape to close the ends of the roof's section: the so-called gable roof. A hipped roof has four sub ridges and a main central ridge.
local version of the rubble-wall), though suggestive of a distinction between non-load-bearing and load-bearing sections, considering the lightweight nature of the floor above, could carry that floor and its activities with no difficulty whatsoever. The brick pilasters are therefore more of a rhetorical device than a structurally necessary one.

In order however to assess the degree to which its creators recognize this building’s architecturality (that it is architectural and not simply building), and to which this is perceptible in the building’s involvement with rhetoric, as well in order as to assess the normality or the uniqueness of this building in the context of southern Nigeria, we need to indicate the way in which it is related to other buildings, as well as to grasp the historical and cultural situation into which it is placed. The cultural and historical settings were detailed in chapter two. Here, the intention is merely to describe the larger formal, technical and constructive worlds of then contemporary architecture which the Ojiakor house cohabited with others.”

Once one actually is attuned to recognizing them, dilapidated and initially uninteresting as they mainly seem today, a recognition of many other buildings in which the architecture just described seems reflected, and to which it may be related becomes possible. In fact, given the evidence of one such building on a main thoroughfare at the town of Oba, near Onitsha and of another in the middle of a commercial street at Okigwe, it may not be an exaggeration to claim that many

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373 This question is addressed again in a subsequent chapter (Ch. 9), but more specifically in relation to ‘traditional’ architecture. For indeed it becomes necessary by that time to question the possibility that a category recognized only by the post 1930s Igbo world is being extended to buildings for which a more custom bound south eastern Nigerian world had no interest in.
northeastern and southeastern Igbo towns (within the larger southeastern Nigerian geographic area) probably had one such building, or that a certain class of individual within such towns would have desired its possession.

To illustrate the point, the following houses namely, the Onwudinjo House\(^{374}\) at Awka, the Old Onyeama Palace at Eke, the Ibe House at Nnobi, and Madam Okoli’s house also at Nnobi, all owned by individuals who achieved and occupied quite different roles in their worlds, are here contrasted with the Ojiakor House.

All the houses are two level buildings, consisting of a lower level which is built from red clay, and an upper level of carpentered timber. All have roofs of corrugated iron. The first was commissioned by an individual who at one point in his career was a member of the proto-colonial police force, the second by a Warrant Chief\(^{375}\) who ultimately attained the rarer status of Paramount Chief, and the third by a palm-oil merchant.

The smallest of the three, the Onwudinjo House sits against a backdrop of thick vegetation, but is itself approached across an open bare ground. Even though it is now dilapidated, upon close scrutiny it yields evidence of its original self.

\(^{374}\) A label such as this refers to the ownership of the house (it is owned by descendants of the man who built it, a Mr. Onwudinjo) rather than to a name for it that would be recognized locally. That is, but for a few rare examples that will become clear in the text, houses are not given names in any formal sense similar to what obtains for example in aristocratic and elite European culture.

It appears to be built on a plinth, as is the Ojiakor house above, over which have been placed clay walls, in contrast to the masonry wall of the Ojiakor House’s ground floor level. The clay walls reveal traces of a very regular course work, implying that the walls were built either from pre-formed clay blocks\textsuperscript{376}, or that the wall was built up of small unmeasured units, applied in roughly parallel but vertically fixed and equal stages.

Either of the two building processes are ones that are observed in customary style buildings in southeastern Nigeria, produced in the 1920s and apparently still a current way of building in the 1940s and 1950s. This is for example clear in the photograph (fig. 80) taken about 1910 by Northcote Thomas (government anthropologist in the early 1900s). Thomas focuses on capturing the image of Anyanwu (the god represented in the sun) through a construction of empty dry-gin bottles. In the background of this construction however, is a wall, which encloses the home of the owner of the shrine. This wall’s textural qualities, and constructional marks, appear to be the same as the ones observable in the Onwudinjo House.

A second photograph, which illustrates the same point, was taken at a significantly later date (c1958) by the Polish architectural educator, Zbigniew Dmochowski, in the same town of Awka in which the Onwudinjo House is located. The Onwudinjo House therefore combines two separate building processes in the same building, one of recent invention, and the other of apparent local longevity. In this sense as well as in others, \textsuperscript{376}

\textsuperscript{376} In Igbo customary architecture, layers of clay were intentionally applied so that each course was of the same height as the next one. However, the result, since it was only roughly measured, is very different aesthetically from the apparently rigid and barely visible joints presented here (Aniakor [1978]:chapter 4).
it is reminiscent of the Ojiakor House. Not in the combination of a new and an older constructional procedure (rubble work, which we noted of the Ojiakor house’s lower level, is not a tradition that was employed in this area), but in the employment of completely different systems between one level and the next.

The walls are formed in one of these two ways described earlier, by five courses, which are punctured by a single door (on each opposing front elevation), at the side elevation and by a very small and rectangular timber window. In some places on the surface of this wall, one may still find evidence of the fact that the clay walls were once painted over with a light green pigment. In other places, the clay is covered over with a cement plaster. The cement appears to be relatively recent, and may be an attempt to give the dilapidating building some stability. It is therefore likely that the earlier surface was a painted one, though we have no way of being certain that the paint itself was there from the initial completion of the building.

Into the upper most clay course are placed timber joists, over which the timber floor of the upper level is fabricated. This upper level consists of a veranda that circulates the whole upper perimeter, framed by a regularly spaced set of rectangular-section poles, off of which a braced balustrading appears to have been built at about the grasping level of an average standing adult. This represents a second significant difference from the Ojiakor house, which house we recall has no veranda at the second level (first floor) but which instead was completely enclosed, provided for ventilation with a screen like timber wall.
The outer edge of the floor of the Onwudinjo House consists of a double beam, the lower run of which is notched at fixed intervals over rectangular sectioned vertical timber members which extend downwards through the clay wall below, which also masks them from view (fig. 81). The doubled edge-beam would not have been visible originally, for it is overlain by a single, planed, plank which formed the visible soffit, and appears to have been introduced to create an acceptably precise break between the line of the timber floor above, and that of the clay walls below.

Set back from this veranda is another group of spaces enclosed by walls made of a vertically hung corrugated iron sheeting, apparently painted with a grey or black pigment, and into which has been introduced a set of framed timber windows. Inserted in their panes, and rather unexpectedly substituting for glass, are pigment-painted, white, rectangular wooden panels. From a distance, these painted inserts successfully mimic the reflectivity of glass.

The floor plans of the Onwudinjo House are simple. The plan at the ground floor (see authors reconstructed plan: fig 82) consists of a sheltered veranda on the front of the building only. From this veranda, one enters through a centrally located doorway into a front room from which, through a second door, one enters a back room. Both rooms are approximately of the same size.

One end of the veranda terminates in a blank flank wall. At the other end is located a flight of wooden stairs, running parallel to the front wall, and rising to the corner of the

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\[ The \text{dimensions of the member are roughly two inch by four inch.} \]
corresponding veranda above. The floor above differs from the plan at the ground floor level to the extent that because at this upper level the veranda runs right around all four sides, the habitable space here is reduced in area. For this reason, perhaps, the upper floor consists only of a single large room.

It is likely that this room was the main reception room for important social interactions, since not only is it approached via a stairway alone, but is in addition also the largest of the three spaces supplied the house. This is still more probable when it is re-emphasized that the enclosing walls are of corrugated iron, at the time an expensive imported material. Furthermore, the attempt noted earlier to mimic glazing by the application of paint to timber window panels, while indicating that glass was itself even more remote from daily experience here, and that glass was certainly an even more exorbitant import than corrugated iron, confirms that this room itself must have been considered the most important one.

The rooms below, at the ground level, consist of a first reception room, used to welcome friends on a more casual basis (when the veranda could not contain such a group perhaps) and of an inner room, which seems to have functioned as a safekeeping room cum store room.

The house therefore is hardly a 'house' in the terms the English word intends, whether the speaker is European or American, or for that matter whether he or she is an English-speaking contemporary West African. This 'house' contains too few of the functions that the idea of a house signifies. Rather, it is obvious that the house can be best described as a reception space; as a place, that is, whose functions were
not conceived as containing and fixing all the expressions of habitation. For, even though one or two of the rooms may have been used for sleeping purposes, the activities of the average-sized family at the time could not possibly have been enacted within this building alone.

Returning to the structure’s envelope, the roof itself is formally elaborate for the area it covers, consisting of a hipped roof which becomes a gabled roof in its upper sections. Though it is not unfamiliar today, and would hardly strike the reader as anything but the simple and the everyday, it is nevertheless worth describing briefly the formal structure of such a roof, in order to recapture its complexity. It commences at its lower levels to rise on all four sides, the four planes intersecting at ridges (known as hips) which rise and approach one another pyramidally, towards an apex. At the mid point of the rise, the roof is arrested on two opposing sides forming a small gable end (acting also as a ventilator), above which (on the two other sides) the roof slope continues to rise, until its double pitch meets at the central ridge. Formally then, it is somewhat more complex than the roof of the Ojiakor house. This double-pitched roof of the Onwudinjo House is formed over a timber frame skeleton, again of rectangular section rough-sawn members. The roof is thus not constructed in the manner of a customary roof, the latter of whose structure would be constructed of roughly circular-sectioned and uncarpentered tree-trunks and branches. The structure of the Onwudinjo House’s roof creates a volume above the walls; a volume which, in the absence of a ceiling, is clearly visible from the veranda below, as are both the
corrugated iron roofing above, and the timber structure supporting it.

A further comparison to the Ojiakor house finds that here, where indeed the timber posts must be structural to support the weight of the storey above (as the unreinforced clay of the lower floor’s enclosing walls would support such a weight with difficulty), the structure is concealed from view, whilst in the Ojiakor house the rhetoric of structure is emphasized where it may in fact not be critical to the house’s structural feasibility. Such ‘overstatements’ seem typical of the Ojiakor House, and became especially significant when the latter is juxtaposed with this Onwudinjo house. Their differences of diction are not restricted to this feature. A somewhat parallel characteristic is observed at play in the contrast between the Ojiakor house’s overemphasized stairway which has been already remarked, and the understated one we find here. The transition between the two levels of the Onwudinjo house is made, as already indicated, via a simple flight of stairs located to one side of the center of the front, and running beside (and parallel) to the wall, contained within the overhang of the veranda above. This is very different from the Onwudinjo House where the stairway sticks out from the building in a separate volume. It is not meant however to suggest that the Onwudinjo House’s stair-flight is meant to be concealed. For, before the series of bungalows now obscuring it from view, this staircase would have been clearly visible to anyone approaching the building from the large open yard in front of it. Rather, what is being implied by this observation, is the probability that the Ojiakor house spares little in the pursuit of exhibitionism, its assertive display

378 It is likely that the materials would at the time have been purchased from one of the myriad of building material suppliers, who imported such goods from Britain and Germany.
always tending towards the spectacular. The difference between the two houses is in a way simply one of the degree to which self-restraint operates.

The flight of stairs of another apparently related building, the Ibe family house (see fig.83), is also similarly positioned against the front wall rather than protruding from it. It also remains quite visible, against the back drop of the house itself which has many affinities to the one just described. However, it is different from the Onwudinjo’s house is several important ways, significant enough to warrant elaboration.

Located in the town of Nnobi, some thirty or so miles away from Awka, the Ibe House is also built from clay in its lower sections, though this is somewhat more difficult to assume initially. This is perhaps because the clay may have been mold-formed into block-sized units before being incorporated in the work, the resulting building therefore manifests a rectilinearity closer to the Ojiakor masonry house than it is to the Onwudinjo house.

Though the lower floor is built as we have said of clay (or of standardized clay blocks), the structural logic of the idea of a double storey is made even more visible here than it was in the Ojiakor house’s engaged column reviewed earlier. This is achieved not only by the externalization of oven-baked brick columns in the form here of piers, but also in the employment of free-standing columns which here are explicitly evident. Unlike the Onwudinjo house moreover, the idea of the veranda is not restricted to the upper level, but here is also introduced at the ground level along two sides of the four, effectively creating the illusion of the containment of one
building by the secondary and surrounding outer plane of an enclosing second one. The progressive formal complexity does not stop here. In one section of this lower level (the right hand side of the front), the run of the inner wall is interrupted, its line continued by a pair of widely spaced columns, under which a kind of internal open sitting area is located. Approaching this area from the outside, one is therefore met with the distinct presence of two parallel rows of square sectioned columns, holding up the upper floor, and providing a cool shaded sitting space, deeper than just a veranda, underneath. The piers are themselves treated as decorative elements. They are articulated into a base and a capital. Located close to the top of each column rather than at the cap itself (as it was in the Ojiakor house), are moldings; brick corbelling, projecting around the pier, and emphasizing both the piers presence, and its form.

Both the base of the column and the base of the wall are painted with a black pigment, and the upper levels of some of the walls and the columns are painted in a light off-white color. The present paint work is new, but the evidence of one of the rear walls suggests that this was how it was painted previously, though we cannot ascertain that the surfaces were so treated from the very beginning.

A black and white color scheme for buildings was certainly normal in the rural context in the late 1950’s, and may therefore have been customary long before (it is likely that this pigment, made from plant material, had a waterproofing effect on the surfaces covered). The paint schema of the Ibe

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37 It may be sometimes difficult to recognize this, given the poor attempts by the present heirs of the original owner, to keep it in repair. The bases have become large blobs, indicating perhaps an architectural literacy not passed on from an earlier generation, to the one immediately following.
house may thus be interpreted in two ways for the moment. It may be an indication of the fact that the covering over of an alien form was not in anyway seen as a violation, suggesting the extent to which the building aesthetic may have been absorbed into the local formal universe of the locality. Or, the coloring of the building, if it is only a late phenomenon, may indicate the extent to which over time, an architecture may perhaps have once been on the edge of the possible, became indigenized and normalized, partly perhaps by being covered over in a familiar syntax of color.

The floor plans of the Ibe house (fig. 84 and 85.) certainly puzzle the interpreter. What strikes one most is the minimal amount of enclosed space contained within the house’s structural flourish which, viewed from the outside, promised more functional uses (and efficient enclosures) of space. The ground floor consists of two rectangular spaces (a large one and a small one) whose relation may be conceived as being that between two unequal rectangles, the larger one of which partially overlaps the smaller one (along their roughly parallel diagonals). However, only the smaller rectangle, the inner space, is enclosed and securable. The larger space is completely open along one side, and seems to have functioned as a much enlarged and deeply shaded veranda, an appropriately open reception room for the hot and humid tropical location.

Two doors lead beyond this space. One leads to the small enclosed room already mentioned. This room has a door leading out to the rear space of the compound. It is also provided with a single window, located in the bay closest to the front. The second door from the open veranda, leads to a smaller space at the rear. This space was itself also not enclosed, defined by a series of free standing columns. The ground floor
is therefore experienced as a large shaded open area, separated into two by a wall, and supported by a forest of columns. The small enclosed space, at one end of the building seeming like an attachment.

The floor above seems based on the same idea, in the sense that it possess a relatively high proportion of non-enclosed space. The front veranda is twice as deep as that say of the Onwudinjo house which was reviewed earlier. This has the effect also of reducing the amount of space enclosed, in the case of the Ibe house, an upper floor that consists of two rooms: a larger outer room, and a smaller room accessed from the former. Taken together, we surmise that for all the compositional interest of the house’s structure, for all its play with enclosure, with containment and with wall and non-wall in surface definition, the house indicates little interest in concretizing the functions of living within its own spaces.

In terms of its constructive properties, the upper level of the Ibe house, shares some things with both the Ojiakor house and the Onwudinjo house, including the timber joist floor and board flooring and the corrugated iron-sheet roof. Unlike either of them however, to the ends of the roof ridge have been attached pointed acroteria fashioned from hardwood. In addition, and also unlike the two previous houses, the walls and partitions of the upper floor are of the same material (baked-brick) as the supporting piers below. To be formally analytical for a moment, it is as if the idea of the upper level as living space proper, separate from and carried by the utilitarian lower level, is absent here. That is to say that in the Ibe house, the lower level is not thought of as any kind of a plinth on which a more precious object is
placed. Here, both levels appear to be granted the same 'value'. Instead of a vertical hierarchy therefore, one observes the separation to be lateral; from the external to the internal across both levels, implied by the sense of containment which the placement of the ground floor wall surfaces extract from a non-committal and regular grid of columns. Moreover, where the other two buildings are additive, the Ibe house may be imagined like a mass from which volumes are excised. Of the person who conceived this building therefore, it may be said that he or she is much more adept, combining an understanding of the structure with the desire for spatial complexity.*

Setting in a rural landscape.
The Ibe house sits close to a road, which would once have been much narrower than it presently is. One approaches its walled enclosure perpendicularly through a small swept clearing, to the entrance gate. Immediately past the gate, the house itself is confronted across from another swept yard. Abutting the compound wall and left hand side across from the house itself are the remaining foundations of the ruin of a structure long since vanished. Beyond this are a set of contemporary small bungalows, occupied mainly by women. Adjacent to the house, on its immediate left side, is a recent construction which seems to be a water tank. Taken together, these structures, and their locations within the compound, indicate that the Ibe house itself occupied a central position in its original compound, detached from any of the compounds enclosing walls, and from its neighboring structures.

* This tendency is perhaps most visible in the best early twentieth century southern Nigerian sculpture, and most recently in the yet to be publicized contemporary architecture of the region.
It is difficult to ascertain how another house, the Onyeama house, was placed within its compound, since today it is surrounded by farmland, and dense tropical overgrowth. Located in the small rural town of Eke, Enugu State, on a densely vegetated farm through which no formal access to the house is still provided, it is a much larger building than any of the other three described so far in this chapter. Though it shares much of their character, it combines their elements in a way that gives it a separate identity (fig 86). It has a lower section which consists of load-bearing brick piers, non-load-bearing and unbaked red-laterite block walls\textsuperscript{391} erected in courses, and a timber-framed upper level. It has an upper level veranda, extending across the front of the building only, and a corrugated iron roof. Like the Ibe House, this house also has a stairway set into the sheltered ground floor veranda. Like the Onwudinjo House, the cladding at the upper level from which both the external envelope and the partitions are made is of corrugated iron sheeting, which in the rear elevation is horizontally lapped.

However, unlike any of the previously presented houses, the veranda’s ‘balustrade’ is itself also of corrugated metal sheet. Furthermore the Onyeama house’s piers never engage the clay walls at the lower level (as they do in the other buildings). Instead, the enclosing walls are kept separate from the piers, forming behind them an independent plane whose autonomy is marked by a just perceptible gap. This house therefore is the only one in the group we are describing here, to separate structure from enclosure consistently.

\textsuperscript{391} In most of the wall area, there is now a cement plaster rendered over the clay. However, the laterite walls at the rear, which would not have been visible to most visitors, is left unrendered, and reveals its constitution.
The Onyeama House’s floor plan is difficult to reconstruct, given that due to its general state of disrepair (it was structurally unstable due to neglect), it was not possible to explore adequately. However, enough was observed to be certain that both the lower floor and the upper floor contained only a few large spaces. The ground floor consisted of one large space (fig. 87), possibly divided into two rooms (an anteroom and an inner room), and of a third unenclosed alcove at one end of its rectangular plan. This alcove is positioned just behind the front wall, shaded underneath the floor of the over-sailing floor above. The main enclosed space is apparently accessed directly from the exterior through two doors, one of which is located in the alcove. It thus seems likely that the ground floor spaces were used either as a casual reception area and its ancillary room, or that all the ground floor area was used as storage space for various goods.

The flight of ladder-like stairs from the front of the house up to the level above, lands towards the head of a deep, covered veranda that runs the whole length of the front elevation, offering views out to the large compound, across which one approached the house. This veranda is bordered by what may have been a large reception area, extending the full length of the front. This seems especially likely, given that the rear elevation (the back wall of the structure), does not have as much as one window opening along its length. The activity expected to occur within the space, would therefore focus substantially on activity within the space itself, or when this was not the case, would focus on the activity unfolding beyond the building itself, but strictly across the veranda into the open space which once occupied the area in front of the house.
The house was apparently set within an unwalled compound, defined by the open space and vegetation-cleared space in front of it and on which it was focused. Moreover, commencing at the house's right hand side, and running in the same directions as its major axis, a lengthy red-laterite single-level structure has been located, which structure consists of a doubled row (joined back to back) of rooms, apparently including sleeping rooms and kitchens. These rooms are said to have been occupied by the numerous wives of the late owner.

Because of the absence of an enclosing wall, it is not easy to comprehend the significance of the positioning of the buildings. Here however, given the linear disposition, it would appear that the Onyeama House relies solely on its comparatively huge size (and stylistic difference) to advertise its hierarchical importance for the approaching visitor.

It would seem clear that this building, and the others reviewed in this section do not posses an architecture that could easily be labelled as customary. Without doubt, it displays many distinct differences from both what passes for the customary in the architecture of southeastern Nigeria today, and from the forms of it with which we are familiar in the sparse knowledge we possess of what would have characterized the customary before the modern colonial period.

On a strictly visual level, it may seem more likely that these buildings are more closely related to the tropical colonial buildings discovered in the towns of the colonial administration, in West Africa and beyond, than they could be to 'traditional' Igbo architecture. Indeed, juxtaposing the
Ibe house, say with either the Witt and Buesch\textsuperscript{382} factory in Lagos (c.1870), the Governors lodge in Lagos (c.1860) or the Church Missionary Society's mission house (figs. 88 & 89), in the form in which it was extant in Lagos in an 1843 photograph, brings out many aspects of the Ibe house in its architecture, and is symptomatic of the kind of easy affinity that has led in other places to the identification of buildings displaying these kinds of affinity, as European.

These colonial-period European owned and erected buildings represent in fact the three European institutions that would have been most important in the lives of the native person, and the ones with which they might have had the earliest reason to interact, whether as its constructional labor, as its occupant's servants, as its 'African staff' operatives, or as the public who it was directed towards serving (and servicing) in one way or another. One represents the German presence, and especially as related to German involvement in the palm produce trade, the second represents the presence of the British colonial administrations, manned by English, Scotch, Welsh, Irish, Trinidadian, Jamaican, Barbadian and Sierra Leoni operatives, and finally, the presence of the mission, here represented by the Anglican Church.

These three European-owned buildings are double storey structures, or single storey in Nigerian parlance (see figs. 88 and 89). The configuration of the stair-flights which link

\textsuperscript{382} Witt and Buesch was a Hamburg (Germany) originated company, whose Nigerian operation consisted at the time largely of a commerce in palm produce. At the time in question it would have been established in Lagos for about half a century. The company may be remembered as the one that provided moral support and a temporary residence (at both Lagos and Ibadan) to the German expeditionary group led by Leo Frobenius, at the time en route to Ile-Ife (Frobenius [1923:44]). Unfortunately, Frobenius himself leaves no description, in his published work, of the of the character of the buildings themselves, or of their interior disposition of spaces. This may have helped with a further assessment of the extent this particular building may have influenced the style of the Igbo houses explored here.
the two levels of two of these buildings might be noted first. In the Witt and Beusch Factory, this flight of stairs projects from the floor above, straight out from the building, and terminates on the ground, beyond the boundary of the building. This is what we recognize of the Ojiakor (Ezenne) house (see fig. 36). In the missionary house, we see that the stair-flight runs up at the side of the house, to a sheltered landing. This is the location in which the stairs are placed in all three of the four Igbo-owned buildings which formed our sample, with the only difference being that in those houses the stairway is contained within the structure’s rectangular volume, arriving at a veranda, and not, as is the case here, in a specially provided porch.

It is interesting to observe the provision of structural support in the European-owned buildings. In the Witt and Beusch factory building, the piers are large square-sectioned columns, which run at the periphery of the building’s volume, uninterrupted from the ground to the roof edge. In the other two European buildings, the columns terminate just below the first floor (continued above by slender pilotis in the missionary house). In the Witt and Busch factory therefore, the two floors are subsumed within the conception of the whole, and this is indicated by the giant order treatment of the facade and its structure. With the two other Lagos buildings, there seems to be a clear distinction between a supporting base, and the supported upper section, emphasized not only by the termination of the piers as described, but also by the use of a different material on each of the floors. This is most clearly visible in the missionary house, where the piers are built from bricks, while the upper floor which sits upon them, is a lightweight, timber framed and lapped boarding structure. In this particular aspect it is
reminiscent of all the houses (the Ibe house, the Ojiakor house, the Madame Okoli house, and the Onwudinjo house) described earlier. None of them, that is, were conceived in a manner that failed to articulate this division.

However, in other ways, the Witt and Busch factory shares more with the southeast Nigerian buildings than do the other European ones. Firstly, it has a veranda, which runs for over half of its length. This veranda is secured by a balustrade with cross-bracing, both elements recognized in three of the Igbo houses. In addition, to the right hand side of the Witt and Busch building’s elevation we may note that the veranda is terminated, the bays are enclosed by a modular tripartite set of wood fabricated louvers, whose central sections open inward. This is exactly as in the windows of the Ojiakor House.

Relational Difficulties and Characterization
It should by now be obvious that all these buildings must be related in some way to each other; that each one enters an already existing architectural dialogue of sorts, and that although each varies from every other one, they participate in a culture which is manifested in a recognizable architectural style. In other words, the consciousness with which is inserted some of the properties of the Ojiakor House, the central structure of this section and the one with which this chapter started, and of the many related structures we have reviewed here, forces a recognition that an architectural sensibility operates in each one of them, and the possibility that some kind of knowledge of the existence of a style exists mutually among all the buildings. Moreover, at this moment, the culture itself, by which is meant the mechanisms and

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intellectual exchanges which make the compositional invention and improvisation possible in the first place, remains largely invisible, to contemporary historical work, whether of the western Africanist historian, or of the Nigerian historian.

Given an appearance of age and neglect, it seems clear that they arose at about the same moment in time, and in the context of a cultural dialogue about new architecture. Moreover, whatever they share in common, it appears that they are not the result of the standardized reproduction of a type. Each varies from the other sufficiently for us to assume that each case involved an autonomous conception, but one made in the context of a knowledge of other similarly styled buildings.

Are they then simply a European architecture operating within the limits perhaps of available materials of the location? That is, are the laterite lower levels of some of them merely substitutions for bricks, which were perhaps too difficult a material to obtain at an acceptable price in the context? Or is the reverse truer, that it is in fact a customary building, into which new elements from beyond the early twentieth century Igbo world have been introduced?

The hesitation with an easy characterization and dismissal of the buildings may derive from the difficulty of explaining both their place of existence(fig. 90) and certain aspects of each building’s architecture. Understanding them in terms

383 They are dispersed over both the urban and rural landscape, to the extent that one easily misses their presence. When they are not submerged in the crush of urban architecture, or camouflaged by the density of tropical foliage, they are simply rendered invisible by their remoteness, located as they often are away from even the unpaved rural roads on which all but the local resident might be expected to travel.

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of their having been early colonial buildings erected by a fledgling and then still new colonial community seems difficult. Rarely for example, even in the cities and the towns of the south, are these buildings found clustered together in one place. This is however what one might be led to expect of colonial architecture, since schools, court house precincts, and colonial housing seemed to gather together (and to have been so planned to accumulate), separate from the settlement of the larger native community whose governing it was the former’s task to enforce.

The other alternative, that they were produced by those Africans who, having abandoned their own architectural cultures completely, sought to acquire the prestige associated with European architecture by reproducing this tradition’s style for themselves as closely as the materials to which they had access would allow, seems equally problematic, not the least because this implies that they are (for this reason) of a comparatively late date.

Indeed both alternatives have been offered in other places for not dissimilar buildings in sub-Saharan West Africa, and more especially in its near coastal region. In places like Freetown in Sierra Leone, Monrovia and Arthington in Liberia, Porto Novo in the Republic of Benin, Grand Bassam in the Ivory Coast and like Badagry in Nigeria, the latter suggestion is usually proffered, because for very different reasons in each place, the African or part-African community is too powerful, and the history of their active presence too well-documented to allow one to assume otherwise. Outside these areas, in the communities in which the African traditional is assumed to be intact because of a remoteness from the metropole, the former explanation is usually found acceptable.
These positions are not exactly untenable. Many things (but, by no means all things) about the houses, cannot be explained without resort to the suggestion that a European architecture is the source for many of these particular properties. Neither the cornice, nor the edge gutter as architectural elements at the edge of a pitched roof are, for example, known in pre-nineteenth century Niger Delta and Cross River architecture. It is also clear that though timber was used as a building material in the delta areas, it was rarely used in the Igbo hinterland, and certainly would not have been of the precisely cut and carpentered form that the Ojiakor house displays.

And, even though we may point out such features in every one of the buildings, the Ojiakor house, into whose description we entered in the most detail, has plenty to offer in this regard. It was mentioned earlier how the rhetoric of structure is enunciated here, in a situation where the building may in fact be acting rather monolithically (and be known by its builders to be acting in this manner), in terms of bearing loads. Indications so far have been that such manipulations abound in this architecture. In the Onwudinjo house, this is observed in the painting of wood insets in mimicry of the reflectivity of glass⁳⁸⁴, in the Ibe house by its columns and their layout, and in the old Onyeama house by a frontality which lends the structure greater grandness than a view from the side might confirm. Nevertheless, perhaps the one thing that links them together most visibly (though the Ojiakor house cannot be claimed as part of this) is the roof. Only the Ojiakor House's roof, despite the use of corrugated iron sheeting, possess a form that is well recognized in the

³⁸⁴ Indeed from a distance one is hard-pressed to identify it as anything else but glass.
photographs that we have of pre-modern south east Nigerian architecture. For the others represented here, the double-style roof (half double-pitched and half gable) is an introduction from elsewhere.

Based on the analysis above, one might suggest a developmental path for these buildings, ordered in the first instance along a path of which might indicate the progressive constitution or mastery of a style, and an increasing formal complexity within a set of approximately defined compositional rules. Since the town of Awka is one in which two storey structures existed within customary practice, since Awka itself was the town of itinerant blacksmiths, and since moreover a house is found here in Awka in which the new and the old seems perfectly combined, it seems reasonable to suggest that it is also here, amidst such an experimentalist milieu, that a reinvention of custom and of modernity would be expected to result in new architectural style. Judging by the Awka building, the primary differentiation that these new builders attempted to communicate, is of the upper floor floating above the lower one. That is, unlike was the case with the customary building, in which the expression of the separation of lower and upper floor externally is not normal, we find here the distinction between the two, achieved by the different materials applied, and by the crisp delineation between the two floors. In a manner of speaking, the new architecture carries a very different architectural semiotic. One may think of it in fact as a single storey building (the upper floor at the time shining, rippling, and metallic...in a town of metalsmiths and of blacksmith societies in a town in which the

385 Dmochowski (1990): 120,121
ritual kings, and priests were metal smiths...in a town in which metal was King!) raised on a plinth.

It is not difficult to imagine the lower floor as a plinth\footnote{This theorization is not without problems, the most obvious perhaps being the recognition that the plinth, as a lower mass on which an art object, particularly public sculpture) is raised. Though the equivalent of public sculpture did exist in the form of ancestral shrines and representations at the entrance to public and private structures, they were not raised on plinths. The closest that we find to a plinth in southern culture, are the raised platforms on which religious objects were placed. However, these did not normally function to individualize each object, or even each set of objects. They seem instead to have been thought of more as an elevated surface for the ritual activity, as, that is, an altar.}, especially given that the structure is concealed in the lower level’s wall itself, adding to the perception of this level as a solid non-hollowed mass.

With a house like Madame Okoli’s, located in Nnobi (see fig 91), the same town in which is also located the Ibe house described earlier, the beginnings of a shift were observed. All the characteristics of the Onwudinjo house are maintained, but the idea of the plinth is broken by the exposure of the structure (not separated as such, but simply distinguished by the color and textural difference between clay-laterite and wood), and by the introduction of a visible transition from the lower level to the upper level. The Onyeama house, the first large version of this kind of architecture, extends this even further, by separating the structure from the walls, not especially because of the use of brick for the piers, but by the separation of the planes of structure from the planes of enclosure. With the Ibe house, the structurality of the two storey building seems to be mastered (assuming for a moment that we may read chronology into complexity), and the beginnings of a volumetric creativity may then appear to have commenced.
Which still leaves the Ojiakor house as a difficulty. Does it lie at the beginning, middle or termination of this development? We have already suggested that the form of its roof is the closest in a new material to the customary Igbo roof. In terms of the plinth and upstairs reception-house issue, even though the materials from which the lower section is fabricated is not characteristic of customary architecture, its approach to massiveness would locate it closer to the Onwudinjo house than to the Ibe house. In fact, its closest relative seems to be the Prince’s mother’s house (madam Okoli House) to which a brief reference has been made earlier. Its columns, like the ones of the Okoli house, are visually separated but not detached, by the distinction between material. Only here, the distinction, unlike in the Okoli house, is far more rhetorical than it is real. This latter fact still makes it possible that it comes at the end of the line, but is an attempt to produce the earlier, more unbreached volume of the Onwudinjo House, but in more ‘modern’ materials.

In summary, an analysis based on a close observation of the buildings in terms of their form, material assemblage, and appearance, seems to indicate that the mud-based buildings are either the older ones (based on their less refined and pristine architecture) or that they are later examples in the same style, representing instead however a kind of architectural ‘degeneration’. For reasons that are obvious,

387 As explained earlier, this purposefully formal-analytical and evolutionary paradigm is assumed here, and only momentarily, in order to set the reader up in a manner that readers are set up by much writing on similar subjects. This tactic does serve the hopefully persistent purpose of familiarizing the reader with the buildings as physical objects.
such a conclusion is difficult to accept". And, only an historicizing project, which project would provide an assessment inclusive of other kinds of critical information might in fact resolves the issue. Such an assessment will be detailed next.

Historicizing the Double Storey House

1857 was as mentioned earlier, the date at which the first Christian outpost, as it were, was established at Onitsha, the latter being the western flank, so to speak, of the project to Christianize the south east. The southern flank of this project, located first at Bonny and then additionally at Okrika, and at Akwete, were all established in the 1880s. Nevertheless, it was really only with the invasion of Igboland, and the dismantling of the religious authority of the Aro, that the way was opened for Christianity to spread, unhindered by fear of retribution, into the heartland. Though not directly connected to the British Frontier Force", the Christian missionary successes that followed the occupation, marks the point at which Europe and the south east of Nigeria encountered one another in any general and unmediated sense.

The unease derives must emphatically from the implication of an evolutionary paradigm, and its privileging of technic.

It certainly is not being suggested here that the missionaries were neutral, simply that there was no policy, from Rome or from Canterbury, of active cooperation between the church and the 'state'. For, acting largely on his own initiative for example, Rev. Fr. bubendorff, an Alsatian Roman Catholic priest, wrote several letters to British officers in the south eastern coast, urging a military invasion of Arochukwu, and the destruction of the Igbo oracle ther. This was seen by him as th ereal prerequisite for the possibility of a Christian impact in the region. His petitions certainly would have contributed to the final British decision. The British ultimately commenced such an invasion in 1889.
It is therefore interesting that barely over a decade following this event, and well before Christianity itself as such arrived at Adazi, Mazi Ojiakor, at the time a newly appointed Warrant Chief, was in a position to commence the construction of the first building on the site, the one that is called the Ojiakor House in the inquiry. This was in 1913, the year in which the house said to have been built, or most likely would to have commenced, and the same moment in fact in which the European penetration of inland Igboland was quite at its infancy.

It has also been ascertained that its builder was Igbo, one George, whose last name is, so far, unfortunately unrecoverable. George hailed from Asaba, the western Igbo town, just across the Niger river from Onitsha.

Although at the present time so little seems knowable about George, both Asaba’s proximity to the town of Onitsha and the fact that Asaba itself had been the capital of the Royal Niger Company’s commercial ‘state’, imply that George was from a place in which some contact with the restricted universe of European building in south eastern Nigeria was possible. This, as much because of the status of Asaba in the proto-State (and therefore of the presence of Europeans requiring certain kinds of building work carried out for them) as from both the previously remarked 1857 missionary establishment and its related Industrial school and brick-making factory. Though it is not known what exactly the nature of his particular contact may have been, it is clear that the range of possibilities would have been wide. It could, in theory, have included
formal training at the Onitsha Industrial Mission\textsuperscript{390}, and subsequent participation as a leading foreman or mason in the construction either of missionary buildings or of the buildings for the Royal Niger Company’s Asaba based operations. On the other hand, it may also have consisted much simpler more peripheral activity such as would be participating as an unskilled laborer, learning what he may have of the building craft slowly, and by being apprenticed in this capacity to another properly skilled individual.

The skill with which the Ojiakor House is executed however, makes it most probable that by the date of its commencement, its builder George X\textsuperscript{391}, was a qualified builder with a significant amount of formal training. It is known for certain that when Fr. Bubendorff, an early European missionary visitor to Adazi (perhaps even the first one ever to set foot in this town) arrived here, the building was already completed. This is deduced from knowledge that this same building is the one he was allowed to occupy before the mission’s own residences were built subsequently\textsuperscript{392}. All of this appears to indicate

\textsuperscript{390} An Industrial school was established in Onitsha in 1861 (Sanneh[1983]: 152), though Ayandele (op. cit., p297) gives a second date of 1897. This seems to indicate simply that the first school was one in which Church Missionary Society policy dictated that any education was to be technical rather than academic, while the second results from a clear distinction made between a ‘normal’ primary school education in which one learned to read and write, followed by either the Grammar school or the Industrial Institute. The initial 1861 school at Onitsha was, for comparison established ten years after its Yoruba parallel at Abeokuta. A similar school was also opened at Bonny much later in 1890.

\textsuperscript{391} Unfortunately, it has not been possible to recall this individual’s last name. He was constantly referred to as George, and no one could remember his last name.

\textsuperscript{392} Interview with Nazi Stanislov Azodo, Adazi Nnukwu, August 1, 1992. Azodo stated that the house was completed before Bubendorff’s arrival, which he dates to 1913. Other information (see p 333 note 422) however suggests that Bubendorff’s presence at Adazi dates earlier, to 1912. This may suggest either that Mr. Azodo’s recollection of the 1913 date may be inaccurate, or on the other hand that though the church may have been established here in 1912, that the visit by Bubendorff himself occurs later.
that George of Asaba, must have been a person who had a wide experience in the techniques of European building tradition.

It is relevant to wonder how, even if such a skilled builder were available at Onitsha or Asaba, Mazi Ojiakor could possibly have known of this particular person’s existence, and what the avenues of communication were that became employed not only in contacting this individual and in selecting him, but in arranging for him to move to Adazi for the duration of the project. Indeed to understand this, a brief explication of who Mazi Ojiakor himself was seems called for.

In this regard, it is noteworthy that while discussing another building, the Nzegwu House located in Onitsha, an indigene of this latter town informed the writer with excitement, that Chief Ojiakor’s daughter, was the first Igbo woman known to have been able to drive a car, which car, according to the informant, she also owned. From the almost mythical description presented of Ms. Ojiakor (who was later to become Mrs. Nzegwu, though she unfortunately she died young, and before she produced any offspring), it must be claimed that the liberated, relatively wealthy, glamorous woman, was visible here in Onitsha (and long before she appeared in most of the what was to become the West). The patron of the building just focused on, and Warrant Chief of the small town of Adazi Nnukwu, was therefore already projecting an image we are more familiar with in European upper-class behavior, than in local Igbo norms, affording his daughter an apparently glamorous lifestyle, which also allowed her (we cannot be sure that this is necessarily Ojiakor’s design) circulate amongst (and in) the world of the just emergent and apparently ‘Gone European’ elite.
For this reason, it is not as difficult to imagine the possible routes therefore by which news of the skills of an individual like George of Asaba, might reach Chief Ojiakor. We have no evidence but the circumstantial one provided by the almost Duncanian anecdote above. Nevertheless, because the Nzegwu family possessed at the time two large non-customary buildings both built in 1905 (each one of two brothers owned one), and given for example the close relationship that normally exists between in-laws in Igbo society, it is not improbable that George of Asaba may have reached Adazi Nnukwu as a result of a recommendation from his in-laws at Onitsha.

Chief Ojiakor was born around 1855, according to his grandson, the present Adama of Adazi Nnukwu. Though Chief Ojiakor never himself became a Christian, perhaps due to his deep sense of independence, it is interesting that having heard of the missionaries and their work at Nteje (a town not far from Adazi), he was so struck by what he saw them occupied in trying to achieve (most likely the formal education of children, and particularly the teaching of the skill of writing) and recognized the importance that this would have in the development of any people’s future and in the future viability of his realm, that he seemed to have resolved that

393 The Adana is the title taken on by the religious and political head of any town in Igboland, who owes allegiance to Nri (Ezekwugo [c1964:1-3]. In fact it is likely that this indicates the installation of a migrant community of Nri origin in a position of leadership over an indigenous population, typically by invitation.

394 This indicated by the sub-text to the statement by the District officer of the province, D. Ross, writing in one of the Intelligence Reports (too often taken uncritically for historical fact rather than as the ideological discourse which it most often is), writes that Ojiakor "...possesses some character, but at the same time is without question a rogue." NAE: J.Ross (1930).
not being as a town of any particular importance to the colonial administrators based at Awka since 1905³⁵⁵, the only hope that Adazi Nnukwu had of possessing a school in which the young of his town could ever hope to become literate, and to obtain a formal education, was if he convinced the missionaries at Nteje (who happened to be Roman Catholic), to open up a station at Adazi. Through a friend of his already acquainted with them, Ojiakor Ezene sent out a warm invitation, which was heeded, so that the Roman Catholic missionaries arrived in Adazi in 1912, and were set up initially at a private residence by the market square (Nwosu [1990]:10).

It is interesting the extent to which Ezene seems to have been progressivist, clearly separating in his mind, the instruments and technologies of the modern world, from the cultural and religious baggage with which it was often brought, and which for many other individuals often proved difficult to distinguish. For example, Ezene appears to have preferred the Roman Catholic mission to the Church Missionary Society, precisely because the latter were known to insist on conducting formal school education in Igbo and not in English³⁵⁶ as the Roman Catholics preferred, emphasizing moreover semi-public Bible readings and recitations. This is to say that the Church Missionary Society was intent first on communicating the message of Christianity in contrast to the Catholic mission on the other hand, which came closer to the idea of a secular education (for which English was crucial for

³⁵⁵ 1905 is the date a so called Native Court was set up here, but may not be the date the Colonial presence itself was actually established, following the occupation of the town by British forces.

³⁵⁶ Ojiakor Ezene like many other Igbos favored the use of English, apparently aware of its importance as the language through which one communicated with the British colonizer, whose presence and status must at the time have seemed incontestible.
the possibility of involvement with colonial government employment), and did not appear so obviously to prioritize religious education.

Ojiakor's foresight, is perhaps however, best illustrated by the fact that as a Warrant Chief he had passed a law which insisted that every young person be sent to school, and that in the early years of this program, Ojiakor himself provided a scholarship top all the children who were volunteered to engage in this process (which it must be emphasized would at the time have been regarded by most adults as an untested experiment.

It has already been indicated that the British colonial Administrators regarded Ojiakor somewhat as a pariah, and certainly as one of the Warrant chief's who could be thought of as being corrupt. The larger house investigated below was built hardly a decade later. Indeed, it is reported that the levy he imposed on Adazi Nnukwu adults soon after he was appointed its Warrant Chief was illegal. Many writer's have thus indicted him with illegal enrichment, suggesting that this tax on a local community was really intended by Ojiakor for the procurement of private property. In hindsight, it can hardly have been otherwise, when it is considered that in its absence it must be presumed that the house we have just reviewed was paid for from nothing more than a Warrant Chief's salary. The label of a benevolent autocrat may however be

397 Ozigbo (1988) op.cit., from the Colonial Administration's 'Intelligence Report' on Adazi

398 In an unusually architecture specific comment, Afigbo for example has stated that 'The greatest proof of the corrupt use to which these chiefs put their powers was the fact that every one of them was very wealthy when compared with his non-warranted neighbors, in spite of the fact that the sitting fees were very paltry. Even today one can single out the compound of a former Warrant Chief. These men competed with each other in the erection of two-storeyed buildings of fantastic shapes and sizes for those days and often of the crudest architectural description which were at times put to very little.'
more accurate than one of a selfish and corrupt person, for it is as if seeing far ahead of the majority of his 'subjects', he took it upon himself to intervene on their behalf, in a manner the British seemed totally uninterested in pursuing (because Adazi was in no way important to their purposes). Ojiakor Ezenne seems to have been determined that regardless of the British disinterest, his people were not going to be left behind, in the wake of 'progress'.

Indeed a photograph that was produced in the 1920s (the period in which the building soon to be described was produced), and that is posed in front of the building described below, features a line up of young men, dressed in the most gentlemanly of British fashions. These men were the teachers he had personally employed to come to teach at the school he set up at Adazi, and included the following individuals who went on to become among the best well known names in south eastern Nigeria, including Kaine of Ogbaru (Ossomari) (who became the first ever black judge to serve at the World Court in the Hague), and Okolo of Onitsha.

From all the above, it is not surprising to discover that the Court Clerk at Adazi Nnukwu, Mr. Ekeri[?], had played a central role in the connections. Mr. Ekeri was apparently a travelled and lettered man of sorts who was obviously aware of the extent of new building development in the lower Niger river area, and knowledgeable about who the builders involved at such places were. By his presence as Court Clerk in 'Ojiako's court', Ekeri was well positioned to have introduced such a builder to Ojiako, knowing that Warrant Chief Ojiakor

(Afigbo [1972: 193].

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was desirous of erecting for himself a building of a non-
customary and Europeanized style.

Indeed, in attempting to understand the mechanics of these relationships, the interview with Azodo developed in this manner:

The writer: Onye Asaba lulu uno-a eh? Ma kedu ka onye Asaba n’alu uno si jegide (n’oge afu) we jelue Adazi.

A man from Asaba built this building? How on earth did an Asaba builder get to be in Adazi in order to build?

Azodo: Onye kpotalu ya nna anyi bu Ekeri...Ekeri bu Koti Clyaki na Kotu b’anyi oge a. Nya nwa ma na Ojiakor na acho ilu nya bu uno, we kpotalu nya onye ya enwe ike lu nya.

The person who brought this man to my ‘father’ was Ekeri... Ekeri was a Court Clerk in our Court at the time. He seems to have known that Ojiakor intended to build a new house; and he therefore brought along someone who would be able to build it.399

Other members of the building team are also known to us, and again it will be observed that they are all Igbo and originating within the general vicinity of the present New Anambra State. One of the builders, whose name was not remembered, hailed from Awkuzu. The producer of the much remarked upon roof (who is actually remembered by the English title of ‘roofer’) was Peter, of Nteje, who is credited with the carpentered timber structure supporting the roofing material itself, as well as for the installation above this of the corrugated iron roofing sheets.

399 Interview in Igbo, with notes in English. Interview date August 01, 1992.
These builders also apparently travelled as a team to other places, and erected buildings of this new sort, as far afield (though still within Igbo land) as Arondizuogu (Ndiejezie), were they built for Igwe Nwantaluko, as well as to Amazi Uzu were they built for Igwe Iliche-ime (non of which buildings are known to this writer). The suggestion by Mazi Stanislov Azodo, himself once a builder, was that building teams were already itinerant this early on in the history of the new style building.

What this detail allows the conception of, is that the builders were organized amongst themselves into what may have been informal groups of skilled friends who moved from one work site to another, working for individuals who may have been friends of previous patrons perhaps, but who certainly occupied very similar status positions in their own towns.

It was mentioned earlier that the Roman Catholic Mission had been provided with a residence in the compound of another...
individual (in which compound the first Church masses were also given) at a house by the market square.

It transpired subsequently however, that a dispute with the people of Nteje\(^{402}\) forced a decision to move the Church out of that town, and that Father Bubendorff moved his mission headquarters (and the industrial training school which he had annexed to it) from Nteje to Nimo. Following yet another dispute here, he moved again in the early twenties, and finally settled in Adazi Nnukwu.

If there is any truth to this version of events, then it may be in order to show gratitude for the effective concentration of the Roman Catholic Mission in Adazi, or perhaps out of a deep felt respect for the Catholic priest, that inspired Ojiakor Ezenne to vacate his residence, offering it up to Father Bubendorff, as a home, most likely because most of the former’s time would (it would now seem) have been spent in the obi, and because therefore such a temporary giving up of the new style house was hardly to be an inconvenience to the Chief. Further, it seems clear that the establishment of residence by such an important catholic priest in Ojiakor’s compound, might have important political implications for the Chief, and would add a significant sense of prestige to his authority and power in the politics both of the town and of his relationships with the colonial state, the latter with whom he was frequently at odds. It is more surprising, considering the above, that the Catholic priest would, certainly understanding such implications, have consented, even for the luxury which such an address undoubtedly provides, to move into Ojiakor’s compound.

\(^{402}\) This is an explanation of the event as given in Nimo. Father Bubendorff himself does not appear to have subscribed to this version of the tale.
This decision may of course however have been influenced by the knowledge that his own residence was being completed, as were the permanent buildings for the school which he helped found, at a permanent site in the town, and that he would be moving into these quarters subsequently. It is remembered that he lived at the Ojiakor house for about two years.

By the time the second building was commenced, in 1921 (or 1924 according to another informant...though this may be the year of its completion), Ojiakor’s reputation was well established, and he had become not only the most important of the three Warrant Chiefs of Adazi, but he had also become elevated to Paramount Chief, the apex of the structure of British-invented Chiefdom in the Protectorate during this period. It seems clear then that the second building was only commenced in order to provide residence, that matched more closely, the air and impression more fitting to the newly achieved status.

In this historical context then, Adama Ojiakor’s decision to erect a second building, and one of the type described below, was motivated by what was probably seen at the time as the inadequacy of the Ojiakor house, to the then contemporary, and new status of the Adama of Adazi, and one only of three Paramount Chiefs in Igboland. It therefore hopefully allows the retracing of the route travelled by an individual, who from all accounts was a progressive individual, and one who clearly seemed to have thought of his role as being that of

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403 The Paramount Chief system did not survive long in Igboland, unused to the presence of individuals in whom so much power was vested. Following various protests which seriously threatened the peace, the Colonial Government reverted to the older Warrant Chief system, in which power was somewhat more dispersed.
an enabler and encourager of that progress, albeit with himself as benevolent autocrat of the process.

The Adama’s Stone Mansion

It was observed in the previous chapter that the Uzoka house uses stone only at the front of the house, the place where, judging by the elaborately provided terrace and by the acroteria at the top, the representation of the owners stature seems most inscribed. Though baked brick and mold-formed clay blocks were, at the time, relatively dear in comparison to customary building materials, this use of stone would suggest perhaps that it was the most expensive material, and that Mr. Uzoka could not afford to utilize it throughout the building. At the Adama Ojiakor Mansion on the other hand (fig. 6), stone is the only masonry material used. It is moreover a much larger building than both the Uzoka House, and the previous building (the Ojiakor Ezenne House, fig. 36) on which have focused, and with which it shares the same site. This house is perhaps best described as a stone mansion by comparison, and is distinct in most ways we have discussed from the smaller house adjacent. In this section we discuss this large house as type, suggesting that like the Ojiakor house, the Ojiakor stone mansion seems to represent an example of a recognized house type that also proliferated all over southeastern Nigeria, no suggestion whatsoever being made here that Adazi Nnukwu be thought of as the only hub from which stylistic innovation was dispersed.

Rather it was one of many such loci of experimentation, its rather severe structure, recalling some of the formal simplicity of many of the houses of the period, including for
example the George Eze house at Oraukwu, the Onyiuke Stone Palace at Nimo and St. Peace Odenigbo house at Enugu Ukwu (figs. 92, 46 and 43 respectively)(also see chapter 4). These are for example distinct from the houses that define the development of the style as seen in St. Peace Odenigbo house Enugu Ukwu, in the Uzochukwu House in Enugu Ukwu (fig. 37), in which the building ceases to be restricted within the bounds of a rectangular envelope, becoming more complex in overall form as much as it is in detail, and displaying an ornamental flourish of sorts⁴⁴.

The Adama Ojiakor Mansion is a two storey structure, with a corrugated iron roof whose formal style we recall already from some of the buildings reviewed elsewhere in the chapter (i.e. combining the gable roof with the hipped roof). At the front elevation, just below the roof line, are a range of five windows, supplied with double-leafed and hinged wooden louvers. The window’s spacing is not articulated into bays separated for example by engaged pilasters. Rather, they are simply placed into the plain wall, with the regularity of spacing indicated by the wall area between each window, as well as it is suggested by the alignment of these solid areas with the piers below.

From the tops of the five ground floor level piers spring a series of true arches, which form a colonnade all along the front elevation. From a distance, the impression this creates is of the presence of no particular entry point, but of the accessibility and openness of the building itself. This is further reinforced by the fact that the piers stand on a

⁴⁴ The Uzochukwu house is not made a significant part of the present work. Its master-mason was Eziekel Obiegbu of Alor who does however become a center of focus in a chapter 9.
stepped plinth, from whose top one descends to the surrounding ground.

Four windows are located at the upper level of the side elevation, the lower level consisting of two windows and two arched openings located at the end bays. This archway is somewhat smaller than the one's that are located at the front, but together with them, it allows the sheltered veranda they bound to turn around the corners of the building, increasing the sense of its permeability at this level.

The rear of the building is a replication of the front, complete also with a rear veranda and arched colonnade. This is an important quality, distinct from other buildings outside this particular set, whether one thinks of the customary building, or other ones created in the spirit of the new architecture. The Ojiakor Mansion, by implication has no front and back, quite contrary to most tenets of customary south eastern Nigerian domestic architectural planning.

Its functionality therefore could not have been foremost in the minds of its creators. Rather, its totality as an object, an object to contemplate and to view, seems to have decreed that it maintains perfection: no projections, no differences, no irregularities are allowed.

The first suggestion of asymmetry, and therefore of the use of the building, is observable however in the simple flight of wooden stairs, which rises from the center of the front veranda to the second level. The run of the staircase is here in the same direction as the longer axis of the building, rather than perpendicular to it. As such, it is barely visible from the compound from which one approaches the building. This
is in direct contrast to the building adjacent, the Ojiakor house, where we recall that the staircase is given an unprecedented and unexpected prominence, and moreover is placed perpendicular to the building’s own mass. The location of its staircase, as well as the form of its roof, is reminiscent of the several small buildings presented earlier such as the Ibe House at Nnobi, suggesting that they may be linked in some way. They may all result from a changing taste, and the cross influences which make this possible, which at this time may have been dictating that staircases be included in a more discrete manner; without sacrificing the integrity of the overall and dominant shape of the building. It seems reasonable, in other words, to suggest for example that the Adama’s Mansion, though much more grandiose than a structure such as the Ibe House at Nnobi, nevertheless is part of a new assemblage style in which the staircases is preferred as a more understated element.

Its floor plan is of course unlike the floor of the Ibe House. The series of ground floor arches lead directly into a central reception area, off of which appear to be private rooms of an unspecified purpose. The upper floor is reached by either one of the staircases, but lands one in a totally internalized upper level space, whose relationship to the other spaces at that level is unclear. Judging from the photographs however, it is likely to resemble the layout of the St. Peace Odengibo House at Enugu Ukwu (see Chapter 4). The stairs would thus seem to land at a hallway, from which direct access to an upper level reception room would be had. Furthermore, as was the case at the lower level, the reception room would be expected to lead of into two rooms each on opposite sides of the reception room’s axis(fig. 93). Partly then to the increased size of the building in comparison to the one
adjacent to it; and partly due to what must be a changing requirement, the plan of the mansion is significantly different from the House. The main characteristic of the Mansion is the presence within each of its floors, and in a centralized position, of a large room which was used as a reception room. The lower centralized reception would moreover have functioned in the same way as the upper one, but for the fact that the upper room would be used only to receive important guests, especially if they visit in a large entourage*. It would also have been used to entertain close friends and family members; most particularly when such entertainment was not expected to be easily observable by the generality of possible casual callers.

It has already been mentioned that the fabric of the building is stone. However, it is interesting that the masonry clearly attempts to produce the rhythms and modular articulations of a brick built house*. The masons appear to have consistently selected small sized individual stones (or broken down larger pieces to achieve this) which have allowed the mortar pattern to replicate a density and horizontality of line more typical of brick.

To persuade further that this is intentional, one may point to the arches, and to the apparently careful selection and placement of individual stones in the replication of the

405 Because of the absence of verandas at this level, the upper reception room is nearly twice as large as the lower one. This is quite distinct then from the St. Peace Odenigbo House at Enugu Ukwu, in which the reception rooms at both levels are of approximately the same size.

406 It is interesting that this strategy has indeed been able to fool some writers, admittedly not those with any claim to a particular interest in architecture. V.A Nwosu, for example, speaking of the Onyiuke mansion, which uses stone in a similar manner, has stated that "...[Onyiuke's] palace, was built with burnt bricks...". (Nwosu [1990]: 15).
center-focused series of voussoirs (and their joints) typical of the architecture of the tropical colonial brick house.

Nevertheless, it cannot be claimed that the intent is to pretend away the fact that the building is stone and not brick. For, the surface of the building has a texture which is striking for its ability to suggest strength and wroughtness. This quality moreover, is one that seems to be purposefully emphasized by the style of the pointing. The joints are thick and bold; carefully pointed in cement. In sections the run of the pointing is triangular (fig. 51), possessing a ridge across its center. This profile produces deeper shadows that would a plain pointing, and adds to the sense of the discrete constituency of the wall.

Furthermore, the mortar cement-mortar pointing style is not a faithful reproduction of the familiar recessed or bevelled joint found between the individual masonry units of the Flemish or English bonded wall. The mortar pattern does retain the alternating off-centered grid pattern of these bonds, but the actual pointing itself is thought of differently. Each horizontal run of pointing appears literally stacked on the following horizontal layer, by the vertical sections of the pointing which are applied so as to appear to sit on, rather than merge with, the line below. The effect is achieved by applying the vertical pointing so thickly that it projects over the horizontal line immediately below it, and thus from a short distance away, appearing to be structurally supported by the mortar line just below it (fig 51). This also adds to the quality of the wall as an accumulation, and not a simply as surface.
It also provides in itself a stylistic marker that one is able to use in identifying those buildings worked on by this particular mason or his apprentices, separate from the work of other builders, who also seem to have had their own distinct signatures. The identity of the builders will be returned to later on in this chapter, and in much more detail in a subsequent chapter [chapter 7]. At this point, it seems more pressing to suggest how the changing mentality of the times might be indicated by the differences which are observable in comparing the Ojiakor house to the Adama mansion of just over a decade later.

Size apart, one of the differences is the monolithic nature of the Adama mansion’s volume viewed externally, when compared to the Ojiakor house, in which three different materials are offered a place (timber upper floor and a brickwork and rubble stone base). The Adama mansion therefore is conceived to project the idea of power that the consistent use of one material might suggest (the political context involved was moreover mentioned previously). And, even in the sections of the Ojiakor mansion in which stone masonry is employed, two different systems are utilized, the Ojiakor house being a rubble, whose patterns (true to its constructive form) are much more playful and restful than the steady somberness of the Adama mansions stonework.

The difference in the importance each one extends to the stair flight has been mentioned, distinguishing the first building in which it is seen as an object worthy of display, to the Adama’s mansion in which it is well nigh concealed. This concealment of course adds to the containment that appears to be intended at the Mansion, given as already mentioned the Mansions lack of distinction between front and rear;
tendency therefore that appears to perceive of the building as an object whose contemplation seems on offer."^57

Where the house is, speaking sculpturally, somewhat additive in its formal process, the Mansion is subtractive. This may imply a transformation towards an architecture that is becoming more restrained, more mannered, and more disdainful of the exuberant gesture. Architecture is thus becoming more conformist, in a recognition, perhaps, of the new social class in whose membership the building would help confirm the owner.

The difference between an additive architecture, and a platonic one (so to speak) though probably not intentional in a manner that would have been discursively articulated at the time, nevertheless seems to reflect the difference in the every day life of the owner, whose initial path to power would seem to have been a highly political one, in which much was improvised and opportunities were ceased for increasing power wherever this surfaced. The mansion however seems to reflect the idea of a perfected power. One that had reached its height, and for which therefore any incidentals regular in normal life, could only subtract.

**Interpreting the building's fabric**

The issue of the possibility that the nature of the masonry-pointing of these buildings may allow distinctions to be made as to the identity of its master mason, was raised previously.

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^57 It was mentioned elsewhere that it is built on a not insignificant plinth, which further adds to its connections to the idea of an object on exhibit, a notion that is as much a Western one, as it is one of the south east of Nigeria (recalled here for example would be the various kinds of altar in Igbo, Efik and Kalabari Izhon cultures, in which the sculpted objects used in religious observance, is distinguished as important much as it is laid out for view, by being raised on a plinth).
That the style of masonry does indeed consist an identification of a sort is confirmed by comparing this house with three others in its vicinity, each one of which in itself would have made a fruitful subject of detailed study. Chief Michael Onyiuke Stone Palace at Nimo, the St. Peace Odenigbo House at Enugu Ukwu, and the George Eze House at Oraukwu are all stone buildings of a similar kind. Yet even a cursory review might suggest that the latter varies in terms of its texture, from the other two, which latter pair are known to have been conceived and erected by the same mason.

Of the history of the Adama Ojiakor's Mansion, which narrative confirmed the above distinction, it appears that the Chief's desire for a new and larger house, was given physical impetus by his having beheld both Chief Agwuna's own stone building at Enugu Ukwu, and Chief Onyiuke's house at Nimo. Unlike the Ojiakor House which was conceived and erected by an Igbo mason from the more distant Asaba, both the Agwuna and Onyiuke palace buildings were designed and erected by Thomas Isiadinso (also Igbo), who himself hailing from Enugu Ukwu may therefore be considered a local person.

The builder Stanislov Azodo confesses that he had on several occasions visited both of these chronologically earlier buildings in the company of the Adama, who was at the time probably visiting these places as a fellow chief and, in either a socio-ceremonial or possibly also an official capacity. It was following the observations that his peers, these two chiefs who had built for themselves what would have

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408 According to Stanislov Azodo, Ojiakor attended the opening ceremonies held for St. Peace Odenigbo House.

409 They had also visited Chief Onyeama at Eke, whose own earliest storied building was commenced (according to Azodo) only after he had seen the building at Adazi.
been seen as magnificent new structures that Ojiakor apparently arranged for the production of such a building for himself.

Certainly, Azodo recalls clearly that Isiadinso was at this time simultaneously involved in the erection of other buildings in the vicinity, most memorably with a building for Ezeokoli at the latter Warrant Chiefs palace ground at Nnobi. Azodo recollection implies that Isiadinso would travel from one site to another in the general vicinity on his bicycle, spending a few days or weeks in one such site before moving on to others, and returning ultimately to the one at Adazi. This indicates that at this point in time, as has...

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410 V.A. Nwosu has stated that Ojiakor and Onyiuke perceived themselves as rivals. Since they were chiefs over different communities, the rivalry could not have been connected to struggle for power, but with who could claim more influence and status (or who could be perceived so to) amongst Igbos at large, among the officials of the colonial administration, and perhaps most importantly by the leaders of the Roman Catholic church.

411 At the time this fulfilled ambition did cause a degree of consternation in the community, some of whose members accused Ezenne (Nwosu[1990], op.cit.) of levying illegal taxes on the community in order to build the house.

412 It is unclear which building exactly Isiadinso was involved with at this time. It could be with either the erection of a courthouse in Ezeokoli's compound which is dated to 1914 (NAE ON DIST 7/1/2 states that '...Nobi [sic] Native Court House and Rest House [...]' was built in 1914 by [...] Eze Okoli with his own money and by the order of M.R.A. Roberts, Resident...), or with the completion of Ezeokoli's own brick and wood palace building of English-imported parts. It is less likely, given the dates involved, to be with the erection of the Church of St. Simon's itself, for which the information gathered at Nnobi itself failed to mention Isiadinso.

413 The discussion around this issue proceeded thus;

Azodo: Thankyo! Thomas Isiadinso. O so mno na ndi lulu uno a.
Thankyou! Thomas isiadinso. He surely was amongst those who built the house.

Writer: Ina ekwu eriokwu! Nya bu nwoke di kwa ka onye ama-ama oge afu...maka na a ma mu na oso na ndi lulu uno uka na Enugu Ukwu ana akpo Emmanuel Church....

(continued...)
been the case in many other places a resident team of workers together with a daily supply of Adazi Nnukwu volunteers was involved with the erection of the building, and Azodo himself was only one of the many unskilled laborers helping with the work (though he must have been one of the very youngest ones). It is credible to deduce from these facts that Chief Ojiakor was a competitive individual, for whom architecture was a means of creating a public image.

Fortunately, a number of photographs survive, which give further insight into Chief Ojiakor as he chose to represent himself, and through which it might be possible to gain additional understanding of how the mansion may be seen as an

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Really! He sounds like a well known person of his time... because I know that he also helped build the church at Enugu Ukwu called the Emmanuel Church...

Azodo: ....Okwa nwa onye Nnobi ka isilu na ibu...
     ....(interrupting)Did you not say you come from Nnobi?

Writer: Ee...
     Yes...?

Azodo: Iwe na ekwu kwa! Oro zi Isiadinso so lu be Ezeokoli... Igwe be unu nanu ewu-ewu n'oge gbo. Ehe! Thomas so lu beya. Okwanu ka olusigolu olu na be Ezeokoli, magolu basikulu nya we na ko nu Enugu Ukwu ka oji kwusi eba we bido luba nka...
     Well! It was (wasn't it?) Isiadinso who also built Eze Okoli's house... the Igwe of your town who was famed in his day. Thomas was one of those who built that house. It really was after he had completed the building of Ezeokoli's house... and while he was on his way back to Enugu Ukwu, that he stopped of here and commenced the building of this house (the Adama Mansion).

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As in other places such as is confirmed for Enugu Ukwu and for Oraukwu, the earliest storied buildings attracted the labor of the community for little reward. In the competitiveness between towns, citizens seemed generally supportive of the idea that their own town too had a multi-storied building.
additional armature in the construction of the Adama as Chief.

The first photograph, now in the possession of Chief Michael Ojiakor (fig 94), the present Adama of Adazi Nnukwu, seems to show him at a younger age than the second photograph described here (fig 95). Both photographs are nevertheless posed in front of the mansion. In the second photograph, the mansion is clearly visible. In the first one we may make this judgement by observing the fragment of stonework visible in the background of the photograph. In its masonry style, it is comparable to the masonry of the Mansion in its present form, even after it is clear that it would have undergone one or two attempts to spiff the building up by re-pointing. Just behind the right hand Ojiakor Ezenne’s left shoulder, a dark thick vertical line is visible which marks the edge of one of the archways, which is confirmed by the just barely visible projection of the spring molding at the limit of the photographs frame.

He is posed standing somewhat defiantly, dressed in a light hued undershirt (possibly a T-shirt), over which he is wearing a dark shirt, and finally over this he wears some kind of a coat, whose corrugated surface indicates that it is a thick one. The coat has a collar, and _______ buttoning. Over his left chest, hangs a brooch of some sort, whose identity is difficult to determine, though it seems to include some kind of a bunch of tassels.
He wears a helmet, reminiscent of one that might have been worn by an ancient Roman cavalryman\textsuperscript{15}, and in his right hand he holds a tall staff, which is topped by a sculpted animal of some kind, probably a miniature lion.

The photograph was taken after the mansion-house’s completion. In it Ojiakor Ezenne appears relatively young, and probably in his late thirties or early forties. If it is assumed that he must have been around 30 years old by the time he was able to erect the first house (the smaller Ojiakor house), the photograph might be dated to the years 1925-1927\textsuperscript{16}.

The second photograph may have been taken in the early 1940s (judging by a date that has been written unto the table cloth in the photograph). More precisely, it may be dated to before August 5 1941, judging by an inscription penned unto the photograph itself, which notes the above date as the date of Ojiakor’s death. The last photograph described here was probably taken in the mid fifties, judging by the degree to

\textsuperscript{15} This seems to be the recognized form of Crown in the 1920s in Igboland, as is confirmed by similar photograph of Chief Ezeokoli of Nnobi (the town in which it will be remembered the church of St. Simon’s, Nnobi is located), has his pose himself wearing such a crown. It is in fact unclear from where this would have developed. Since it seems to become current in post World War 1 photographs, it may be linked to the exposure service in the army brought to many individual’s life (perhaps as entertainment, European films were screened for soldiers), or to the use of film in missionary proselytizing, of which only indirect knowledge is known to the writer. The inspiration, in a missionary context, might for example have come from the screening in Nigeria of a film like Ben Hur?

\textsuperscript{16} If he was 30 years old in 1913, then he would be 41 in 1924, the year of the house’s completion. Since he seems hardly older than about 40 in the photograph, it seems likely that it was taken between 1924 and 1926. However, ten[?] pages earlier it was stated here that Ezenne was born c1855 according to one informant. This would mean the former was 58 in 1913 when the house was built, and 69 in 1924 when the mansion was built. This birth date would also put the photographs date much earlier around 1895/96. The history of the use of photography here, as suggested say by Colonial officer Amaury Talbot’s or A.G. Smith’s access to this technology which from their very privileged positions is only evident after about 1904) would tend to contest such an assertion. Our assumption in the text above that Ezenne was about 30 years old in 1913, therefore seems a more reasonable date to work with.
which Chief Ojiakor seems to have aged by the time this portrait was taken.

In the second photograph, the Chief is posed sitting behind a table on which is placed the same Roman helmet, and some glasses and a bottle, which appears to be a gin bottle. The table has a light colored cloth covering it, underneath from which project the table’s legs, formed in the imitation of the legs of an animal, such as the antelope." Sitting with him in the front row is his first son (the heir apparent), his mother, and his first wife. Ranged behind him are twelve standing women, all of whom are, apparently, the Adama’s wives and his own close female relatives. The Adama holds an elephant tusk in one arm, while his seated son carries a colonial officers helmet on his laps.

This second photograph sees a man who is more conscious of his status than is evident in the previous photograph explored here. His dress style has become much less eclectic for example, consisting here of some kind of a wide lapelled jacket, a pair of shorts, tall socks and a pair of well polished shoes (this suggests that the colonial helmet was part of this costume). The image apprehended is that of a man who is intent on projecting an image of his power, and which power he compares with the might of European colonial power itself (from which he derives his authority in fact, even though he was considered by the colonial administration as a thorn in their flesh).

Unlike his willingness in an earlier phase of his career to pose a photograph in which he is captured standing and thus

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417 This is not a customary type of stool, or table, and therefore was probably imported from abroad.
perhaps in a far from dignified posture, this later image makes it clear that Ojiakor's own importance demands that he be represented sitting. There is certainly a hierarchical line demarcating the seated from those who are standing, and the center of the composition coincides with the center of status amongst those ranged in the photograph, in a certain way, running parallel to the centrality indicated in the Mansion's house plan, and in the relationship between the posed group and the building itself. The posed group is, in other words, located right along the central axis of the building, as is indicated even in the photograph itself by the symmetry of the arched backdrop, and also by the visible shadows of three door entrances into the central room of the house.

The present Adama of Adazi, Chief Michael Ojiakor has suggested that this second photograph was taken by a now naturalized Nigerian of Sierra Leonian origin, Mr. Adams, who is still resident in Enugu, and who was a photographer by profession. Like the missionary project itself therefore, these forms of representation (the house and the composition of the photograph) even if it consists of elements that are unequivocally of European origin, are nevertheless inserted and fully digested within a local aesthetic universe.

Of the photograph to give one illustration, one might note that this is posed outside, in the open courtyard or compound that faces the front of the house. Yet, it is also posed as a presentation. The table and its objects, as well as the individuals and the manner in which they are posed certainly assume a certain continuity between the space of the photograph and that of the viewer. The Adama is making a presentation to his viewer, a sort of iwa oji [breaking of the kola nut in the making of the traditional offering to
ancestor and to visiting guest] is implicated, for without this, the photograph seems to make no sense. It cannot be assumed, in other words, that this is a representation from which the viewer may be an uninvolved observer, and it is this quality which, in spite of the centrality and the triangularity of the composition, separates it nevertheless from the European family portrait, and absorbs it within the Igbo universe.

The final photograph, apparently also taken by the same photographer from Sierra Leone, is again posed in front of the building, though this is hardly visible\(^{11}\). It emanates a certain maturity, and a return to a traditional idea of Chiefdom, that is not present in either of the two former photographs. Again he is seated, rather than standing, in a tunic whose origin is difficult to ascertain, but appears like a south eastern version of the northern Yoruba danshiki or agbada, or perhaps may be a closest relative of this Nigerian dress that is found in Ethiopia and in India. Whatever its provenance, its simplicity is more in line with the degree to which a Chief is clothed, than the costumes he donned in the two previous photographs. It also does not appear as much posed as the previous ones. That is, he seems to have ben shot in the motion of speaking to an audience of some unspecified kind, as is indicated by his right arm which is raised and unsupported; caught that is in the middle of a gesturing with his arm, the wise chief offering advice to his community.

Finally on this photograph, there is an absence of a display of chiefly paraphernalia, at least in any form that is meant to be a critical representation of Ojiakor as a man of high

\(^{11}\) To the top left hand side of the photograph, one may in fact recognize
status. Though for example the photograph clearly includes an attendant whose upper half is bare\textsuperscript{11}, and who supports the Chief’s ivory tusk, neither are obtrusive, in the manner in which such symbols of power are presented in the two previous photographs.

In understanding the aesthetic and mental transformations that are involved in the shift from the Ojiakor House etc. the Adama mansion, only the first and second photographs are in fact relevant. As an indication of the direction in which both intellectual ideas are moving, they indicate an individual increasingly desirous of, and conscious power. In fulfillment of which possession a search is made beyond the world of traditional Igbo society, increasingly appropriating the European, first the staff of power (very different from the customary ofo, the customary staff which for example Chief Idigo a generation earlier [in terms of age] is found carrying) which may be European, but may quite possibly be of the Gold Coast. Secondly, the ‘royal’ costume, also seeks to borrow from a world beyond, the first example displaying the remoteness of that world and the inventiveness with which it is interpreted, while the second photograph indicates the beginnings of an understanding of the European world in terms the European himself would recognize and find acceptable, including the ‘proper’ combination for example of shorts, high socks and helmet hat.

\textsuperscript{11} This individual is likely to be Mari Azodo from whom much of the architectural information regarding the construction of the house is obtained, because he described himself as the last and longest serving of the late chief’s attendants. Since this photograph is taken during what must be the Chief’s last years, it seems likely that in this period he was almost inseparable from the Chief himself.
Indeed, this apparent understanding of the syntax of European aesthetics, might explain the difference between the two houses, the first one like the earlier photograph representing an earlier phase of this transformation, in which the European is still conceived primarily from a local context, which allows innovative interpretation to be easily undertaken (and which gives both objects their uniqueness), while the second set of objects, indicates a situation where an apparent Europeanness is more convincingly presented, and through which it becomes more difficult to excavate, and to discover the continued Igbo world that underlies (and is maintained behind) all the appearances.

It is also obvious that it is in this latter context that Thomas Isiadinso gets called upon to also work on this latest project. Nevertheless, the list of other builder's who participated in the project includes many indigenes of Adazi town itself, such as Jeremiah Aronu, Mazi Ezimora, Clement Obijindu, Johnson Obichebelum, Michael Obijindu and Christopher Ezeanyiora.

In another chapter, the history that explains the existence of such individuals (skilled so early on in the production of buildings in a non-customary manner) is dealt with in detail (chapter 8). At the moment though, if Thomas Isiadinso may not be included in the generalization because he is not of Adazi origin, it may certainly be reasonable to nevertheless wonder why one discovers a large pool of carpenters and masons in Adazi by 1924. The answer, pursued in some detail below, is that the Roman Catholic Mission opened a school at Adazi (following one established previously at Nimo), under the leadership of the gadfly of a man, Fr. Bubendorff.

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Father Bubendorff and the School at Adazi.

The Onitsha Industrial Mission, founded in 1898, and in which were taught masonry, brick making and carpentry (Ayandele [1984: 297-298], was the Anglican institution that appears to have trained many of the southeast's early builders, who became involved in the construction of church and private property in Onitsha itself, and far beyond. Together with its Presbyterian counterpart the Hope Waddell Training Institute in Calabar (by which it was ultimately outlived), they were both from the start the envy of their Roman Catholic competitors. The latter (the Roman Catholic Mission) were fortunate in this regard to have the priest from the French Alsace region, Albert Buberndorff, in their midst in the years after 1908. Following fast on the heels of his namesake and predecessor, he appears equally to have been an avidly

420 In this sense he is only rivalled by another Alsatian priest, Fr. Joseph Bubendorff (see Nwosu [1988]:123. See also ft note no 421 below), who at the close of the century, was found petitioning the British Colonial Government to mount a military campaign against the Igbo oracle at Arochukwu, ostensibly to rid this territory of an 'evil' influence, but actually in order to allow the opening of a missionary front here, which being on the ground a rearing to go, would offer him the advantage of advancing ahead of his Anglican competitors.

421 It is clear that local historians confuse the two Bubendorffs in oral traditions, a fact which explains the puzzle that Ozigboh seems faced with in attempting to explain a local narrative on the reason for Bubendorffs exit from Nteje. Ostensibly about Albert Bubendorff, it includes the names of places that Albert Bubendorff never missioned at, a fact which Ozigboh (1988) therefore uses to refuse the narrative's truth completely. However, the towns taken together in fact are towns in which one or the other of the Bubendorffs worked in. Given the common name, personality and love of building, one must wonder whether they were related in some way; Albert perhaps being a younger nephew of Joseph?

422 The other Bubendorff (Joseph), was one of the figures, who realizing the comparatively late entry of the Catholic Church to missioning in this part of Nigeria, was determined, sometimes overly so, to catch up with his episcopalian rivals the Anglican-Church-centered Church Missionary Society. The Church Missionary Society had been involved ever since the 1890s with the training at Onitsha of (continued...)
competitive person, who thrived especially in challenged contexts. Moreover, he had an understanding of the

builders and carpenters, through the setting up of the Onitsha Industrial Mission (CMS G3/A3/07, Executive Committee, Minutes of Nov 3, 1987, and G3/A3/08, Annual Letter of 1899, from Rev. Dennis), on high ground in the town of Onitsha, on a site now occupied by the exquisite, modern architecture of All Saint's Cathedral Church of the Anglican Church of Nigeria (built between the 1960s and 1980s to designs by a British architect and by Nigerian architect Ifejika. The often campaign-like approach to missionary work displayed by Bubendorff was therefore linked to his determination to close this gap on all fronts, even if this occasionally entailed a closer cooperation with British colonialism than some might assume.

His career seems to have started in the Izhon and Efik areas of south eastern Nigeria. Certainly, we find that he writes out of Bonny in mid 1880s, encouraging the British invasion of Arochukwu, whose religious hold on the minds of south easterners, from the Izhon and the Igbo to the Efik and Ejagham themselves, would, as he conceived it stand in the way of the Christianization of these populations.

Following the invasion of Igboland, and its subsequent conquest, Father Joseph Bubendorff's dream of carrying Catholicism into the Igbo heartland suddenly seemed feasible. As a result, he commenced this journey inland, exactly when we however do not know.

Based on his pioneering work, his younger namesake (Albert) and colleague had by 1911 himself made the first in-road in Igboland through the establishment of a mission station of some kind at the village-town of Nteje. His sojourn here was however not to be long lived. Partly as a result of a his own arrogance, and partly as a result of an erroneous perception by the local Nteje community, he was asked to leave town. He did so, taking up residence next in the town of Nito. The year was 1913...

423 The archive is replete with examples of the disputes in which he was involved, and the controversy that he seems constantly to have been surrounded by. See for example NNA (1919); AW/DIST/2/1/6 Item 33 where at Enugu Ukwu he attempts unsuccessfully (due largely to opposition from Enugu Ukwu's establishment [NNA (1917)] AW8:AWDIST/2/1/5, Feb 16,1917) to establish a Roman Catholic school in a preserve that might have been assumed by now to be Anglican. Perhaps the nature of one such dispute is best captured in a letter from the District Officer of Awka District dated March 1, 1915. In this letter, the D.O. is reaching a decision over a dispute involving the unauthorized (as far as Enugu Ukwu's Chief's were concerned) and then ongoing erection of a Roman Catholic school (and station) at Enugu Ukwu. The RCM had apparently taken matters into their own hands, and started building the school.

The District Commissioner, having delayed the continuation of the building while he attempted to reach a resolution (latter on the document speaks of the Roman Catholics as having started a new school elsewhere while repairing the old one), resolved that the matter be heard in the Native Court. In the process of deciding upon this recommendation, he received information from his District Officer at Awka. The D.O. himself had received representations from various lobbies, including one from his own roving subordinate which states of the Roman Catholic position on this dispute: '...it is a tissue of inaccuracies (to use a mild and polite word) and skillfully arranged misrepresentations, for which, perhaps Father Bubendorff, rather than Father Ward (Bubendorff's superior) is responsible.' The D.O. himself summarizes to the District Commissioner that it is a dispute between Chiefs and 'small boys' acting under the prodding Father Bubendorff whom the chiefs apparently see as having 'come [to] troubled (sic) us' (AW8; AW DIST 2/1/4, Item 6). It seems, in short, to have been an attempt by the RCM under Bubendorff's instigation, to enter an area already largely under CMS hegemony. Indeed the

(continued...)

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importance of building craft and other technical abilities to the physical expansion of the mission. He seems himself to have had some prior experience as a builder, and one who was, on more fronts than one, keenly concerned with the head-start that the Church Missionary Society had acquired historically, over the Roman Catholic Church.

It thus does not surprise, to learn that at every location on his journey from the coast, further and further inland (as he was most typically expelled from village to village\(^\text{22}\)), he

\(^{22}\)\(\ldots\)continued\)

repeated competition between the two missions in this part of Igboland, ultimately lead to the DO's recommending that two missions never be allowed into the same town unless their locations are sufficiently far apart. It also ends by suggesting that in the future, all missions first seek approval from the colonial administration for starting a school, before commencing its erection, whether or not the land to be occupied seemed in dispute or not. Inadvertently, of course, the Church, in it competition with itself, allowed the Colonial administration (and government ultimately) to gain a foothold of control on the territory of education.

Not one to relent easily, Bubendorff is already writing in 1920 to an acting D.O. Mr. Langston for permission to build a school at Enugu UKWU (AW DIST 2/1/6 Item 33), which request is nevertheless (and once again) 'Not approved'.

\(^{24}\) Different versions of the reason why Fr. Albert Bubendorff moved so constantly from one town to another, are on offer. Ozigboh (1988) provides evidence that this decision resulted from the slow rate of conversion that seemed to occur at Nteje, and that a decision was taken by the Archbishop at the time (Bishop Shanahan) to move the missionary headquarters to Adazi, implying that the interlude at Nimo was also therefore planned as an interlude, the ultimate destination of Adazi being certain. Ozigboh at the same time dismisses with apparent ease an unattributed allegation that Bubendorff is said to have declared on his exit from Nteje, that 'I am tired of Nteje. I am tired of Agulwet. I am tired of Igboaram. Nsugbe is nonsense...'. However, it seems that this charge may be the more accurate one. For individuals at Nimo recall Bubendorff's exit from Nteje as resulting from his meddling in local politics, and with the resulting local pressure (no doubt delivered by the towns elders and Chief, that he depart from their town, which insistence may have rendered his life there intolerable, given that this was supported by a determined refusal to be persuaded by his Christian message. There are also indications that his departure from Nimo was not simply the result of a preplanning, as his sojourn here extended over a long period, and as it is documented that Ojiakor of Adazi Nnukwu had to proffer several pleas to Bubendorff to settle at Adazi. It seems in fact, judging by his earlier letters written when he was on the coast to the British authorities, that Albert Bubendorff may have expected to get his own way, and that when this was not forthcoming, he was always tempted to leave for another location. Given moreover the obvious affluence of Chief Ojiakor at the time, and perhaps the foreknowledge that he was to be offered a residence of more stature than was on offer elsewhere, (continued...)
attempted to set up an institution, no matter how small, that was directed at training and providing the builders the mission needed, and that would remove the dominance in trade skills, from the world of the Anglican Church’s own new adherents.

Thus, at Nteje, the first town in Igbo land of which record exists of his influential presence, he set up the first such training institution. It may be recalled that a few paragraphs earlier the 1913 Ojiakor house numbered an individual from Nteje amongst its largely western-Igbo building-team. Though we have no collaboration, it is likely that this individual, whose name was not discovered, may very well have received some instruction from the Nteje experiment.

The probability that some link exists between some of the early new style architecture, and the presence of this individual in the villages in which he was resident, is further supported by the fact, the reader may recall, that Bubendorff spent several years in Nimo itself, and that this is the town in which the Onyiuke House is located; a house which moreover predates the Adama Mansion. Furthermore, and finally, it may be recalled that Bubendorff was subsequently enticed away from Nimo, ending up at Adazi, the place in which yet another large stone mansion became produced (though of course one of the two on this particular site predates his arrival). Thus, at each station, Bubendorff appears to have become involved in the formal training of builders in European construction practice. These builders it would seem, where the

"(...continued) it is possible that he may also have been attracted by the relative comfort on offer in Adazi. Certainly, given that Ojiakor himself never converted to Christianity, it is difficult to agree that he was anymore enthusiastic for Christianity as a religion per se, than Chief Giniwefolu Onyiuke was at Nimo."
ones who would have consisted the larger part of the building teams involved in the construction of many of the new style houses, apart that is from their more certain involvement in the building of missionary stations.

As will be seen later however, in all the cases in which building for private clients are involved, and in which the involvement of Bubendorff school graduates are unequivocally confirmed, the head mason himself was not a Bubendorff product, and it is this fact that seems to encourage what little adherence the Bubendorff trainee may have had towards a more European approach, the freedom to depart significantly from this, and to therefore produce buildings that have absorbed a new Nigerian character. It is likely that it was the syncretic aesthetic sense of such individuals that for example makes the match between them and individual patrons like Ojiakor Ezenne almost perfect, and perhaps is the background against which the particular proliferation of the will to build may not have been possible.

Though the writer was not able to research the technical workshop at Adazi, it seems that its form during the Nimo phase was the most glorious and successful. The school was apparently attached to the Roman Catholic mission itself, and occupied the same premises at Uruegbu, Nimo, with the mission itself and with its church building. In the relatively short period in which it existed under the tutorship of Bubendorff, it seems to have been very productive in bringing up craftsmen, since in Nimo today, over forty such individuals (carpenters and masons) are remembered locally, and many are still alive (Okeke [1991]). The technical school offered its
students an interesting set of career possibilities, including masonry, tailoring, and carpentry.

It is important to get a preliminary sense of the cultural base of this institution, as the issue becomes more and more important, the further an attempt is made to attribute its inventions to the many sources from which it could have drawn. In particular, it is important that even though the earliest training centers at Bonny on the coast, at Onitsha by the river Niger 'coast’, and at Calabar on the eastern coast, all had technical teachers with English names (though they may of course have been Sierra Leonians amongst them so named425), at Nimo the names of technical instructors now includes Igbos amongst their list (Nwosu [1990]: 15), including a Philip Ochuba from Nise, a town barely fifteen miles away426.

For its students one can imagine that the presence of an Igbo instructor would have had a significant effect on the way in which subsequent students would have seen themselves. For no longer would the skill they were acquiring be seen as simply that taught to them by the foreign (and most typically for the Roman Catholic Mission, white) person. Rather, for the students now taught also by Igbo instructors, the new building technology and culture would most likely be received as

425 For example, at the Mission Church school at Bonny, in the early 1880s, Epelle ([1955:13] op.cit.,) states that 'Carpentry and Brickmaking were taught-Mr. Samuel being Technical Instructor. Given the fact that the mission here at the time was almost all Sierra Leon in origin (Ibid:20), thanks to the Reverend Crowther's participation in it, it is most likely that Samuel was in fact himself Sierra Leonian. Certainly, it is sure that the second missionary station established after that at Bonny was the one at Brass, and that the latter's earliest buildings (a school-chapel) were '...done by Mr. Drewing and Mr. Priddy, both of them Sierra Leonians' (Ibid :22).

426 It is interesting that Madam Uzoka (second daughter of Mazi Uzoka) indicates that the stone mason who erected her father's house was from Nise, though she was unable to recall his name. It seems entirely possible that this individual was in fact the same one who would have been offering instruction at Nimo a few years before the commencement of the house in Awka.
something normative; as less alienating than it might have seemed to students of Ochuba’s own generation; as in effect a culture that was already their own. This point may be significant in order to understand the possibility, later on, of a developing freedom towards architectural invention within this new culture’s language; and of why it may be justified to regard the buildings explored in these chapters, as created in a context for which a local and independent culture can be seen to have been formed, albeit at the initial inspiration of the French Alsatian priest.

The Onyeama House at Eke

At the start of this chapter, it is suggested that a second pair of the buildings are relevant to the issues we have investigated here mainly through the Ojiakor palace compound at Adazi Nnukwu, though it is also suggested that this second pair cannot be explored to the same depth, largely for the reason of limiting the volume of the text.

There are strong parallels between Chief Ojiakor and Chief Onyeama of Eke, with one difference being that Chief Onyeama was able to gather to his person a degree of autocratic power, and one spread well beyond the confines of his own village town, that would be quite unthinkable in the Idemmili Nri Awka context of Adazi. This is perhaps recognized in one of the terms by which Chief Onyeama is described; Black Stalin (Onyeama [1982]: note facing photograph on page 89).

Nevertheless, his personal history shares much in common with that of Ojiakor, even though for circumstances which must be regarded as tragic, he travelled widely in his youth. Briefly, Onyeama’s mother appears to have been exiled from Eke when he was a young boy (for reasons to do with the committing of an
abomination)(Nnagbo:12/17/91). Though the details are not clear (Onyeama [1982:18-21] varies from the above), he appears to have ended up as an apprentice produce and slave-trader to various merchants from Arochukwu, in which employ he would have travelled widely in the late 1800s and early 1900s. Though no knowledge exists of which towns specifically he would have been familiar with through this travel, it is likely to have included Arochukwu itself, Calabar and Oguta.

According to one version of his story, after the period for which Onyeama and his mother were banished from Eke elapsed, he returned to his hometown, where, the ultimate irony and paradox of his exile (or marginalization) was to unfold: In his travels Onyeama acquired a then rare command of several languages, including a creolized English in particular, and had thus come to understand the opportunities offered for trade in the formative new world. He returned to Eke in the moment that was just a few years prior to the European penetration and occupation of this part of Igbo land. Being already a successful entrepreneur in his own right and thus ‘enlightened’ by involvement in cross-national trade, he was

\[427\] In another chapter, it will become clear that Arochukwu is crucial also in the life of the builder Thomas Isiadinso, and thus be regarded as one of the central loci of the possibility of the architectural revolution in Igbo land.

\[428\] The so called pidgin or broken English, which is in fact quite a misnomer.

\[429\] Eke, like Awka (with which it has known historical relationships: Eke being said to have been founded by an immigrant from Awka) was a town from which dispersed many itinerant blacksmiths, as it was a town which, in the pre-colonial era, has a well known market. Some of its adult craftsmen would have been used to travel beyond their own vicinity, and thus Onyeama is not unique in this sense. What is unique is the fact that his experience of the larger world commenced at a much younger age than would be normal, and that moreover, he was not able to return to a home base with his mother, as would be true for other Eke travellers. His acculturation would therefore have been more profound than would be usual for the time.

\[430\] Upon his return to Eke in the early years of the 1910s, he had set up a palm produce business in Eke. This is the period in which the first, rather nondescript building was erected.
able to exploit the general 'ignorance' of his compatriots to his own advantage, presenting himself to the Europeans in such a manner that he would seem to them the most appropriate person to confer formal leadership stature on. Thus he seems to have become nominated Warrant Chief, over the community that had exiled him in childhood, and for whom (given his incomparable autocracy) he may have held a deep sense of spite.

Occupying therefore the same position as did Ojiakor at Adazi, he commenced building the second building, and the corrugated-iron one already explored in an earlier chapter (see p ). In terms of the issues with which we are concerned here, the transformation between this building, and the one he erected for himself in about 1932 (following his elevation to the rank of Paramount Chief) is especially enlightening, given also Stanislov Azodo's claim that Chief Onyeama had been to visit Chief Ojiakor a number of times following the completion of the Ojiakor Mansion. This indicates, if any doubt remains, that the Chief's, regardless of the difference in the degree to which they may claim legitimacy in their localities, recognized their formation as a group separate from the general populace; and that in the social interactions that occurred, this group form also an identifiable patron group to whom the masons became client. It also makes it important to bare in mind that an architectural difference may be identified, between these buildings for the Warrant Chief's, and those others that were erected by individuals as varied as church catechists, merchants, and blacksmiths, the latter of which the Uzoka house was an example.

This is brought up again in more conclusive detail in the final chapter. For the moment, it may be pointed out that the
Uzoka house, remaining as bungalow indicates a financial position not equal to that of the Chief’s, and that the ‘upstairs’ in itself as double storey, would be understood as a marker of prestige. Uzoka himself may have been attempting to allude to (or give the illusion that his house was) an ‘upstairs’ building; by the device already connected on of the central facade of the building which appears as a miniature double-storey. Moreover, one may explain the devise of the Uzoka house’s acroteria, as one intended to give additional height to the building, whilst not adding significantly to its cost, in order to make it even more difficult for the average local person, to determine that the house was only single storey. In this sense it shares something with the Adinembo house of a previous chapter though the latter had nothing to compete with but its own blue print.

The Uzoka house thus, in part at least, appears to have been following the lead established by the chiefly non-customary house. The illusion of a double-storey and the use of stone apart, the most obvious confirmation may be found in the upper section of the central pedimented gable, which earlier had been compared to the elevation of certain style of church architecture, most specifically of the Cathedral Church at Akwete (fig. 96), though no specific historical evidence of this is on offer.

It happens however, that this gable in fact also resembles closely the gable of the St. Peace Odenigbo House at Enugu Ukwu, as well as of the other houses in the Enugu Ukwu area not included in this study. It may thus be that despite this itineration, the Uzoka house’s gable comes from these local sources and not from further afield. If this were the case, it indicates that some members of a different client group.
sought their models in the stone palace structures of those considered of a higher status than they themselves were.

This was not however a general rule. Other structures erected as residences for members of groups we may perceive as forming a client group do not appear to have been interested in imitating this sub-style, especially when their own occupation (or the position reached in their own careers) had afforded them the means to erect double-storey houses, and to match the grandeur of the stone Palace type house. There are other houses that do not appear to fall into any single identifiable stylistic category. All that seems to unite them is either a flamboyance or a conservativeness directed at not being mistaken for the Warrant Chief style. Some like the Nwokoye Idah House, Awka (researched, but not included here, see Neaher [1976:73-74] for a description) are so precisely European in detail, as to be thus easily mistaken; others incorporate a formal complexity and exploration not present to the same extent in the other houses.

In answer to the question raised earlier about the chronology of the development of this particular style, the historical evidence suggests finally therefore that the Ojiakor house (as opposed to the Mansion) is the older of all of the buildings investigated here. Azodo confirms that no exception needs even be made to this chronology for the Onyeama House, which was built subsequently. Nevertheless, for its own relatively early production, this house also deserves some emphasis here.

Onyeama’s Palace
Unlike the Ojiakor mansion, and unlike Onyeama’s own earlier house, what here is labelled the Onyeama Palace is a brick
house (fig 97), whose rectangular shape is broken by the extension in the front area of the house, of a double storey porch. Since the double-storey porch was already observed of at least two house’s at Enugu Ukwu (the Agwuna family’s St. Peace Odenigbo House being one of them), this in itself cannot per se be claimed as a significant shift. And even the use of carpentered, wooden in-fill panels consisting of louvered sections and of windows has, despite the insertion here between brick piers, been observed of the much smaller Ojiakor house. It is only when this house is compared with the older Onyeama house located at a different site at Amankwo, Eke, that the response Onyeama has to the other architectural developments in the areas around Awka and Onitsha, Adazi, Nimo, Nnobi and Enugu Ukwu, can be fairly judged.

For the Chief was not surrounded by competitors to the extent that those in the province of Onitsha were (the Onitsha Province included the towns of Obosi, Adazi, Nimo, Enugu Ukwu, Ogidi, and many other towns, in which context no one Chief could possibly hope to hold sway in the manner that Onyeama appears to have in the Enugu area.

His first building, the large laterite earth and corrugated iron building would thus have served its purpose as representative of his wealth satisfactorily. Moreover, when Europeans occupied the town of Enugu after 1911, and commenced the erection of two storey Colonial buildings, this in itself does not seem to have merited a response of any sort from Chief Onyeama. For him, these Europeans offered further possibilities for commerce (as it did in fact through the establishment of the coal mines at Iva valley from which he derived revenue, and after whom it is named), but were of no direct cultural relevance to his prestige. It was apparently
only at the point at which he observed other buildings by Igbos further in-land, many of which rivalled in size and sense of stateliness the buildings the Colonial administration was only just beginning to erect, that the notion must have occurred to him that his own palace was perhaps no longer appropriate.

Of course Onyeama would have had many possibilities open to him at this point, including certainly the erection of a house in stone to rival the others, and to which it might be compared. The absence of the same building material cannot explain the choice of brick, for Eke (as is most of the lands inhabited by the Nkanu and Agbaja groups) has access to nearby hills and gullies from which an abundant supply of stone may have been obtained had it been desired."1. One way of interpreting the choice is to state that quite typical of this individualist, having been outdone momentarily by his 'northern Igbo' rivals, it may have seemed critical to him not to be seen as simply following were others had lead, but to be able to erect something that would be recognized as a significantly different structure, one that upstages all the others. What better place to go for this, perhaps, than Colonial Enugu right in his own backyard.

The brick structure is certainly impressive, and possess a certain sharpness that both brickwork, and joinered timber have contributed to the pristine state of the house's surface. What is interesting nevertheless, is that for the erection of

"1 Indeed, after his death, and thus the termination of the edict forbidding any other individual to erect two storey buildings, Chief Gabriel O. Onoh of Enugu Ngwo (1903-1936, father of the well known politician C.C. Onoh), commenced the erection of his own mansion, a two storey building constructed in stone. Given that Onyeama was a much more powerful man, and certainly one who could muster the resources and the labor required to erect such a structure, the decision must be seen as one that was actively taken.
the house it might seem natural to assume that he most likely would have relied primarily (since he is close to Enugu) on skilled labor that would have come out of the Public Work’s Department training schools, of which one had existed in Enugu since 1911.

However, all the indications point instead to the likelihood that many of these craftsmen were indigenes of places like Awka and Nimo, whose initial training had occurred in the Idemmili-Awka-Nri area, before they had sought employment further north in the colonial town of Enugu. In fact, the only known and confirmed craftsman who was involved in the construction of the Onyeama Mansion, in the capacity of a window fabricator, carpenter and joiner (fig 98), is Chief Nwasike, a native of Ogidi, who had been trained in the once Church Missionary Society owned, now defunct, Onitsha Industrial Mission\(^{32}\). Nwasike himself, rather interestingly, returned to Ogidi in the latter part of his life (Afigbo [1964:appendix p433]), were he became a member of its Native Court\(^{33}\). Some evidence suggests however, that he was greatly appreciated here, for the contributions he made to the building of the house, and that he continued to be held in regard by the indigenes of Eke, and the surrounding areas, for the rest of his life\(^{34}\).

\(^{32}\) See p. 332 and footnote no. 422 for a brief discussion of this institution.

\(^{33}\) Afigbo, Ajaero E. (1964): The Warrant Chiefs, unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, the University of Nigeria, Nsukka. This information does not survive the transformation of the dissertation into a book of the same title (Afigbo [1972]).

\(^{34}\) Indeed, there is a possibility that the eventual appointment (1961) of Chief Nwasike’s own son, Edmund (a Swansea engineering graduate, and Nigeria’s first mining engineer), to the post of General Manager of the Coal Corporation (of which after all the Onyeama mines would have been a significant part) by Nigeria’s then newly independent Federal Government, may have been partly a result of the goodwill that leaders of Enugu may have had for the Nwasike name, partly perhaps to do with Chief (continued...)
It might be reiterated here that as was seen of Thomas Isiadinso (who travelled from Enugu Ukwu to work on projects as far away as at Arondizuogu), what little historians know of Nwasike’s own career indicates that his services were in demand well beyond his hometown of Ogidi. His residence at Eke certainly provides a case in point. What this begins to suggest is that even though the new-style architecture is found all over southeastern Nigeria in this period, the center of its architectural culture was in fact a quite narrowly focused one, corresponding to the Anioma-Nri-Awka-Idemili locus of Igboland, from which locality the new architecture spread well beyond.

Later developments which occur in the period after the era of these house’s may be utilized as another location from which to understand what the transformations of architectural culture explored in this chapter contained. It is interesting to note for example that the Onyeama family, presently, is one of Nigeria’s most well known families, especially in regard to its members who have been illustrious participants in the development of Nigerian legal history and of the

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434(...continued)
Nwasike’s lobbying his former employers on his son’s behalf, and finally perhaps partly as a result of the unquestioned distinction and relevance of Edmund’s own mining-engineering educational achievement, which no other Igbo person at the time could rival. Moreover, Asogwa [1991: 36 and 24] states that one of the son’s of Gabriel O. Onoh (who in the 1920s was one of Onyeama’s chief rivals), Christian. C., was himself Chairman of the Coal Corporation (appointed in 1959) and had also been an earlier graduate of the same Swansea campus of the University of Wales (were he had earned a law degree). It is likely that cordial relations apart, Edmund Nwasike’s having attended the same university as did Christian Onoh, made him acceptable to the latter (then the recently appointed Chairman).

435 Afigbo, Ibid.

436 Roughly speaking the Igbo speaking Northeast which here is defined to include the Nri-influenced communities of the eastern Niger river regions most recently known as Anioma.
history of its judiciary. The family has included for example such international figures as Dadi Onyeama who was the first black judge ever to hold a permanent seat at the World Court in the Hague. His nephew, Dilibe Onyeama was the first black student ever to attend the prestigious English Public School, Eton College (in 1965). Many of these individuals (of the generation of Onyeama’s before Dilibe’s) became anti-colonial nationalists, without whom Nigeria’s subsequent political independence seems unthinkable.

Based on this, it might be surmised that this subsequent family history already is prefigured in their father, Chief Onyeama’s thinking in the early century. It would be fool hardy to assume that the adornment of the cover of a European, from dress or architecture, to Eton College be considered evidence of a succumbing to European values and aesthetics. As will be indicated in the following chapter, what might appear European when glanced at, often turns out in this context, and when explored further, to be anything but.

The Onyeama mansion moreover, displays responses to the colonial situation as do also both the Uzoka House and the Emmanuel Church, which have a not dissimilar approach when compared to these other buildings, albeit one that might be considered extreme. Certainly, the transformation between the first house and the second one runs parallel to the transformation observed earlier of the Ojiakor house, and is apparently motivated by related desires.

Judging by Onyeama’s work Nigger at Eton (Onyeama and Frewin [1972]), a text that in its time may have been the most subversive book on Eton College (as it is incidentally about
Igbos, Nigerian society, and 'the black man' to boot"), his experience of the English Public School grants a view quite unlike Hughes' earlier description (Hughes [1928]), for which the passage of time cannot quite account. And, despite appearances', it would probably be erroneous to assume that Dilibe Onyeama himself emerged an Englishman; such a conclusion seems reachable only were one not prepared to abandon essentialisms in favor of the authenticity of a totally Igbo Etonian.

This position suggests architectural parallels, recalled in the issue of the roof cornice of the Ojiakor house. The problem in that instance was that of characterization. Could one fault the assumption that this house was anything but a mild transformation of an English Victorian idea when it sports a formal element that might be thought of as utterly European? The answer seems to be that too much might be being assumed on the basis of form and appearance alone. The form of the building may not necessarily be what counts most critically in an architectural characterization, for this element may be ontologically neutral. What does count is the understanding of what is being produced by those organized to produce, without whose own particular understanding itself, the production would not be possible. Similarly, the way the object is used may also tell much about the meaning the object carries. What then makes the Ojiakor house what it is (European type or not) is not form as such, but the relative location of form within a world (or complex) of signification.

437 The book ends rather depressingly with the statement that it seems '[...] that God especially created him (the black man) to suffer, and he will always suffer'.

438 The photographs in Nigger at Eton show Dilibe almost always rather stiffly and formally dressed, whether with his brothers on the steps of St. Peter's in Rome, or with his step-mother and siblings in a park in London.
Nothing may illustrate this fact, and the error of translating architectural elements from the point of view only of the originating culture, as well as the columns of the Ibe House. According to the dictates of established European or European derived pre-modern style, there is something wrong about the location of the decorative corbelling close to the cap of the columns. In European or Europeanized architecture, these are rhetorical as well as structural devices indicating the experience of carrying. They would form the cap itself. However, it is possible that in this context, the decorative aspect of the moldings are recognized, but that the rhetoric of 'carrying' represented in this manner is not meaningful here. This is perhaps because in the decorated column of pre-modern southern Nigerian architecture (fig. 99), a space was always left between the top of the decorated section and the end of the column. This appears to have been because in this constructional culture, the tapering rectangular-head section of the column comes to sit inside a cavity created for it in a cross beam, in order to do the work of carrying. It is suggested here, that it is this understanding of the column, and of the limits of decoration around it, that may explain the form that the Ibe house’s columns take. For this reason also is recognized the error of judging such structures on the basis of appearance alone (and from a European perspective at that); a perspective from which the group of buildings to which it belongs is easily judged bad European architecture. It is in fact something else entirely.
[De]razing the roof:  
Feint, Talking English, and an Okrikan House

Still more important than Wordsworth, or the eminent authors Burke and Hare, was the art and science of mensuration.... ‘How am I to fear the absolutely non-existent?’ said Hurree Babu, talking English to reassure himself. It is an awful thing to still dread the magic that you contemptuously investigate—to collect folklore for the Royal Society with a lively belief in the Powers of Darkness.

Rudyard Kipling

A Drawing For the Adinembo House

The necessity to dispute any assumption that objects are inscribed exclusively by any particular nationality is insisted upon in previous chapters. Such disputation may be especially critical when an assumption of origin is based simply on a comprehension of the object’s appearance centered on the viewing subject’s national location. In literary discourse, this might be like attempting to read a text without, even momentarily, negotiating oneself into the space of the author’s implied reader. The viewing (or reading) subject’s center in American Africanist discourse most typically emanates from Europe, with the result that it is to this place that the African object with resemblances to objects of European culture is often attributed. With

439 Well known examples come from art history, and include the historical interpretations of the Ife terracotta heads, which because of their naturalism were assumed to indicate the influence of Europeans. The more significant point for this author however, would be that even if a Portuguese (say) sculptor were shown to have once resided at the Oni of Ife’s court, the Africanity of Ife tradition should not therefore become questionable. Which is to say that if it was shown that these works were produced under the influence or supervision of an Ife-naturalized European, that because (continued...)
specific reference to architecture, the issue was raised initially in relation to the Anglican Church of St. Peter’s and to a three storey house, both sited, as the reader might recall, on Okrika island. The moment now seems appropriate to re-enter the latter building not only because it presented an acute puzzle of origination which remains unresolved, but because aspects of a larger context which might allow the comprehension of this particular building has been put in place in previous chapters. Here, then, the building will be explored in as much depth as possible. Ultimately, this will serve to assess the validity of a call to doubt, when applied to a building which more than the others in this investigation, possesses formal and historical contrasts which challenge an easy understanding.

Okrika is, as previously mentioned (ch. 2), an eighteenth century town consisting of an island of the same name, together with a more recently settled mainland, both of which are only ten or so kilometers from the newer colonial and industrial city of Port Harcourt. Perhaps most memorably, Okrika was indicated moreover as a market town for, amongst other things, second hand European clothing, and in the Igbo imagination became synonymous with this commodity. In this chapter, now in the richer context of the histories already explored, its three storied house (henceforth the Adinembo House, after its owner) itself may be revisited, and an attempt made to understand its architecture more meaningfully than was previously possible.

439(...continued)
it is created to function within a matrix of meaning quite unlike anything a European would comprehend, and because some aspects of it are not reminiscent of European sculpture, it is without merit to then view such a piece as therefore not truly African.

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The Adinembo House is now habitable only partially (and with difficulty), due to its being in a state of disrepair following serious damage during the Nigerian civil war. Nevertheless, the house's unusual forms, projecting above the rooftops of the more ordinary contemporary buildings of the town, cuts an impressive skyline from a distance, and attracted this writer’s attention*. Certainly, given the previous descriptions of Okrika in the English texts of the early century, and upon the discovery that it was in this same period that the house was built for an Okrika indigene, Joshua Adinembo, it seems impossible not to imagine the kinds of life-experience that might have formed Adinembo's desire for the possession of a building such as this one, let alone the conditions that allowed its actual fulfillment. For a building erected ca. 1923, World War 1 might easily attract attention as an event, whose chronological and psychological import might lead in particular circumstances to a radically changed view of the world. As will be detailed later on in this chapter, Joshua Adinembo (later Chief Joshua Adinembo) does not seem, as far as is discoverable, to have participated directly in the First World War. Other basis might thus be sought for the implied world view transformation. In this regard, the likelihood that one’s place of origin would have been of central importance to a participation in constituting the changing southeastern Nigerian mentality, is granted that much more persuasiveness, given that this building was commenced in 1923. The usefulness of place of origin as a partial explanation in the context of Nigeria in the 1910s

*The inclusion of the house in this writing results from a chance discovery and encounter, while actually on the way to visit St. Peter's Church for the first time. The centrality that it now occupies in this work is thus rather interesting, and suggests of course that in the absence of any comprehensive survey of architecture in Nigeria, there are many more buildings, unknown outside their immediate context, which would stand up to close scrutiny, and which would sustain the attention of a detailed critical history.
(when experience was markedly different from one location to another) seems substantiated by the fact that as will be elaborated subsequently, the history of the Adinembo House determinedly links together two places with related experiences of British colonialism; the Onitsha-Asaba area, to the vicinity of Port Harcourt.

The Proposal For A House

Several difficulties are encountered in reconstructing the circumstances in which the Adinembo House came into existence. Many such difficulties are to do with the paucity of documentation, but some, at least, are related to the meaning and social function that remains attached in the Okrika of today to certain kinds of artefact inherited from one's forbears. These kinds of artefact have customarily included the textiles and large pieces of cloth worn as dress, which female forbears may have used in the performance of prescribed rituals marking passage through defined stages of life. These artifacts are preserved in the family, usually by its female members, and are displayed (or even worn) by daughters of a present generation, going through similar life passage rituals. In the young woman's coming out ceremony, or Iria (or Irigha), for example, it appears that evidence of the antiquity of a family, as represented by fabrics which, by

"The particular architecture historical link to be established here apart, a more general, structural linkage renders the two places somewhat comparable. The town of Okrika, in which the Adinembo House was to become located, is in a number of interesting ways to Port Harcourt what Asaba is to Onitsha. This is not to claim that Onitsha is a new town (which its 18th century foundation contests) in relation to Asaba, but simply that Asaba's fortunes, as the one time capital of the southern Protectorate under the Royal Niger Company which ended in 1914, parallels the rise and fall of Okrika for very different (commercial) reasons. Further, like Onitsha's meteoric commercial rise after the 'fall' of administrative Asaba, Okrika's commercial fall had been accompanied by the meteoric rise of then administrative Port Harcourt in the wake of the enactment of its status as Colonial port city, and in addition to the project to here terminate the main North-South railway line of Nigeria's proposed eastern corridor.
their style and appearance, index a particular historical era, add to the connoted value of the potential bride, and remind the in-laws (or potential ones) present, of the good fortune that is being visited (or may be so visited) upon them by a successful union. The term *Irigha* itself translates to 'I do not go astray'[^2], which when forms of marriage are considered at the end of the following chapter (ch.7), are directed at justifying intra-House marriage.

Such greatly revered objects of any Okrikan family, may include not only textiles, but also photographs of an event in the past, as well as various written materials which together may be considered the family archive. All such objects are also usually kept in the care of female members of the extended family, who must give permission for their use[^3]. It would appear that in Okrika custom, such objects operate within a complex of signification (and of things deemed significant and important), which allows us to understand that they have become fetishized[^4] instruments connecting any one individual to the ubiquitous presence of one's ancestors. Nevertheless, and despite the difficulties it causes to our present interest, it is probably to such historical hesitancy with which their frequent and un-institutional handling becomes surrounded, that we owe the

[^2]: See Chief E.D.W. Opuogulaya (1975:3)

[^3]: Because historical documents are mainly in private hands, so that access to them is subject to the researcher's personal skill at negotiation and persuasion, access to the documents involved much more than an institutional letter of recommendation. It has involved interpersonal relationships, even including the attendance of the funeral of a friend of one of the persons from whom I sought assistance, in the process of building trust, and in normalizing my presence.

[^4]: I use the term in a way closer to its Marxist sense, than to the common understanding with which it is applied in ethnographic and anthropological texts.
survival of any of the documents whatsoever, and of the dispersed Okrikan archive.

The existence of a set of documents related to the Adinembo House was revealed during one of several interviews with the current family head, Tamuno Adinembo. Clearly however, a request for access to the documents such as they were, revisited the politics of the family¹⁴⁵, to the extent that in the final analysis, access was granted only to some of the full set of documents known to exist. These consisted of an old photograph of the building taken during its construction, and two plans of the building, only one of which was loaned briefly for the purpose of making a copy. The two design/construction drawings were similar, and on closer examination, it seemed that one of them was a hand drawn copy of the other, because they were both drawn on cloth (making the possibility of a mechanical reproduction unlikely), and because in the text which surrounds both drawings, a difference appears in the omission of some of this text in what is assumed to be the copy. It is proposed that towards the completion of the hand drawn copy, the density of line

¹⁴⁵ In an early interview, which turned out to be one of over seven, I had been promised that the full set of documents relating to the house, would be made available to me during the following visit. However, what played out through the narrations of my Okrikan partner and family head, was that several members of the family were unhappy with his intention to make the materials available to us, for reasons which were never quite clarified. On several occasions indeed, his pretext for non-production of the documents appeared to be untenable in its contradictions of previous apologia, suggesting perhaps that the vehemence with which some family members were opposing his proposed actions occasionally proved less appetizing than the threat of my showing up to be disappointed.

Interestingly, I had proposed (as the difficulty became apparent) meeting members of the family either individually or as a group, in order to explain the nature of the project, and to earn their trust. However, my partner decided this ran the risk of closing the door completely, and never encouraged pursuing this line of action. How right he was in this opinion, and what fears he may himself have had (how such a move may have undermined his own relationship to me) are matters which can only be speculated upon.
and text made it more and more likely that the differences between the original, and the incomplete copy become more difficult to identify, and that some of these differences slipped by the copyist. The drawing selected for copying, and therefore the one figured in this dissertation, and used in its analysis, was the one in which additional text was identified\textsuperscript{46}.

**An analysis of the drawing**

A drawing (fig. 100) of the Adinembo House, said to be the only one produced (apart that is from the hand made copy), is both undated and unsigned. Executed at a one-eighth inch to one foot scale, it is titled 'Proposed Building For Mr. Joshua Adinebo. Adinebo. Okrika Town', and therefore allows us to assert that it meant to function both a design drawing and as a contract drawing.

It consists of six independent sections. These are namely a front elevation and a sectional elevation, followed by four floor plans (reading left to right and starting at the top of the drawing sheet). The spatial organization of the proposed house as it is represented may be summarized as constituted by a bi-axially segmented core\textsuperscript{47} linked to, and surrounded by, a wide periphery. This structure is repeated on all four floors, the main difference being that the peripheral area on the ground floor is open (the punctuation which correspond to window and door openings in the upper floors, are unframed and unglazed here). Sectionally speaking, the storeys are of equal height (floor to floor), and are linked vertically by straight 

\textsuperscript{46} Text omitted in the copy being identified by this writer, and noted.

\textsuperscript{47} Divided into four unlinked quadrants.
Uncertainty surrounds the drawings provenance. In an interview Tamuno Adinembo tells that the drawings were secured as a sort of favor for Mr. Joshua Adinembo, by a close European friend of his who was an employee of the Royal Niger Company, one of the many acquaintances Joshua Adinembo made in the course of his palm-produce supplies business.

A foreign origin for the drawing is plausible, for it would not be difficult to believe that in seeking to posses a house of this grandeur, the local patron in the late 1910s might easily assume that it demanded the involvement of technicians practicing in Europe. In general terms moreover, the imported item, today as in the recent past, grants a certain additional prestige and mystique to an artifact’s owner. One then understands that Adinembo might have set out to acquire only a building that would obviously not be like anything easily available in Nigeria.

For the same reason however, when claims of foreign provenance are assumed, it is also appropriate to be cautious, since such a characterization may also equally well be fictional; Tamuno Adinembo, who narrated the history during the interview, may, in other words have learned a history of the house that was motivated by the same forces. It may be a history in which has been constructed a connection to Europe, in order to make the building all the more impressive to its audience.

Disputing the European origin of the drawings is then necessarily demanded by any attempt to discover the historical truth. This, in spite of the possibility that by thus making Europe critical to the study, this endeavor may trap one (or be seen so to do) in the hermeneutical condition commonly
termed the dilemma of post coloniality". It will be suggested therefore that the drawings are not produced by a person (or persons) fully familiar with European conventions of constructional technical drawing; and that the draftsperson has left a plethora of traces which imply a great degree of invention, a non-restrictive capacity for abstraction, a non-European and therefore unconventional paradigm of the abstract and its operations/relations with the real, and finally a spatial categorization, that is at once unexpected (from a Western perspective) and rigorously appropriate (from an Izhon and Igbo point of view).

It will be suggested in other words, that if one claims that the drawing is produced by a European, the evidence of the drawing insists that he or she would have had to possess the following: firstly, they would have to have lived in the south eastern Nigerian coastal region for enough time to have become intimately familiar with the spatial logic that would be workable within the south eastern Nigerian coastal life of a successful merchant. Secondly, such a person would have to have had no professional training in draftsmanship, but would have been involved in some capacity on a previous building in which reading of architect’s drawings was occasionally required of him or her. This person’s knowledge would therefore be such that if he or she applied themselves to it,

449 In other words, there is a the danger that in being so concerned with contesting Europeanness whenever such an opportunity arises, all Africanist critique becomes colonized by European concerns in the very act of attempting (after the historical fact of being colonized) to reclaim its autonomy. However, such a fear would be based on the assumption that indeed the ceremony surrounding a declaration of Independence, does translate in real terms, to a control over ones cultural and historical existence to the extent that may once have been possible. Little in the subsequent history, and the economics of African life would however sustain such a claim. It is possible to regard present opposition as properly belonging to a continued struggle, in the contemporary period for independence.

450 Of course the gender of the delineator cannot be assumed at this stage.
he or she could produce a drawing which could serve, at a general level, the same purposes for which design drawings are usually produced.

To commence an analysis of the plan (fig.____), the specificity of the drawing, in terms both of the idiosyncratic qualities of line, and of the character of their execution will be entered. In particular, the drawings might be read with the following kinds of question in mind. How are the anticipated intersections and junctions between masses rendered? Are such renditions different when the intersections are anticipated to involve the same building material than when they are of different materials? What representational lines, if any, are privileged at any such juncture?

Looking at the plan-sheet’s lower left hand side (fig. 100 and 101), one is immediately aware of three different renditions of the juncture. Each of these representational types occur in the space of the rectangle which forms the inner core of quadrants labelled ‘store’. At the center of this rectangle is found the application of one logical possibility; when walls intersect, the lines are simply allowed to run through each other, giving the represented masses a transparent quality. At the top right hand corner of the same inner rectangle, we see the occurrence of the second possibility. One set of parallel lines which mark the margins of the walls’ mass, is given priority over the other, apart from which nothing seems directed at distinguishing the two runs of wall. A third possibility, is indicated at the corner immediately below (that is, the lower right hand side corner). Here, the lines arrest each other at any points of intersection. That is to say that lines never cross each other, but are strictly delineated to mark the outer boundary of the physical wall
regardless of its planar profile (wall intersections are not distinguished from wall direction changes for example).

On this floor then, all three delineational possibilities are employed. Moreover, no sooner has one recognized a pattern or basis to the selection of which form of intersection(al) convention is to be applied in a given situation, than is it subverted by the next occurrence of a comparable situation. For example, the type in which one wall’s lines are given priority over another, occurs at the two upper intersections of the partition walls, whilst the third convention in which intersections never occur, are used for the junction of partition at the two lower corners. Since there is however a formal difference in the junctures as junctions (the upper pair is a crossing, and the lower pair are T-junctions) it is tempting to propose that the convention is one which may aid in the reading of a plan, by utilizing different conventions for different kinds of partition meeting points.

However, as soon as one moves to the second floor, this hypothesis is found not to hold. Here, the crossing of two upper partitions is not rendered in the form expected; that is the convention in which one set of parallel lines is given priority over another. Instead it is found that the lines are given a transparent quality, which was previously reserved only for the non perforated partitions which cross at the center of each floor plan. This gives the plan an unexpectedly layered quality in which different conventions are deposited one over the other on the same arrangement of lines, suggesting in a sense the possibility of reading each plan in

\[451\] In which for example the cross at the center of each plan uses the transparent convention because these are the only non-perforated walls; that is, one could propose in addition that the most solid walls are the ones that utilize the most line transparency as convention.
a number of different ways (or for a different purpose) depending on what one is interested in. For this reason, it is also likely that during the construction of the actual building it would have been difficult, in the absence of the draftsperson, to be certain what exactly the layout and form of the walls are meant finally to become.

The evidence of the plan itself suggests however that the latter situation would have been the more likely, that the mixed conventions are not a purposeful attempt to register a doubled message. It must be concluded instead that the delineator is not following any particular set of rules or conventions, but is merely making decisions as he or she comes across problems, and moreover is doing so without necessarily referring to a previous decision taken in a similar instance.

In another example, external 'pillers'(sic), which appear to be properly describable as pilasters, have been rendered by shading them in, making them solid against a background of voided wall. This convention is found to be maintained through all the floors, although one is hard pressed to understand what this is supposed to indicate. The most likely interpretation of this convention is that the pillars are indeed intended to be incorporated structural elements. This is confirmed somewhat in the '4th floor' plan, where we find a system of rolled steel joists incorporated into a concrete floor, and apparently forming a framed lattice, supported at the extremities by these peripheral 'pillers'. Yet, this cannot be. If these pilasters are the only structural verticals in the whole building, then the implication is that the joists span sixty feet across at their longest extensions. Given the structural technology available at the time in Okrika, and even in larger towns like Lagos for that matter,
such a feat would then have been extremely difficult to achieve. Therefore, and again, it seems more likely that we are faced with a product whose maker has some knowledge of the way in which large structures are held up, but who may not quite have realized that the structural aspects of the proposal are impracticable, despite the apparent propriety they communicate on being perused\textsuperscript{452}. It is interesting nevertheless to suggest that this structural idiosyncracy is parallel to the tendency already observed for the conception of the building to be carried out on a floor by floor basis, with many of the systematic qualities of one floor not quite being transferred to the next as would be normal. In other words, conceived on a floor by floor basis, the building as drawing has either not been successfully reintegrated to the whole, or quite oppositely, its 'inconsistencies' may indicate instead a local attitude that is extremely utilitarian. Explained in this manner, the well-sealed fourth floor and the roof over it (assembled from steel-joist reinforcement and concrete) has some advantage in the tropics with regard to water penetration for example, and as a function would serve no purpose if for consistency's sake it were maintained as such on the floor below. The draftsperson's decision which proposes that the floor at the second and third levels be fabricated from wood, may thus be understood simply as displaying a priority for what might be thought of as a local economy of materials; a sort of literal functionalism.

With respect to structure alone however, the approach taken in respect of the level by level design of the floors results

\textsuperscript{452} There is some indication that at the junction of the horizontal grid of steel reinforcements on the fourth floor are meant to be located vertical iron poles located within concrete columns. This would reduce the horizontal span to more reasonable dimensions. However, it would also indicate that the structural system of the whole building lacks consistency from one level to the next (since they do not all show evidence of this grid of poles).
in mixed structural systems. Reading the schedule (specification) on the right hand side of the drawing (fig. 102a and 102b), the building appears supported in the first instance by 18" columns at the periphery (line 8), but in the interior (reading the schedule together with the section) the vertical supports appear to be 3" diameter rolled steel (R.S.) 'stanchions' (or posts) which have been embedded in cement block walls of diminishing thickness. On this dual system of supports is then carried either a wooden floor or a concrete floor reinforced by a grid of rolled steel joists. Furthermore, the proposal to install multiple floor types contradicts the logic of another structural aspect of the building, namely the columns inside the peripheral walls, which are designed such that their width decreases as one goes further up the building, a not uncommon, structurally sophisticated and efficient ploy. However, this structural revelation is countered by the use of a concrete floor at the fourth level for no immediately obvious reason, effectively making the house top-heavy, since the roof is also indicated as put together using concrete. It is has been suggested that while it may offer some protection from water penetration, it is unclear that it offers an advantage to regulating internal temperature; certainly it does not offer any structural advantage nor does it make sense from the point of view of structural efficiency. This might indicate in fact that the draftsperson was not formally trained, and does not appear to have been conversant (or concerned) with either European building structural technology, or with the elemental rules of modern Statics.

\[453\] Which are, if we assume that the darkened 'pillars' are structural, left out of the plan and only appear in the sectional elevation

\[454\] The lower a column is in a multi-levelled building, the more weight it carries, and therefore in theory, the larger it should be.
Regarding the drawing itself as architectural drawing (as an object in its own right) demands of its viewer and reader, that it be subjected to certain conventions of abstraction which should allow aspects of the building to be communicated with a minimum not unreasonable effort. In this regard, it is interesting to note that a section is included in the series of six drawings set out on the page. In a number of important ways, this sectional drawing is made so as to conform with at least one of a number of recognized styles for executing a drawing of this category. The sectional elevation is projected from one particular plane, which bisects the building through all its floors. This plane of bisection is moreover indicated on all the plans by means of a labelled sectional line, and is the basis for the title of the section drawing itself: 'Section through AB.CD.EF.GH' a title that is in itself excessively recurrent".

Other aspects of the section are still more unusual in their heightened sense of abstract and conventionally redundant layering. The flights of stairs that on the plans lead from a core area on every floor to one of the peripheral areas, are represented in the sectional elevation. However, given the sectional plane represented by the line AB.CD.EF.GH., it would not be expected that the stairs appear in profile as they do, but rather should appear as a pair of parallel, vertical lines with horizontal rungs (or risers, if one wants to de-emphasize their ladder like appearance and form). There are two likely explanations for the fact that they are not drawn in the manner expected. One is that the draftsperson was aware of the difficulty a layman might be faced with

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[455] Section A-B for example would be adequate.
comprehending the abstraction of a representation of stair flight as if it were a vertically hung ladder. The draftsperson may therefore have invented the combination of two perpendicular sectional planes in the representation of one, with the intention of communicating unambiguously with the client.\footnote{Many cultures adopted a similar representation (Ancient Egypt, nineteenth and early twentieth century Yoruba. Its presence in any particular culture is apparently unrelated with the suggestion above for the Adinembo House.}

The other possibility is that the draftsperson himself or herself could not come to terms with or accept the logical endpoint of the sectional conventions of abstraction; that in other words it really did not make sense to the drawing’s producer. On his or her own initiative then, the decision was made to render the stair flights closer to what would actually be seen, and in particular with what corresponds to the actual corporeal experience of going up a flight of stairs (as opposed to going up a ladder) with all the sense of the slope of the flight and the treads.\footnote{This problem, judging by the writer’s own educational experience, is one faced in fact by every first time student of architectural representation. The dissociation from the experience of space, of the abstraction involved in the architectural drawing, is moreover a problem that is traceable in the history of the invention of architectural drawing in any culture in which it was applied.}

Either possibility would remain both innovative and inventive of the drawing’s producer. However, it seems ultimately more probable that the second explanation is the accurate one, given one other characteristic of the incorporation of the stairs into the section. This is that even with the decision to render the stairs in profile, the representation does not remain faithful to the assumption that two planes are represented simultaneously. For were this the case, all the stair flights ought to be shown parallel to each other (as a
series of parallel diagonal lines, since this is what their representation and annotation on plan implies) rather than in the way they are delineated, some parallel, some facing away from each other, exploding or radiating outward from a vague hypothetical center.

Here, but with more difficulty, it does seem possible to justify this idiosyncratic representation as a device meant to communicate a reality more immediately to a layman client, as the same representation simultaneously provides sufficient information for the building contractor.\(^{458}\) Departing from formal reality, the only reality to which this representation may refer to would be the experiential one of walking around the building from one stair to another, and mounting them in order (or out of order). In doing this, the stairs would be experienced as quite dispersed; the actual experience of them would deny that a strict order such as the implied parallelism, let alone that they all face in the same direction, might exist in the subsequent built reality. One might then imagine that the draftsperson was quite sophisticated, and that the drawing is an intentional attempt to combine the abstraction of a sectional projection with the experience of movement in space.

More believable however (given unsophisticated levels of control evident in other aspects of the drawing) is the possibility that the delineator failed, as the drawing was in the process of production, to be aware of (or to anticipate sufficiently\(^{459}\)) the necessity for the stairs to be drawn

\(^{458}\) Such a person was involved in the erection of the house as is evident later.

\(^{459}\) The drawing seems to be ink on cloth as has been pointed out previously. It is therefore not the product of a trace produced over a guiding pre-drawn underlay. Once a delineation is made, there is (continued...)
parallel to each other. As a result, the delineator then seems to have taken recourse to a representational strategy that seemed more able to closely resemble the anticipated experience of actually moving through such a building as such a structure had been conceived. Though the draftsperson may well have been aware of the demands of architectural convention, he or she completely resists its rules in this situation, because of the apparent contradiction between such rules and the experience of the space as anticipated.

Again then, the evidence seems to point, however inconclusively, to the likelihood that the drawing’s creator is not a European formally trained in building drafting; certainly not one trained as an architect. Two other possibilities nevertheless remain. In the first place, the drawer may be an untrained European somewhat familiar with architectural drawing, but perhaps who rarely if ever, had to draw. The other possibility is that the drawer is an African who has learned some of the rudiments of European drafting either through apprenticeship in a colonial or commercial organization in the country, or, the African draftsperson is formally trained in European drawing convention, but that such training occurred only over a shorter period of time than would be normal in Europe. For the latter possibility moreover, the training itself would have to have been one that was not undertaken in Europe, but a training that was undertaken within the borders of the new colonial state. The evidence of the architecture of the building itself as

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also no possibility of erasure. The draughtsman therefore put down every resolution as soon as it was satisfactory. Even were we to assume that errors were realized after such a dilectiation, the drawing serves as a record of impulsive convention, and therefore is a record of the draughtsman’s expectations, and of the kinds of immediate answers which his or her own past knowledge and experience has prepared him or her for.
proposed in the drawing, the character and formal dispositions of its various elements, would as we shall observe shortly, lend credibility to these latter alternatives.

A number of characteristics of the building’s style are relevant to our analysis. The bay proportions are unusual, and compared to European preferences and taste, appear quite curious. Thus, though the decision to employ symmetry both horizontally and vertically is characteristic of European and Near Eastern Islamic architecture rather than it is of sub-Saharan tendencies, one is surprised to find that the central bay, which both marks the place at which one enters the proposed building is not emphasized in any way, but that instead what to European architectural discourse might be framed as an overly timid gesture of entry, is made.

It has also been mentioned that symmetry characterizes the vertical layering of the proposal for the Adinembo House. The bottom and topmost floors (fourth) are identical save for minor differences made to accommodate function. The ‘second’ and ‘third’ floors, which form the middle of the building’s elevation, differ from the floors that surround them, but are in themselves completely identical. What is unusual about this composition, is that European buildings are rarely vertically symmetrical. Certainly, in the typology of the house, the norm is the layered, tripartite composition consisting of a lower

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460 It must be admitted that even for Europe and the Near East horizontal symmetry occurs rarely, though it is recognizable.

461 Many renowned European buildings in fact share the quality of a small central bay over the entrance area. However, they normally emphasize the entry in some manner, most typically be the projection of a pediment or pedimented porch over the entrance area.

462 The rectangular entrance door at the ground level is replaced by one arch of the same series at the top floor, where no entrance is required at the location.
level, a piano nobile, and finally of a top level. At this last level, the floor to ceiling height is shrunken significantly, and its windows are therefore usually smaller. They (windows) are also geometrically at variance from the design of the windows of the floors below, presumably so as not to take away from the dominance of the entrance level and the grand and most significant spaces of the floor above. This disposition is most common. In fact, the four-floored country house (England), villa (Italy), grande maison (France), or herrenhaus (Germany) is not as commonly encountered, and when it is there seems often an attempt to maintain the idea of a tripartite form by for example having the piano nobile contain two floors which are projected onto the facade in a manner that creates the sense that it is proportionally a third the size of the other two levels. Only the Italian palazzo (an primarily urban type typical of course of Venice, Florence and Sienna), and more recently the nineteenth century Parisian apartment block is commonly to be found four or more floors high. Even in these instances the copying of the lower floor's facade for the elevation at the last level is, however, uncommon. Moreover, Italy, of all the European countries mentioned above, had the least representation in the trading communities of West African coastal (specifically south-east Nigerian) society. Italy is therefore unlikely to be the ultimate inspiration for the

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463 In terms of social representation that is, if not necessarily in terms of the internal dynamics of the social life of the inhabiting family.

464 There was no shortage of Roman Catholics of course, especially amongst the missionaries, but we have no reason to think that missionaries were involved with this project. In any case, the Adinembo's are identified, when this is ever raised, as are most Okrikans, with Protestantism rather than with Roman Catholicism.
idea, except in the indirect sense that if the draftsperson received instruction from any European person, books or drawings, then for this general style of building even English examples would exude a certain Italian influence. This possibility is obvious in a comparison of a French design from de Neuffrages's style book, which borrowing from Italian ideas does share much with the facade of the Adinembo House (compare figs. 103 & 104).

For the other three cultural areas, when the fourth floor has to be (for whatever reason) conceived, it is usually incorporated into the space of the roof, from which dormers protrude to provide light to the used spaces within. It would certainly be unusual to find in a European or Euroamerican neo-classical town or country house, the lavishness manifested in the upper most floor of the proposal for the Adinembo House.

There is another architectural category worth interrogating for the authorship of the proposed building: the spatial organization, and the uses and functions to which the spaces are expected to be put as indicated by the labels given each room on the drawing. To deal first with the spatial organization and its logic, we note first (and as we have briefly commented elsewhere) that there is a conceptualization of the building in semi-oppositional terms of core and periphery. However, unlike what European sensibilities might

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465 If it is imagined that the draughts person could well have received instruction from European persons, books or drawings, then all such English examples would exude Italian influences given the historical connection in England between the architectural design or pattern book and the Italian models on which it was based. However, there is at this point no direct evidence of the availability of such books in Nigeria during this period.

466 Typically housing domestic servants.
lead one to expect of a European building of equal stature, we find that the space at the geometrical center of the proposed house is here not the grand, expansive void of the Palladian house, meant to represent (and impress upon its viewer) the power and wealth of the occupant by it awe inspiring quality, but that rather it has (on the ground level, which is also the main level at which the visitor seems expected to arrive\textsuperscript{467}) become, according to its label, simply a set of stores.

Moreover, this central space is divided into four equal parts, a property which the European mansion house, as idealized in the Palladian villa of the centralized plan type, reserves exclusively for the peripheral, functional spaces (see Chiswick House in London, or its inspiration in Padua (fig 105) (Wittkower [1978]). This is a total inverse of the logic of the European house. Not only are the four peripheral spaces of the European house salvaged from their typical marginality so as to take quite literally the center stage here as the central spaces of the Palladian house is expelled to the margins, but, the reversal of this European spatial logic does nevertheless not disintegrate the distinct separation of the four quadrants so brought together at the center of the Adinembo House. The core of the Adinembo house is composed as a quadrate rectangle, and moreover as one amongst which interpermeability is excluded. That is, we may not, according to the drawing, move from one storeroom space to another, without first exiting into one of the peripheral areas. This center is thus not only the very opposite of the void, but in addition, we are not to be allowed the possibility of moving around inside it, and experiencing this space as center.

\textsuperscript{467} Thus the small flight of stairs by which one ascends to the main entrance door.
Constantly, it anticipates (because it is a drawing and not itself a building) the displacement of its own center, and thwarts any tendency or desire the reader may have of finding such a focus. Having said this one might also understand this spatial form with more simplicity and perhaps elegance by seeing it as conforming, within the interval of an apparently European edifice, to the non-centeredness of the Okrikan/Izhon house, whose focus is instead a conceptual center not meant to be spatially realized” (see fig. 106) in the way in which the European (house) is meant to be a spatial microcosm of the structure of the universe that Europe invents”.

Interestingly, the stair flights have been located in these centrally placed rooms. On the ground floor, this would mean that access from here to the first floor is only possible through one of the spaces which have been designated ‘store’. It therefore combines the idea of the grand staircase rising from the central hall of the European stately home (by

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469 See ‘Community Organization and Architecture’ in Alagoa E.J., and Tamuno T.N. [Eds] (1989): Land and People of Nigeria: Rivers State. Port Harcourt, Riverside Communications. This essay is quite preliminary, and though it includes house types from closely related groups (such as Kalabari), it has no plans of customary Okrika houses. Nevertheless, for all the areas it describes (and for which it gives a formalized diagrammatic sketch), there seems to be no indication of centrality, or of an interest in a core, many of them being linear only. Indeed, Talbot’s remark, quoted in a previous chapter that ‘the central or general room called Boikiri, contains the shrine to Tamuno....’ (see chapter 3 of this dissertation) is only true in the sense that the iru anya mmuo is central to the Igbo obi. That is to say that this centrality applies only to the male reception area of the Kalabari house when the house head’s structure is considered alone, but in terms of the compound (the more accurate equivalent of the idea of house in Europe) the boikiri looses any sense of a physical centrality, though it certainly possesses a sacred or spiritual centrality. Indeed in Alagoa’s version of the Kalabari compound, the boikiri is simply rendered ‘parlour’, and a further structure within the compound the oyiapu-oposukube is named as the men’s room (though he does not indicate what this term means, it is the largest structure in his schematic plan of the compound, ad is located in a manner which suggests that like the Hausa compound, it is the main space in which a family’s interaction with the public might occur). Given such a scheme, the boikiri looses even further any claim to all but a centrality in the daily spiritual communion with the world of deities and ancestors.

469 ref. on the European invention of the centralized universe, and of the play out of this in architecture.
ascending from a centralized space), with the other quality of such residences; servant’s stairs located at the peripheral, separated ‘functional areas’ of such European homes. The reversal of the European logic is maintained here since it is of course not the servant who we expect to ascend them, but the revered family head.

Only one flight of stairs appears to connect one floor to the next one. Already noted was the fact that the first flight of stairs is proposed to rise from a space labelled as Store, arriving, on the first floor, in the Sitting Room. This presumably marks the visitor’s progress to the first place of formal reception. The next flight of stairs seems to be the more private, rising again from a core area; from a room labelled as Bedroom, and arriving in the Dining Room. A subsequent flight of stairs rises from yet another core space simply called Room, up to the fourth floor space (again not actually represented in the fourth floor plan) titled Dining Room (if we follow its plan location), or if we choose to read

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470 In the European setting, such staircases were of restricted access, and for use exclusively by servants. This separation of circulatory routes through the building allowed the appearance (and illusion) to be maintained that servants appear almost by magic in the rooms in which they serve, since they are not run into as the owners and their guests move around the main routes.

471 Interestingly, as the stair-flights are drawn in section, the space required in order to contain each flight (headroom and all) literally takes up most of the space, leaving very little usable space, in spite of the label’s contrary suggestion. This again appears to result from the degree of familiarity the draftsperson has with sectional representation, and with spatial imagination in this context.

472 Customary south east Nigerian houses, and many modern ones are surrounded by a veranda on the ground floor, as is this mansion. This veranda often serves as a reception area itself ...a place where visitors are received who may either only be acquaintances and thus not welcome in the deeper areas of the house, who are not thought important enough to be given a formal reception, or who are thought so familiar that an informal sitting in this covered external sit-out is not inauspicious.

473 The location where the stairs actually arrive is not represented on the plan as would be conventional, though the section indicates this location by implication.
its alternate rise as delineated in the section, it lands in the same typological space at the other end of the rectangle which here is labelled however as Conversation Room. Or, if we follow the section line on plan, this stair might even be conceived of as anticipated to land in the Dressing Room. One final flight of stairs, noticeably lacking both balusters and a handrail, rises from the Dressing Room on the fourth floor up to the Trap Door on the roof deck.

Detailed descriptions as to how the as-built layout would have differed from the drawing, or descriptions of how these spaces were actually used [how their social logics were enacted] on a daily basis, have not been accessible. Certainly, the layout as proposed is difficult to make sense of. If one assume that the spaces were built as drawn, or at the very least that the drawing was considered adequate to the lifestyle and social organization anticipated as likely to inhabit the building, then this raises a number of interesting questions.

Let it be assumed firstly that the plan is the more accurate record of the designer’s intentions regarding circulation within the building (that the section disagrees in so far as it attempts to represent sensual experience). Since there are no obvious alternative routes up to the first floor than the one already traced a couple of paragraphs earlier, would visitors to the building therefore be expected to traverse a storage space in order to make their way to their final destination at the Sitting Room one level higher? If this was the intention, how may we interpret such a scheme? Perhaps even more puzzling is the fact that access to the Dining Room on the third floor, is to be had only after having climbed up the staircase which starts its rise in a bedroom.
Other spatial interconnections which perplex the contemporary viewer include the location of the rooms marked Office, on a path which intersects the sequence from Dining Room to Dressing Room, a sequence which incidentally is the only one available to a user desiring to reach this Dressing Room. And, what can be made of the elongated fourth floor area marked of as a Hall, and which would appear to be more appropriate to the ground level location occupied instead by a store?

These qualities, following no logic when viewed from the location of a Western subject suggest the unlikelihood that this drawing was produced by anyone other than a southern Nigerian, if not specifically an Okrikan", or by the building's mason, Mazi Onwudinjo of Asaba. And, even though it does not literally cohere any better when one attempts to imagine how these room labels might indicate a proposal for use conceived for the lifestyle of an indigenous Okrikan merchant, it does allow a certain interpretation. If it is imagined that a draftsman who has created a building based on a spatial type whose properties (core/periphery, stable quadrant/spiralling quarters) are forced on a given request for a four-storied European-classical building ....If the same draftsman is imagined to know a series of labels which the proper European house plan contains, but has no real experience of the logic which governs their dispersal through the building, then the building's plan, and the dispersal of 'functions' within it, makes real sense when viewed as a

474 The writer has no evidence to indicate that a draftsperson of Okrika origin would have existed at the time. However, for southern Nigeria generally, and specifically in Yorubaland to the east of the study area, building constructional drafting was a well established skill by the 1920s time. And, perhaps the meaning the plan as an object already had in this wider context, is well illustrated by the self representation the Oba of ___ chooses for himself, in which photograph he and his draftsman are shown holding up a drawing for the Oba's proposed new palace building, over whose drawing they appear to be deliberating. It seems to be suggesting that a certain prestige accrues to the very fact that one builds from plans.
proposal to grant a local interpretation to unfamiliar usages.

It needs also to be noted, here writing with the assumption of a specifically Western subjectivity, that certain functions which one would expect to find in such a building are, further, completely absent. There are no bathrooms indicated in the vicinity of the Bedrooms, nor are they found anywhere in the building for that matter. Also absent are any kitchens from which the Dining Rooms would be served.

The characteristics of the Adinembo House which, if one considered it as a European building, would have to be interpreted as idiosyncratic, are qualities with which one is familiar in the spatial arrangement of the pre-modern Igbo and Izhon domestic setting, in which the 'jewel' as it were of the domestic spaces, the place in which the adult males congregate and in which the family head usually sleeps, is quite separate from the spaces in which the more 'ordinary' activities of everyday life occur, and in which are kept objects related to its necessities. The absence of these kinds of space from such an eminently large building, then, would hardly have but been thought normal by indigenes for whom either defecating in a building or cooking inside it would have been culturally unacceptable, no matter how clinically the new technologies might make possible the occurrence of either activity. What one therefore seems to be faced with is an architecture which even if it appears to be 'European' initially, in fact negates it and whilst being at the same time infused ultimately with much that derives from Igbo and Izhon domestic spatial structure.
In a manner of speaking, one may understand this building then as one that is more subversive than it is mimetic of European expectation or tradition, especially if a particular definition (and a more useful one) for the notion of the subverter is admitted”. For, in regarding the house from the exterior, the idea is projected of Joshua Adinembo as ‘civilized’ (as the African person accepting things European and even successfully reproducing it for his own consumption... the sort of person that the Oxbridge trained Colonial officer might expect to be more comfortable with than he could be with the ordinary native), whilst in reality being resistant to the Colonial project to impose a hierarchy of culture on southern Nigeria. In this hierarchy, European culture was presumed superior, and those who adopted this culture or (as was the case with the Fulani aristocracy of Northern Nigeria), those whose own culture seemed to contain elements parallel to those of European tradition, were more easily romanticized, and enabled to progress in the new society. The representation that the proposed house seems intent to offer either the visiting European or the institutional Colonial person, is one of a safe and familiar European civility, while in reality such a comparison reveals that the plan reverses, inverts and destabilizes the European resemblance: suggests allowance for the survival of Izhon forms of being and of the culturality by which this is comprised.

Text in the Drawing
So far, the textual content of the drawings have been examined only in relation to their function as interpretative tools for

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475 See De Certeau(1984) (though Class is not strictly the issue in Okrika), and Bhabha (1994) (both on ‘minorities’ in London, and on the British encountering Indians unwilling to be made over in a particular manner.)
understanding the way in which the anticipated use of the building was conceived. As architectural production-drawing, the text also has a purely communicative function as well, and may therefore be engaged as text.

Apart from the names such as Dressing Room and Conversation room, and apart also from the title of the drawing at its top, the text is present only to function as a guide for constructional specification. One type of text is the figural; indices defining room sizes in feet and inches, to which has been attached regularly either the room labels, or a brief description of structural type. On the 2nd floor plan’s front wall for example (fig. 101), we find ‘...9" wall...’ and ‘...18"x 18" con pillar...’. The latter annotation is located adjacent to a darkened L-shaped form which seems to surround the corner of the building. This seems to be a convention referring either to structural tying or bracing, or it is meant to indicate that the portion of the wall is a reinforced concrete pilaster, distinct from the masonry blockwork of which the rest of the large part of the house’s fabric consists. In the absence of such an interpretation, there is no justifiable reason why these sections are shaded in, since the pilaster, and the wall from which it protrudes, belong to the same sectional plane and therefore ought not to be distinguished in rendering.

Much of the annotation is however not ambiguous, and quite familiar. Thus the roof-deck annotations which top the sectional elevation (fig. 107), gives a good idea what is proposed that the deck be made of. Unusually solid and providing an almost impenetrable barrier, its function appears to go beyond either that of a roof, or of a roof deck strong enough to support the weight of people who might choose to use
it as an activity space. Rather, the degree of its reinforcement begins to hint at the possibility that the security, both of its inhabitants and of its material contents some of which may have been of significant value, may have been an important consideration. It may also have served both to secure the roof against rain-water penetration, and perhaps may have been proposed as a means of insulating the spaces below it from the intensity of the mid day sun⁷⁶.

The greatest concentration of annotations is however to be found in a list at the right hand side edge of the drawing (figs. 102a and 102b). This list appears to function as the Specifications, in that it details as much as must then have been thought necessary, the materials, sizes and occasional locations of items intended for incorporation in the building. A closer look at this list indicates that there is order attached to it. It starts from the foundations, then details the sizes and material of the internal partitions' walls in sequence from one level to the next (from which we can gather, as mentioned previously that the walls reduce in width the higher up one goes, a strategy which is structurally sophisticated⁷⁷). The list then mentions the structural elements of the surrounding external walls, then it specifies the floors in sequence, ending with the concrete roof. The final section, corresponding to a sort of 'Fixtures and Fittings' sub-section (in the parlance of the present day specification document), gives an indication of what the doors and windows are to be.

⁷⁶ More recent understandings of the nature of tropical climate and of heat flows in buildings, indicate however that in the tropics massiveness is no solution to heat, since diurnal temperatures remain largely unchanged in the twenty four hour cycle.

⁷⁷ Since the center of gravity of the building will then be kept well below where it would have originally been otherwise, thus making it more stable and less likely to tilt over.
If it may by now be assumed that the draftsperson is Nigerian, it can at least be said that such a Nigerian has had some formal training or apprenticeship in both the art of building and in architectural draftsmanship, in order that the drawing conceptualized to the extent that it is. In fact, the evidence of the critique made previously when coupled with these more practical aspects, would indicate that the delineator has more proficiency and familiarity with the Europe of technical draftsmanship, than with the Europe of architectural culture. Certainly the use of the somewhat specialized word 'Stanchion' on line sixteen of the 'specification list', would lead one to infer either a degree of technical training, or significant experience as an apprentice or employee, in the then burgeoning industry of non-customary building construction (both carpentry and masonry).

It is interesting to compare this drawing with another one (actually a set) (fig.108) whose provenance and traditions of delineation are, for the history of architectural representations at least, more familiar. This drawing is prepared for the Lieutenant Governor’s Residence at Enugu, a town which by the time the drawing was produced† had become the new provincial capital of the Enugu Division. The drawings are dated March 30, 1929, and was therefore completed only some five years after the one for the Adinembo house. Though the two drawings are for a domestic building, each intended to be of unusual grandeur, we most bear in mind constantly, that the Adinembo drawing proposes the mansion of an African

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† Enugu became first a commercial center of activity around the coal industry centered on Emene, a town just outside Enugu and in which coal mining commenced in 1911. Enugu itself became the official provincial capital shortly after.
who was a colonial subject and a merchant, while the Lieutenant Governor’s drawing is that of the highest ranking Colonial administrator in the province. It must also be noted that at the time Enugu and Port Harcourt were not under the same provincial administration.

Again, the writer’s interest is primarily to consider the sheet which consists of different elevations, as a drawing; as an instrument of convention, whose norms of delineation traverse the particular style of the buildings represented. That is, one is little concerned with the differences that one may observe in the nature of the objects proposed, particularly as the Lieutenant Governor’s lodge post-dates the Adinembo house, and bears no resemblance to it (fig 109).

One of the notable differences is the way the 1929 drawing (fig. 108) is easier to follow. Easily understood are the enclosure of each space (how much is wall and how much is transparent window), as well as how one might move from one room to another, what doors we encounter in making these motions, and in which directions they swing in order to open. One of the techniques employed here, and which make this reading possible, is a standard technique of western delineation still current at the time in Europe and the Americas; this is the practice of shading in sections of wall that are meant to be built as solid. Left undarkened, would then be parts of it which correspond to the presence of a door or window, and which thus literally evoke permeability. It is this quality, encoding the plan as a horizontally cut section at one level, and thus allowing the visibility of the inside of a mass (the darkened portions of a wall in which we are not particularly interested) from that which surrounds it and
which is not cut through”, that one learns to read as enclosure. Such reading would indicate to a large extent (and more accurately with the subject’s increasing architectural literacy) an approximation of the experience of a set of spaces in a building, were it subsequently to be built. With the Adinembo House blueprint, as previously detailed, such conventions are not to be had. The embodied contemporary reader, a member of an audience outside the one which the drawing was meant to address, is required to work harder at understanding its experiential nature. Attempting to comprehend it today, one never quite feels the sense of having accurately interpreted (and anticipated) the proposed reality.

With the 1929 drawing, a clear hierarchy of space is also recognizable. Passageways and veranda’s are less expansive than bathrooms, which are themselves much smaller than the sitting room and the bedrooms, both clearly thought of as being of the highest significance. This contrasts with the Adinembo house, in which we find the unexpected equality of entrance veranda’s (and connecting passageways), bedrooms, sitting rooms, and dining rooms. Moreover, stairways are conceived of as spatial elements that demand their own locations, so that whether they are as dominant as they are in the flight located just south of the Sitting Room, or are as unintrusive as they are in the single-flight stairs located at the rear right hand corner, they contrast with the stairways as this is proposed in the blueprint of the Adinembo house. In the Governor's Lodge, these are inserted, as already indicated, within functional spaces, which (imagining how they would work in terms of their size relative to the rooms in

479 The same convention is used on the other hand when the wall’s cut-through profile varies from that of the wall itself.
which they are located, or in terms of the headroom required
and the related areas of floor that would be cut out in the
level above) they come to dominate on both the space from
which they depart, and the one at which they arrive. This
particular difference may be interpreted in two ways. It may
result from the difficulty the Adinembo House’s delineator may
have had with anticipating that the stairs occupy space as
such, and that therefore they should be imagined separate from
the spaces which they connect. The draftsperson simply failed
to give the problem adequate consideration. On the other hand,
this variance may result from a different priority given to
the stair as object, such that its value as an independent
architectural element (as say also is the door, or the
balustrade), is considered equal or as significant as the
value of the room or space which it occupies.

There exists enough evidence (indicated earlier, and detailed
subsequently) to suggest that the stair in Igbo culture
certainly became a status-granting architectural commodity,
and this may be what is indexed here by its repeated
incommodious placement. This evidence is however inconclusive,
and we must continue to maintain the possibility, and a real
one at that, that the presentation of the stair flight derives
simply from the absence, in the locality’s culture of
building, of a set of conventions which have become
internalized and rationalized.

Though the labelling of the rooms are parallel, in the sense
that the Adinembo House drawing uses room labels most of which
are found in the Lieutenant-Governor’s Lodge drawing, a
difference in the way each drawing disperses its related text
in adding further to the drawing’s technical meaning, may be
discovered.
One may choose to attribute the plethora of names, and their administrative titles distributed in boxes at the lower levels of the drawing-sheet, to the bureaucratized Colonial state, and to the requirement that it be possible to locate individual responsibility precisely. That is, it is clear that as remains the case for professionalized architectural practice in every country today, decision-making must be accounted for, and plans (drawn, written or even verbalized) must be authorized. Yet, the drawing for the Adinembo house, for all its detail and accompanying written specification, omits completely the name of the person who conceived, drew, or 'traced' it. This lack of interest in authorship; this willingness to omit the identity of the delineator forces us to review our assumptions that boxes with names in the them are simply an administrative requirement. For, when we consider that the 'tracer' of the Governor's Lodge drawing, a person who most likely was considered a minion in the larger scheme of Colonial things, still had to have his own separate box, so that the architect Mr. Hood⁴⁸⁰ who holds the position at which responsibility would stop as such, is not allowed to cover over the productive work of Mr. Akenbor, then it seems clear that a certain European/American individualism is being maintained in the context of Nigeria. That is, in the parallel most clearly staked out between the production of art or architecture in the West which comes signed by its author, and the African tendency where local knowledge of the author exists without the object itself having to carry the signs of authorship beyond the stylistic traces of the maker, we have reason to argue, it seems, that this distinction replicates

⁴⁸⁰ This name is not clearly legible in the original drawing. The recognition I make may therefore be a little inaccurate.
the more familiar one between the identification of the author in the two drawings.

Colonial period drawings for building in eastern Nigeria produced at around the same period abound in the relevant Public Works Department's non-archived files. They appear not to produce more typological distinctions; perhaps they were produced in the standardized setting of the semi-professionalized colonial office. There is however, another set of drawings produced before or in the year 1912 in Eastern Nigeria, which may be of interest to the discussion here, and may to some degree arbitrate between the two we have looked at so far.

The drawings in question are of a technical workshop meant to be erected at the Hope Waddell Institute Calabar (fig 110). The person of Hope Waddell was mentioned briefly in an earlier chapter. The institution named after him (and which

481 The drawing is signed by the institution's Principal, and is dated January 1912. This would mean the drawing was finished just before that date, and possibly extending back into 1911.

482 This fact is mentioned because it is likely that architectural drawing, like architecture in which western traditions were incorporated, had been produced in Western Nigeria for at least two decades, primarily as a result of the influence of the Colony of Lagos.

483 The reader may recall that Hope Waddell had worked as a missionary with the Presbyterian mission in Jamaica. He first came to Nigeria in the late 1800s, apparently on the behest of Jamaicans of African origin who desired to see the establishment of Christianity on the African 'homeland' (Sanneh[1983:107-108]). In pursuance of this, he was granted a two year leave from his duties in Jamaica. According to Ajayi (1965) '[...]'On his outward trip to Calabar via England, [Waddell] was accompanied by Sam Edgerley an English Printer, Andrew Chisholm, a mulatto carpenter and Edward Miller, a Negro teacher (presumably Jamaican).' [emphasis is present author's.] The person of Chisolm would be interesting to investigate further, since he must have influenced the education of those who produced the drawings discovered here. He may have even been responsible for the style of the early church architecture east of the Cross River. Though it would seem unlikely that one may find material from his past, even in Jamaica itself. Future trails that might yield useful information would include knowledge of what the style and nature of the Jamaican church building was at the time of the above mentioned missionaries' departure, most particularly of the Jamaican presbytery from which congregation Chisholm probably came originally.
re-enters the discussion in a later section) was founded c1880 as a Methodist (Presbyterian) technical institute, in which various trades and subjects were taught, including carpentry, bricklaying and the somewhat more academic subjects of arithmetic, and technical drawing. Details of the content of the teaching at the time have not been recovered, though this fact only minimally restricts the interpretative purpose its introduction might offer here.

The drawings to which attention is turned here puts forward a proposal for the erection of a timber storage shed and workshops for the school, and is titled New Carpenters’ Workshop. Hope Waddell Institute (fig 111). That is, the drawing is probably not a teaching aid, but one made either by a member of the Institute’s staff, or by someone who had been contracted to produce it. The drawing does in fact have a signature of sorts. To the right side of the ‘Ground Plan’ the following text is found written at a diagonal: ‘Thomas Harty, Acting Principal. 17th June 1912.’ This might suggest that Harty is its draftsman. However a comparison of the handwriting of this note with that which labels the drawing itself (making allowances for stylization of the drawing’s text) suggests that the Principal is not the draftsman. It is likely instead that the signature is simply meant to indicate the Principal’s official acceptance and approval of the project. The identity of the draftsperson is therefore unknown at this point in time’.

4 From Calabar itself however, one finds evidence that the production of architectural drawings by local draftsmen is well established by 1922. In a written response to a visit by to one of Calabar’s chief’s, Henshaw, the colonial Resident, Mr. Hives writes on September 20, 1922 that, ‘You called shewing me the plans for a new school building-- I consider the scheme to be one of the best things the Town of Calabar have brought up for years.’ [emphasis is present authors]. NAE: CALPROF 5/12/667: ‘School Henshaw Town-New Buildings for- ’.
Though it precedes the Adinembo House drawing by ten years, it is nevertheless useful for suggesting the kind of drawing that is produced in a context, albeit in a pedagogical one, which coincides approximately with the period in which Mazi Onwudinjo would have learned his building craft, and in which period he may also (if it is assumed he may be its draftsman) have studied architectural drawing (Technical Drawing). Certainly, this drawing shares some of its conventions of delineation with the drawing of the Adinembo House. For example, the window openings are represented, as is the case in the Adinembo House document, by the insertion of a simple pair of perpendicular lines across the lines representing the wall itself, which convention fix's the window's location. In both styles of drawing, the frame which would sit in the opening is not located, but the Adinembo house's blue print does have the window frame itself inserted into the opening, represented by a second pair of barely separated parallel lines enclosed by the lines which represent the boundary of the wall's mass itself.

The workshop does not have a plan with many internal walls (and so there are only a few cases of wall intersection by which to judge by), it would appear though that the two drawings share the same convention for representing intersections. That is, the lines on the plan at the intersection do not represent only the outer surface of the profile of such a junction, but often include a line which passes through the inside of such a junction, suggesting that the walls are separate and distinct (one running past the other) and merely abut one another.
Perhaps though, the greatest similarity lies in the layout of the text on the drawing. Both drawings utilize lower case and upper case lettering. However these cases are specifically located and serve independent functions. Referring to the Hope Waddell drawing, it will be observed that the highly stylized, underlined lower case lettering is used to name each individual drawing of many laid out on any one sheet of paper: viz, New Carpenters Workshop, or Side Elevation. The same style is also used to write the drawing’s scale. This is as opposed to the capitalized letters which crowd around and inside the drawing itself, and is used to name the function of each room, as well as to tell what some of the elements on the drawing are, viz. 16" pier, or 6’ door. The Adinembo house drawing follows a similar model, except that it is reversed. The upper case is used to name each separate drawing on the sheet, whilst the lower case letters label room functions. Finally, both drawings share the tendency to vary the orientation of the text. Thus the First Floor Plan of the Hope Waddell Carpenter’s Workshop has the words ‘stair’ and ‘landing’ written perpendicular to the direction one would be facing if actually going up the stairway, and the ‘Door 6’.0” ‘ is turned through ninety degrees, in order to keep the same relationship between direction of travel and text. Similarly, in the room marked Office, it may be noted that the furniture abutting the three sides of the room, and marked as ‘Desk’, ‘Desk’ and ‘Press’ each faces its own direction, centralized on the space in which one would be standing having just opened the door. The Adinembo House plans are not as consistent in this regard, but one still notices that on a typical floor (the 2nd floor say), the Sitting Rooms are each facing a different direction, even though the Bed Rooms all get written from the same direction.
These similarities are not, then, likely to be just accidental. Instead, it would indicate that within the context of south eastern Nigeria, a certain culture of drawing is shared by those involved in the building trade outside the institutions of the Colonial government, many of its conventions not learned from drawing rules that are European, but following a logic which makes sense, and often an embodied, filmic sense, in the way text is related (or emanates from) the actual location (or motion) of the subject in the space of the drawing. This suggests further, that whoever the draftsperson is of the Adinembo house, this person has had contact with a local culture of building and its representation, either by formal training at a place like the Hope Waddell Institute, or by being apprenticed to individuals so trained.

Furthermore, it is evident that a difference can be recognized between the conventions utilized in these drawings, and those that are more typical of late nineteenth and early twentieth century European or American draftsmanship.

The questions raised in this context by the idea of drawing (as by this early surviving example of it) have been pointed to in the introductory chapter48. These comments would seem to place the Hope Waddell and Adinembo House blueprints, as well as the questions they both raise, within draftsmanship as a changing practice that is specifically located in the transformational flux of early twentieth century southeastern Nigerian culture. What remains to be understand is how these changing practices motivated the ultimate professionalization of architectural designers in the period immediately

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48 There is no doubt the subject needs to be revisited in further detail. This must however await another work, as neither time no space permitted its inclusion, in depth, within the present study.
subsequent to the one in which the dissertation is located. Though this process is not the focus of the present work, it might be noted here that the beginnings of this professionalization seem marked in a demand by the Colonial administration some fifteen or so years after the production of the drawings on which focus has been trained, that a plan-drawer be ‘qualified’ before being certified to advertise his services, and before therefore being allowed to earn money by drawing plans for others. Amongst the implications of this new ordinance and its direction and control of an early professionalization could be included the metaphysical issue of the meaning, power, and (perhaps even) traumatic effects that drawing-in-order-to-fix-an-idea would have had for those involved. An exploration of these issues will have to bear in mind the transformation, for example, said to surround social production and cultural reproduction when writing is introduced to previously non-literate and oralo-centric societies. In this context, of course, architectural drawing must, and will in fact, be regarded as a form of ‘writing’.

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486 The colonial registration of architectural delineators commenced in 1937.

487 See Walter J. Ong, op. cit.
The Dramaturgy of Feint: The House That Joshua Built

Biri ogbo sikaka

Huge silk-cotton tree
Standing in the open square

'Drum Name' of the Bileme Dapa House

Naambulo be nwo be me,
Iya ye fana kara ka
atumo pele oki bia

The bull says, instead of losing entirely what is his own, without any evidence to show ownership, it will rather cut off and possess the tail as a mark of ownership.

Okrikan proverb

At this point, however, the issue of drawing as a form of writing, and of the particular manner in which it might unfold in an oral, largely non literate cultural setting can only be approached indirectly, and appropriately by entering into an exploration of the real building as it has been executed. Even a cursory comparison of the building itself (figs. 2 & 17) with the drawing reveals that the Okrikan building does not strive to be overly faithful to its designer’s anticipation as represented in the drawn elevation and accompanying plans. The building has only three floors for instance, as opposed to the four floors indicated in the drawing. It is likely that a decision was made to eliminate the last floor and its arched

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*** Both quotations (which are in the Okrika dialect of Ibibio), and their English translations are taken from Chief E.D.W. Opuogulaya op.cit.
windows, in an effort perhaps to control escalating and insufficiently anticipated costs.

Further, it may be observed that the tall and pointed finials at the top of the building, bear little resemblance to the squat ones on the drawing which end in spherical forms. What the installed finials (which substitute for the drawn ones) recall, by their more visible presence, are the trophy-head representations found projecting from the flat frame of the Kalabari-Izhon ancestral screen, nduen fogbara (fig 112, 113). Unlikely as that may seem initially, it is interesting that the diagonal bracing which link and stabilize the vertical finials of the Adinembo house, result in an aesthetics which replay a similar motif found embossed repeatedly unto the surface of many an nduen fogbara installation. Moreover, the nduen fogbara’s function as memorial shrine apart, they may certainly be thought of as a distillation of the status of the head of a family in the context of the family home. Further, whilst in the drawing there are only six spheres to the front elevation, corresponding exactly with the position of each pilaster, the projections from the roof line are multiplied nearly fivefold, so that for the main elevation one may count twenty-one of them. However, if for the drawing one counts not just the spherical upstands, but the thin vertical lines indicated on the drawing, and which appear to represent balusters, then their number corresponds exactly to the number of rocket-shaped finials in the actual building. The effect on the building, is that the connection between the lower part of the building and the roof deck is severed, the finials appearing more like a crown, an independent artefact that has been placed there. This effect is emphasized even further by the placement of the previously mentioned concertina-like system of braces, which holds the projectiles together, and
gives them an allegorical mobility (as if one could almost imagine each projectile able to move independent of the other, within the zone marking the edge of the building, such that the spacing between each of them ceases to be constant), quite distinct from solemn stability which the squatness and the roundedness of the spheres lend to the drawing’s representation of the facade.

Sense needs to made of this, and of the importance that the silhouette of the roof line might have had for Okrikans. Firstly, it might be restated that the pre-modern Okrikan house was a wattle and thatch building, whose roof would have been typically pitched. Both European missionaries, and the colonial administrators, when they built their own residences, inclined the roof pitch even further, to the extent that projected in elevation, the roof space occupied in some cases a third of the total visual height of the structure. The roof was therefore a major, aesthetically definitive part firstly of customary architecture, but much more extensively so for the grand residences and official buildings of the colony. The roof was in a sense the pre-eminent architectural marker of the presence of Europe, and of European civility. Though nothing documentary suggests this beyond the building itself, it would seem that the determination this structure has shown to the idea of a flat roof cannot be without significance. It is as if the authors want to communicate a message not only to the Okrikan community itself, but to the European visitors to, and administrators of, their new world. And, what better way to do this than to be both Okrikan and more modern than even Europeans themselves?

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If one gets even closer up to the building, the differences from the blueprint plan seem to multiply. Perhaps the most striking difference is found in the treatment of surface. In place of the unmarked surfaces of the blueprint drawing, with its evocation of smooth and spotless white stone or plaster surfaces, is found a skin enlivened by a decorative scheme (fig. 19) which seems to regard any plain surface as anathema. The builder, if not the architect, is intent on ensuring that every inch of the surface of the buildings envelope is covered with the decorative scheme. This difference is returned to in a later on. For the moment, and in order not to loose site of the main focus, other divergences that characterize the building’s difference from the blueprint need to be noted.

The other differences include the incorporation of what appears to be a dado-line as a band around the waist of the third floor, where it intersects with the windows, and breaks its progress to allow the window frame to extend beyond it. Perhaps this was an attempt to maintain the illusion that this was a four storey building after all, for the other possibility (that it represents a point at which the building was proposed as terminating, but was granted a lease of life which allowed its extension to a more impressive height) does not seem as persuasive, given the shallowness of the room height this entails.

It is therefore puzzling, at least viewed from the present moment, that as indicated previously, the drawing is not such

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499 By their very nature we may not be justified in calling these dissimilarities 'differences'. This hesitation stems from Difference here seeming only to represent the builder's inventive freedom when faced with having to give form to aspects of the actual building which the drawing, quite vacuous when one thinks of detail, fails to supply.
as to provide the decisions a builder would require at every stage and detail, in order to give the building its form and texture. A lot of room was left intentionally, or by omission, for improvisation during the actual construction process, and it is here that the decision to decorate the building in this manner must have been made.

As the reader may already have gleaned from the previous description of the blueprint, the building is constructed in concrete-blocks, with reinforced concrete used in areas thought to be particularly critical, as was so deemed in the columns and the upper floors. As elaborated in an earlier chapter (see chapter 3), the relief-patterning of the blocks is not a plaster decoration applied to the surface after the building was up (or while it was being erected). It consists of a rectangular center which is serrated in profile and raised to prominence, surrounded by a nearly floral scheme of sinuous lines, some of which end in an emphasized node. The degree to which this motif is repeated indicates that the effect results from a mould, rather than from an individual’s hand-crafted plasterwork. That is, the design must have been first created in the mould itself, each block already pre-decorated at striking.

Some skill in carpentry is involved in creating the decorative face of one side of this form. Firstly, its symmetry and curvilinearity indicates that it is not the result of a free hand drawing but instead would have resulted from a properly executed technical drawing, involving the use of drawing equipment. That is, it suggests the presence of a

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490 Such as would be found in much Igbo building decoration and ornamentation, as exemplified in Uli art (applied in wall murals), or as one finds on the entrance door gates of the houses of Igbo Ozo title holders.
carpenter whose technical draughtsmanship was such as to allow him the use of drawing implements in such a way as to connect curves of different circumference and focus, to place them at equal distance from the diagonal center of the rectangle, and similarly to place the serrated rectangular figure in its central location. Further, this pattern would have had to have been incised into the block of wood which would ultimately have formed one face of the final mould'. There is of course also a possibility that this pattern results from the use of a stencil traced unto the wood block and carved out, or perhaps even of a wood block obtained with this pattern already worked into it. Perhaps such a stencil or block would have been purchasable through Adinembo’s European business friends. However, there is no evidence of this, nor of the widespread adoption of the approach, in which a stenciled technology would probably have resulted.

This text will return at some point later to the question of how the builder’s of this house could have acquired such skill in the period we describe. First however, the question must be pondered of how such an application may have come to be thought desirable as an appropriate ornamental schema. That is, given that there is no suggestion whatsoever in the drawing for the covering over of the building’s surface with such a skin, the question must be asked of how this idea may have originated.

No answer is forthcoming (so far) on this matter out of a questioning of the present generation of Adinembo’s. Tamuno

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491 This is not to suggest that indigenous wood carving would not have been adequate to inventing this without drawing, as the complexity for example of the carved doors on Northern Igbo Land clearly attest to. Rather, it is to suggest that the emphasis on symmetry, and the way in which the curvilinear forms are placed to emphasize the symmetry of the decoration on each block, is untypical of indigenous practice which might suggest symmetry but appears never intent on attaining it.
Adinembo certainly did not claim to know, or to have an explanation for its origins. This thus denies the possibility of a motivation emanating directly from a desire or preference of one individual; say the mason, or the patron.

However, though other Okrika houses that were built after the commencement of the Adinembo House employ less elaborate pre-decorated pre-cast concrete blockwork (suggesting that the Adinembo House ushered in a fashion for decorative blockwork), it is also known that the one house in Okrika of an equally impressive appearance, but which is known definitely to have been built before the Adinembo House, has no such love for an embossed surface. Its exterior is instead an essay in the art of the smooth and seamless surface. This suggests that somewhere between the 1911 erection of the Samuel Koko House\(^{492}\) (not included in this study) and the 1923 commencement of the Adinembo house, the idea of the relief decorated surface is invented as appropriate for the ornamentation of a non-customary house.

In the absence of an individualized motivator, evidence must be sought within the culture itself for any precedent that may at least have allowed for the presence of an aesthetic framework within which this covering over of surface might have been found desirable. One such context is that in which cicatrization of the body was used as a marker of status in society. One thinks for example of the markings of the Ozo society membership amongst the Igbo as also among both Okrika and Kalabari peoples. It is also known moreover, that amongst the Ikwerre Igbo in particular, co-occupiers of the region as they were, or amongst the Aniocha Igbo (of which Asaba is a part), and whose indigenes also formed the leadership of the

\(^{492}\) This house, located also in Okrika is said to be much older, and possibly the first double story building in the town. It appears to have been built in brick, plastered over to a smooth surface.
primarily Igbo building team, the covering over of an important building’s surface with a well ordered decorative schema was well established at this point in time.

Mention must also be made of the nature of the design of the template, that is of the stencil which appears to be repeated in some form across the surface of each of the Adinembo House’s concrete blocks. Moreover the actual layout of its application over the building’s surface, itself begs an interpretation. Again however, no information has been forthcoming from the Adinembo’s as to how one may understand it. Recourse may however be had to a Izhon building aesthetic attitudes in the early twentieth century, and one may speculate on how such an attitude may be reflected, even if in some ways transformed, in the decoration of the Adinembo house.

Customary building practice in southern Nigeria was not, as it was in Northern Nigeria, such as to imply that the building was conceivable as consisting of small equal units (building blocks) out of which the building itself emerged. Rather, building was conceived as the accumulation of material, with no particular implication being formed of a modular kind. In this sense, buildings followed more closely the processes of pottery where clay was used, or where clay was applied as filler and surface, to a wattle frame. Should any importance or meaning be attached to the switch to prefabricated decoration? Where could this idea have come from?

In the riverine areas of southeastern Nigeria, a wattle frame was used to create the sub structure over which the clay was then applied. Thus it can be said that some sense of modularity had existed in the region’s building tradition, and
that it was the Igbo migration south that brought with it the covering up of modular construction. That is, by the mid-nineteenth century (at the dawn of the period of our study), it is noted that modularity is applied to the structural skeleton, and not to the cladding (in-fill panels) and impermeable surface that is the building's final envelope. Certainly, modularity is not applied to the decoration that may be applied to this finished and inviting surface. Yet, at the Adinembo house, it is on the surface that is found inscribed both the modularity of the actual building process, and the preference for applying this same modularity to decoration and ornamentation. It therefore adopts a decorative schema, that strikes one as most departing from what the custom would have been up to this moment.

It needs also be mentioned that the nature of the design of this template, and of the actual layout of its application over the building’s surface, itself begs an interpretation, but that yet again, no information has been forthcoming (from the Adinembo’s or from other sources) as to how one may understand it. Recourse may however be had to a understanding the Adinembo house’s ornamentation via Izhon architectural aesthetics in the early twentieth century, and it is possible to then indicate how such aesthetics may be reflected, albeit in some transformed way. However, a detailed justified comparison cannot be attempted in the absence of at least a partial exploration of such aesthetics themselves. This is achieved in a subsequent chapter (ch 8) through the study of the Kalabari architecture, including again in that instance other relevant aspects of the well-documented altar-set commemorative sculpture known as nduen fogbara, referred to in earlier sections. For the moment, and in summary, it is suggested that in Izhon architectural ornamentation and its
aesthetics at the turn of the century normally incorporated both linear-geometrical (nduen fogbara) and curvilinear-floral decorative schemes. Certainly, in the form of Izhon burumo painting, and Igbo uli art, curvilinear ornamentation of its particular free-form type was known, and moreover in Igbo-speaking areas, was applied to buildings. For Okiriké then, including those whose families included (as did many) both Izhon’s and people of Igbo origin, these would have been as normal for architectural ornamentation as they would have been for Igbos further north, from whom after all, many of Okrika’s women would have come.

It may then be this familiarity and desire for the curvilinear in architectural ornamentation, that explains the decision to borrow from a European tradition of ornamentation (if not the mode of its application) writ large, and without the ‘appropriate’ European restraint, over the whole surface of the building.

The House and its local spatialization
Thus far it has been established that the Adinembo House possesses a number of characteristics which make it difficult to conceive as European. However, the issues it raises demands delving a little further, a little deeper, in order ultimately to find suggestions as to an appropriate naming.

Certainly for the neighboring Kalabari ethnic group it has been said that:

"... various plates, bowls and dishes of Staffordshire make, all of which had some flower patterns on them, were (considered) Ju-Ju, and not available for trade. These kinds of goods falling into the hands of a true believer had to be presented to the Ju-Ju house." (Talbot [1932:77])

Though for using the word Ju-Ju, such interpretations seem more a part of European othering discourse, than they are accurate descriptions of the basis of African eclecticism, the observation at least allows the confirmation of that floral forms were used in pre-colonial-period architectural ornamentation in coastal Izhonland.
Architectural writing in recent years has responded to the criticism that its historiography was too dependent on surface appearance and on elevational representation of architectural artifacts to the exclusion of other aspects that are in fact exclusive to it, as if this representationality of the surface were the most important basis for understanding a building. A response to this has already been offered by an analysis of the spatial layout of the house. Yet, this analysis remains based in the topography of Europe, by not extending the idea of House beyond the four walls of our object building. This text therefore now turns to consider the house in its full socio-spatial context, if, that is, anything remains as residue of the customary Okrikan-Izhon spatial organization.

It was clear at the time that even if Tamuno Adinembo would be disposed to allow such a project, the Okrikan sensibilities of his larger family would not have sanctioned the surveying of the building on the ground, especially in relation to a stranger of Igbo descent. Nevertheless, a plan of the compound has been attempted from a memory acquired over several visits, and from the writer’s own photographs.

The multi-storey house about which attention has been focused so far, itself sits at the apex of an outer ring of an incomplete series which tends towards the form of a

\[\text{Hillier and Hanson, op. cit.}\]

\[\text{Albeit not with the methodology that the theoretics of space syntax demands. This is of course possible, given the especially the present writer’s earlier graduate work with Bill Hillier and Julienne Hanson. Most scholars remain alienated from its form of analysis, and it was decided that including such analysis in this work would be inconsistent with some of its aims. The implications of a spatial analysis for the organization of the house however are included, in a very general sense, in the present interpretation.}\]
‘concentric’ set of rectangles (that is, the string of houses form a rectangular shape, which is itself surrounded by another rectangular string of buildings). These are all residences occupied by members of the immediate Adinembo extended family. In general (though this does not seem to be adhered to always) the occupancy is arranged such that the closer an inhabitant is to the large house (on the ring to which the large house also belongs), the higher such a person is in the family’s hierarchy of authority⁴⁹⁶; the further inwards that one is on the concentric series of level, the less institutionally powerful one appeared to be. The outermost rings which also are tenements of recent erection, are occupied by tenants⁴⁹⁷, who not being part of the extended family, did not appear subject to the same spatial rules.

The current family head (Tamuno Adinembo)’s own apartments, which were formerly occupied by his late father, is for example in the block which together with the large building, forms the outer ring of the compound. It is also directly across the passageway from it. Imagined as a rectangle for diagrammatic purposes, it would be the next adjacent block clockwise from the large house. The older wives of the late family head, also strategically located at the rectangle’s corners and therefore possessing visual control over the two main axes of the outer courtyard area, also inhabit the same outer group of rooms. The families of the compound’s younger members (those who have remained in Okrika, and have not

⁴⁹⁶ Again for reasons of privacy, it was not possible in the time available to conduct an ethnographic mapping of space on kinship. The conclusion here therefore results from partial information garnered (and visual observation) while in the process of conducting interviews on the history of the building.

⁴⁹⁷ This information comes, for example, out of a visit to meet with Tamuno Adinembo, who himself was not in. Questioning those in this building, it was clear that they were neither particularly close to him, nor did they seem to care whether or not a message got through to him. It is unlikely in the context of the Rivers State that such an attitude would be projected by even distant relatives.
migrated to larger cities like Lagos) are generally found on
the other hand in the inner rectangle, enclosed by their more
senior relatives, though this is not always the case.

It is interesting to note that the former owner, Chief Joshua
Adinembo, still maintained the modest set of rooms on the
outer ring, even when the new house was complete and in use.
He maintained a parlour and bedrooms, with the former’s entry
being directly adjacent one of the four centralized entries
to the main building. This may have been a result of the
unfinished state of many parts of the building right up to the
year of his passing away. Yet, it also seems that the large
house was used more often as a ceremonial place of residence
than an actual one.

Clearly then, at whatever architectural level one cares to
look, one does not find the common models of European or
colonial planning nor unscathed examples of its architecture.
One does not even find a European form of architectural
spatial occupancy, nor an attempt by those who inhabit the
building to mimic the lifestyles of, or live in the building
as if they were, Europeans\textsuperscript{498}. The Georgian town house, were
that it was the model some might claim, did not pass through
an export procedure and related customs unscathed on its
passage to this site. Several slippages have in fact occurred
along the way to a full realization. Something has transpired
en route first between the European idea and the blueprint,
and then again between the blueprint and the building.
Finally, a yet a third slippage may be seen to have occurred

\textsuperscript{498} There were cases in south eastern Nigeria as we shall see, where occupants of such buildings, at
least partially emulated traditions of the European in their everyday life. The epitome of such
behavior was of course displayed in Lagos ([Echeruo [1977]: Victorian Lagos. London and Basingstoke,
Macmillan Education Limited]).
between the physical building itself and the social life into which it is inserted, in which it has had to operate, and from which it derives (and constitutes) meaning.

Erecting the Adinembo House: Builders and the Construction Process.
The serious implication of the fact that a written contract exists for the production of this building in terms of a specific legal consciousness is left for the final chapter. Taking it for granted here, it will be observed that as contract, the transaction documents of the Adinembo house displays an impressive sophistication, and consist both items of what must minimally be present in the constitution of the European notion of a complete contract document set: minimally the drawings themselves, and a set of specifications. The contract sum (L100) is said to be stated clearly⁴⁹⁹, as are also the spelled-out obligations of the parties to each other. According to the agreement, the prospective owner and financier of the project (Joshua Adinembo) was to provide all the building materials⁵⁰⁰. The builder was to provide all the labor. Moreover, it was said, should the owner for example have chosen for any reason not to continue with the project, the balance of the amount of L100 less anything already disbursed, was to be paid the builder.

⁴⁹⁹ As has been mentioned earlier of the actual contract itself, the present writer was not given access to it, though it was described often during many interview sessions. Neither the Adinembo family, nor the builder’s family, both of whom apparently still possess the actual document for this section of the contract, were willing to provide access to it. The narration of its contents and its main provisions was such that its existence cannot be doubted, and that its main thrust is accurately transmitted here.

⁵⁰⁰ This is a rather unusual form for European turn of the century practice, from which the idea of a written building contract here surely derives.
The contract documents are equally brief. All representations (plans, sections and elevational drawings) are contained within the one sheet. In addition, the closest thing to a Specification is found as a list down the right hand side of the same drawing (fig. 101), which has already been commented upon earlier.

Much information that would in fact be required to erect the building is not present in the drawing and contract (given what is known ever to have existed for its construction), and there is therefore much room for the builder's imagination (or if one wanted to be more cynical, there is a wide expanse of territory over which serious disputes might arise). In a sense then, one may suggest that the contract is largely symbolic, and more so than is typical for its form. A comparison of the built house (figs. 2) with this blueprint elevational drawing indicates indeed that much has changed between the drawing board and the final built structure. The parties to the contract then seem to enter it not so much in order to ensure a control over the process as such, but much more as an indication of a belonging to a new modern universe. It is thus interesting to assess the extent to which the blueprint has been transformed into the actual building, given precisely such an open form of contract.

Juxtaposing, as we have done, the image of the built mansion, completed in large part from 1924 to 1926, with that of the blueprint after which it was built, raised the questions we have attempted to address. However, without knowledge of who the builder's were, nor of how they organized themselves socially during the periods in which they were involved in the project, a full answer does not seem likely. Furthermore, the
nature of the relationship between the master builder and the
rest of the building team, or between the team and the patron
himself, has not been discovered. The picture imaginable for
the building process, as well as the answers that have been
proffered with regard to the building’s conception therefore
remain inadequate to a full understanding of the contexts in
which all the input necessary for the erection of such a
structure might have been possible.

This seems then a useful place in which to indicate that the
builders of the Adinembo House were said all to have been
Igbo501 and, moreover, are remembered to have remained on the
site for a considerable number of months (it was suggested
that this numbered over two years, with intermittent periods
of absence). At the time, again according to family members,
and as confirmed by the margins of an early photograph taken
during construction, the land on which the house was erected
stood in a place which was completely undeveloped, and nothing
like the urban place it is today502. The builders were thus
inhabiting the place in which they worked, a fact which is
difficult to comprehend, given the fact that the contract sum
is said to have amounted to L100. One wonders for example who
fed these men (since it is clear they were not on the site
with their families), who paid for the food they ate, and
whether the costs covering these expenditures are considered
part of the contract. Even more significant would be to know
or imagine how such a site resident building community would
co-habit the same space which was occupied by the polygamous
family for whom they worked. Living, sleeping and being fed

501 As becomes obvious later on in this chapter, this was confirmed in subsequent interviews.

502 In fact it seems to have been virgin land, sort of out in the bushes, in a place were villagers
had generally not started taking up residence.
on ‘site’, in close proximity to the client who was in some sense at least, also their host, one can only guess the complexity of the relationships which must have then become engendered between contractor’s team and contractee’s family. It would certainly have been unlike the business relationships we are accustomed to today, as the proscription in Izhon culture regarding the treatment of guests layered upon the long interaction between guest and host, would ultimately have seen them operate as if they were yet another section of a very large family.

This would be especially likely, as many of Joshua Adinembo’s wives were Igbo themselves as we have mentioned, and would probably have welcomed the presence of Igbo speaking men in their midst (being as they were resident in a non-Igbo world), even if they were not, as we shall see, from areas which were culturally so close as to foster with ease a sense of brotherhood. The probability that this was indeed the state of affairs is confirmed, again only partially, by the fact, as narrated by Tamuno Adinembo, that during the Okrika disturbances of ca.1928 (a troubled period around an interregnum involving contesting factions, and out of which an anti-Igbo insurgence in part arose), his father was threatened by other Okrika islanders for hesitating over sending his resident labor force home. Tamuno Adinembo remembers the whole fracas well, though being at the time a

503 It is also not so difficult to imagine the possibility of conflict over issues such as the loyalty of wives of Igbo origin in the presence of many Igbo males present without their spouses, and in the absence of the husband of these wives Chief Adinembo himself, who regularly resided at their home at Ezinihitte. However, such conflict was not apparent in present relationships, though it would probably take a much longer residence to develop the kinds of trust that would allow the relaying of private information of this kind.

504 See Ogan (1988:29-36)
young boy, much of his recollection might derive from retelling by adults:

Heyi! Obi... Obi... They held meeting and even summoned my father to this meeting. They warned him... at this meeting... that if he no send away those Igbo people who work on his site, they will regard him and his whole family... in short every one at his residence... as Igbo, and would come and deal with all of them, and even sef send him sef back to Igboland... so my father had to agree... and had to ask his men to all go home. It was terrible... terrible! That was how the building of his house suddenly stopped. The builders all had to go home, and only come back a long time after, when things had cooled down.... [Adinembo, 2/92]

It would therefore seem that Chief Adinembo himself certainly was beginning to consider these resident workers a part of his family, and had no intention of sending them home (nor did they apparently seek to depart) during a moment of tension in which members of their own ethnic group thought it wise to leave Okrika.

It can therefore be imagined, now with some justification, that decision-making during the building process would have been made in a spirit of consensus, rather than in the context of master and servant in which patron/client relationships are usually determined. Further, as Chief Adinembo would have been away at Ezinnihite on many occasions, it is also likely that by agreement, he left many of the decisions to his master mason, in order that the construction process not be held up on account of his absence. In many ways then, considering the social setting which surrounds the architectural product, it is not inaccurate to consider it as much an Igbo building as it is Izhon.

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505 This expression, an exclamation, was meant to communicate the sense of heat of rising social temperature, of conflict, that the period was producing in Okrika.

506 Obi is the name of a friend who accompanied me at the interview, and to whom Mr. Adinembo seemed to find it easier to address his narrative.
That is important to establish this with more clarity is obvious. It is however in responding to this need that the problem, if not the limitation of the project's methodology, also becomes apparent. Being partly an oral historical project, attempts at recall, especially the process of memory and of forgetting (of what gets remembered, and what not), often seemed to have its own meaning, which contributed in unexpected and sometimes invaluable ways to the progress of the narrative I sought to reconstruct. Informants, often remembered 'wrongly' the circumstance of the building project I was soliciting. Such was the case with the attempt to discover further details about the house's builder, whose name was remembered as Onwudinjo.

An unsigned drawing was no help to attempts at locating the builder, nor did the inaccessibility of the other contract documents. Tamuno Adinembo's own memory had sent me to Enugu Ukwu and to Awka, in the later place of which I did locate an Onwudinjo family who eventually did contribute positively to the research project (because they own one of the oldest two storey building in Awka). However this Onwudinjo family had no relationship to the builder of the Adinembo house, and this was stated without hesitation.

507 This detour was interesting and worth noting, because on narrating my problems back in Igbo speaking Enugu, it was suggested that

In those days, people would often say they were from Awka, as it was the well known town near many smaller Igbo towns...so that when somebody in Okrika says to you that a worker of theirs comes from Awka, it could well be, but it could also be that the person really came from Enugu Ukwu or Abagana, or Mimo. We actually have an Onwudinjo in Enugu Ukwu, and I think there are Onwudinjo's in Awka as well....

And, even though the builder in question ultimately turned out to be unconnected to Awka, it certainly displayed a present conception of a historical past, in which all Igbos somehow came from Awka.
It was Tamuno Adinembo himself, perhaps recognizing and acknowledging both the Igbo origins of some of his father’s wives (who are now well-assimilated Izhon spouses), and the traditional role that women appear to play in Okrika and Izhon society as preservers and keepers of knowledge, who suggested alternate entries to filling in the historical gap. He referred me (and went along with me) to Madam Wanigbari Adinembo, whose apartment is located at one of the corners described above from which maximum visual control may be maintained along the open passageways between ‘concentric’ rows of rooms. She is, as already indicated, herself of Igbo origin and is the oldest surviving wife of the late Joshua Adinembo. Very pleased to talk with me, and especially so as the interviewer was Igbo, she insisted that the mansion was actually built by an Igbo contractor, but exclaimed when told that Tamuno had said he came from Awka.

Mba...odalu ya! Afa nwoko ruru ulo a, wu onye a na akpo Jamis I. Onwudinjo, onye of Asaba.
No..no...He got it wrong. The person who built this house was one James I. Onwudinjo, who was from Asaba.

Writer: Ichetalu oge ana alu uno-a, ma onwelu ndi ocha fa na fa so alu ya, m’obu du onye ocha na abia ka-mgbe ka-mgbe n’enelu anya na anafa aluta uno-a ofuma?
Do you remember at the time this building was being put up, whether there were any whitepeople building with them, or perhaps even a single whiteman who might have come occasionally to see how the building was proceeding, to see it was being well built?

Mrs. Adinembo: E-e. Obu so Onwudinjo na ndi olu ya so luta ulo-nka. Ahunurom ka onye ocha nwa si bia. Obu kwa nu ndiIgbo anyifa rutara ya
No. This was built by Onwudinjo and his men alone. I never knew of any such whiteperson you are talking about. Really, it was our very own Igbo people who built it out.

Writer: Asikwalum ka mu jua, maka na onye nebe nya bu uno anya etu o di na anya, o ma ekwe na o bu onye be anyi luluya mgbe gbo-a.

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I thought I should ask. Because, if one goes on the basis of looking at it, one might not agree that one of our own home built such a thing in those early days.

In this dialogue was indicated for the first time with authority, that the builder of the house was a Nigerian Igbo, James I. Onwudinjo, from the town of Asaba. Who this person was, and how he became involved in the project are details to be introduced later on in the chapter in the first instance, and again more exhaustively in a subsequent chapter, when the careers of several important south east Nigerian builders are recreated. Here, instead, the focus is directed at the patron, Chief Adinembo, in an attempt to understand the context of the latter's own life, the extent to which he may or may not have absorbed a European form of civility, and therefore the possible motivations he may have had for either wanting to reproduce Europe in Okrika on the one hand, or for wanting to appear to be making such a reproduction on the other hand.

Joshua Adinembo's Career And The Seduction Of Architecture
Given as will become evident that Joshua Adinembo's career at its most successful moments, coincides with the decade on either side of 1914, a well mapped historiography of south eastern Nigerian participation in World War I, and of the effect of such participation (including active war-time duty in the West African Frontier Force regiments) on the lives and imaginations of local populations, would seem critical to this study. It is certainly easy to assume that little was in place that would have made possible a grass roots recruitment of volunteers to a British war-time colonial force: to assume in other words that the War in the reality of most people's everyday, was remote indeed. Such assumptions are made more easily accepted moreover because as was indicated in a previous section, the dearth of research on this subject

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leaves many questions unanswered regarding the historiography of the first World War in southern Nigeria. The answers to such questions might have proven invaluable to the dissertation inquiry, since our lack of knowledge extends to the effects that service in the regiments may have had on those who served. No diaries, or other record of the period exist to communicate in detail how the everyday occurrences of the war were experienced by particularized individuals, nor can it be determined how such experiences would have affected them. It may nevertheless be assumed from the little that is known, that the first World War had serious consequences for both the Colonial state of Nigeria, and for the activities of the indigenous and foreign trading communities residing within her borders. Amongst the members of the former group reside those individuals who would become members of the community of architectural patrons or leaders of patron-associations, in whose buildings were commissioned by committee or other organization. It has moreover also been established by others that war certainly did have economic consequences. By the war’s end therefore, the formal economy of the state seemed to approach collapse.

For a majority of indigenous producers and traders, there was more than the slow down in the economy to contend with. The major consumer of their produce (Germany) was no longer a viable customer having been banned from Nigerian ports, and not to mention the commandeering of ships in the service of the prosecution of war. These all proved to have been

508 These would include both women’s and men’s kin-based organizations and non-kin-based associations, as well as institutions such as the many, then new, church organizations.

509 The resources of the state were depleted during the war, having been exhausted on the British campaign to secure German-African territories such as the Kameroons, which had been ceded to Germany at the 1880 Conference and which was so occupied on the eve of World War I.
disastrous for local traders and producers (Osuntokun [1979]: p 292, 331), especially coming soon after a pre-1914 expansion of trade, during which period significant financial profit accrued to many an entrepreneur. It is therefore not surprising to find that few architectural projects, if any, appear to have been commenced in the first few years following the cessation of hostilities.

What is likely however, is that the generation of Nigerians who were soldiers in this war would have experienced aspects of European culture to which they may not have been previously accessed. That is, apart from the obviously war related experience of modern technology and organizational regimen, soldiering for the majority of servicemen (who at the time consisted mainly rural dwellers\textsuperscript{510}), would have made possible a first hand and visual (at least) experience of European building, both within Nigeria itself, and beyond.

We already have seen how for Mr. Onwudinjo of Awka (not the same person as the builder of the Adinembo House whose name is the same), experience with the Royal Niger Company's military, and subsequent contact with German commercial agents, seems to have lead to the putting up of an innovative two storey house, in which Awka constructional custom (to which two story structures are, unusually, not alien) is expanded to embrace new vocabulary. It would therefore not be unreasonable, as we implied in the previous paragraph, to suggest that a similar potential existed in the experience of

\textsuperscript{510} Though Osuntokun's work is of value, it is largely focused on the political sphere, is historiographic only in a very large sense, with little if any room given over to the small scale personal and biographical experiences, effects and implications of that war.
other places through international deployment in the war\textsuperscript{511}, for the intrusion of an awareness for, and the apprehension of, European technical and aesthetic difference.

Nothing discovered about Joshua Adinembo suggests however that he served in any capacity with the colonial armed forces who partook in World War I out of southern Nigeria. Nevertheless, it seems likely that the very fact of the war would have had an impact on the communities of the coast, the experience of which may well have changed the understandings individuals may have brought to interpreting the world around them. Okrika like many coastal cities would have experienced the hardships of the export trade reduction which resulted from the withdrawal of German palm oil trading companies, and in such circumstances the conditions may have been created in which young men might seek enlistment. For an Asaba indigene like James Onwudinjo, enlistment might seem more natural, as the town was once a garrison town for the West African Frontier Force, in which was maintained a significant number of men even after the headquarters of the proto-colonial power (the Royal Niger Company) had moved north to Lokoja. Certainly, it is known that well before World War I, a military career in the West African Frontier Force was an established option for young men in Asaba. Thus it is likely that for Asaba indigenes, as for Okrika indigenes, the idea of enlistment at the outbreak of World War I may not have been alien. Indeed for inhabitants of any one of the old cities with a long history of contact with Europeans, and in the newer Colonial towns; Onitsha and Calabar, Port Harcourt and Udi for example, involvement of men with the colonial army might most easily

\textsuperscript{511} One informant indicated that of course in travel say to Burma, the soldier was transported by ship, which would stop of at many ports en route. For many such individuals, it seems that this represented one of the first experiences of how truly vast, and different the world was.
occur. It is also from these locations, and if not necessarily in these location, that we expect to come (if not necessarily to find) those individuals who would be involved in the first rummage through European things, in order to erect their edifices\textsuperscript{512}.

Many such individuals, in this experience of the army, would have confronted the modern technological world head on. Such experiences may pre-dispose the individual to a desire for other lifestyles and ambitions. Access to this experience at a general level is nevertheless difficult. Scholars of military history have not offered information indicating the occurrence rate per population of men in the region of interest, for participation in the war. We cannot therefore assess properly the likelihood of a synchronic and universally pervasive male-societal interface with the European between 1914 and 1919. However, circumstantial evidence (again) suggests that only a small minority of Igbo, Izhon, Ibibio or Efik men would have participated in World War I, to such a degree that their world view might have been shifted. This evidence includes the fact that by 1913, for example, the European or Creoli\textsuperscript{513} presence in most of Igboland, even at the

\textsuperscript{512} Okrika is in a number of interesting ways to the newer, now more successful neighboring town of Port Harcourt what Asaba was until very recently to Omitsa. This is not to claim that Omitsa is a new town (which its 18th century foundation contests) in relation to Asaba, but simply that Asaba’s fortunes, as the one time capital of the southern Protectorate under the RNC which ended in 19 , parallels the rise and fall of Okrika for very different (commercial) reasons. Further, like Omitsa’s meteoric commercial rise after the ‘fall’ of administrative Asaba, Okrika’s commercial fall had been accompanied by the meteoric rise of then administrative Port Harcourt in the wake of the enactment of its status as colonial port city, and in addition to the project to here terminate the main North-South railway line of Nigeria’s proposed eastern corridor.

\textsuperscript{513} This term is used here to refer to Africans whose personhood derives from the significant invention of a new culture in non African lands, or in Colonies created for them through the intervention in Africa of non-African powers. These cultures are characterized by languages, now quite traditional, which incorporate a significant percentage of English derived words, set in a syntax that is more (continued...)
minimal level of the single white body or of the resonating Saro voice (Dixon-Fyle [1989]), was only commencing its progress.

The context in which Joshua Adinembo matures is one fraught with many possible destinies. It is pertinent therefore to attempt a representation of his person in this context, since it is critical to understand what personal circumstances may have lead to his particular mentality, and what in this mentality (and the biography which constructs it), may account for Chief Adinembo's desire for self-representation in the form of such a visible edifice.

The citizens of Okrika, whose population derives primarily from an urbanized Izhon (sometimes written as Ijaw or Ijo) core, and a from a smaller and by now assimilated minority Mbaise-Igbo, Nkwerre-Igbo (and perhaps Ikwerre-Igbo) base, were with other coastal citizens such as those from Opobo, Bonny, Brass and Old Calabar, prime players in the middleman business involved in securing commodities produced further inland, for the consumption of the European traders at the coast. By the late eighteen nineties and the early nineteen hundreds, this trade shifted from coast bound transportation (and sale) of ivory and of hinterland Igbo and Igala slaves, to the movement (and sale) of palm produce and other agricultural commodities.

\[^{313}\] (...)continued

reminiscent of African language. Perhaps the best known example is Kreyol as spoken in Haiti. In the Nigerian context, Creoles would have included Sierra Leonians, Liberians, Jamaicans and Trinidadians.
Like were many Okrikans, Adinembo was involved in this palm produce trade\(^{514}\). Given when he entered this career (c1909), or at which time he was participating in the trade as an independent, his success may be understood in terms of the generally high profitability this trade seems to have attracted between 1911 and 1914 and again in 1919-21 (Ofonagoro [1979])\(^{515}\), when the palm produce prices rose quite dramatically. Sue Martin’s indicates moreover that profits which accrued to the shipment of a single canoe in the boom years were substantially higher than normal, and which abnormalities occur just prior to the commencement of the house. And, although we do not have access to details of the volume of produce he may have transferred to European ownership in any year, his son attests that his father owned ‘many many many canoes’. Each canoe’s size may be judged from the fact that each could carry over 25 puncheons (rowed by up to forty men). Whatever the accountable details may be, it is clear that Joshua Adinembo made good in the years just prior to World War I and the subsequent downward spiral of palm kernel prices this caused, since he was in a position then to

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\(^{514}\) Tamuno Adinembo, the oldest surviving son adds further that his father was a post-slave-trade oil merchant who lived in the interior of Igboland, at a village called Ezinihitte, where he had set up factory for the processing of palm oil. The raw material, that is the palm oil bunches, were supplied by Igbo farmers. Having supplied the oil and containerized them in large 1 ton drums, they were transported by his fleet of canoes down river to the coast where they were then purchased by European oil traders. Joshua Adinembo who numbered amongst his European acquaintances one or two representatives of the Royal Niger Company, a British trading company which was once itself the colonial administration by contract with the British government, seems to have profited, as did others before him, from his oil trade.

\(^{515}\) These profits were deemed so high by the colonial administration who though themselves making large profits than their African middlemen suppliers, seemed nevertheless envious of (and even intolerant towards) the idea of new rich Africans. How else but in this way is it possible to understand the colonial administration’s gripe about profits, and their proposal to settle the tax credit dispute by singling out one commodity (palm produce) for such measures? (see Ofonagoro [1979]:338-356).
contemplate and activate the construction of such a major building as the Adinembo House, so soon after the war.

However, the information that we have access to, suggests that some hesitation was involved on his part, in envisaging the expenditure that such a project would entail. His son Tamuno Adinembo, has indicated that it was only at the persuasive insistence of other Okrika indigenes, and especially of the then sitting Okrika head (Chief Kalio?) that his father made the decision to erect such a structure. Whilst this may indicate a person not yet prone to the idea of building a structure whose primary function would be representative, it seems more likely, given the actual ostentatious grandeur of the building itself, that such hesitation may derive instead from the financial uncertainty that may already have been perceivable to African traders and business people, in the immediate aftermath of the war.

Joshua Adinembo’s pre-war financial successes, as well as the confidence which may finally have allowed him to overcome the fears of post war uncertainty, probably derive from a positioning which he undertook, and which in all likelihood was in response to the British dispersal inland. This dispersal we may recall, was imposed by military force on indigenous communities who naturally resisted its institution516, because in the granting by the British Crown of the right of inland trading to Europeans, the middleman role of coastal and near coastal societies like Okrika was bound to be destroyed.

516 Refer to Brass and Onitsha, and the burning of Brass and blockading of Onitsha, and other incidents at Akassa.
Joshua Adinembo’s responsive positioning to European competition as represented ultimately by their opening up of factories inland up and down the Niger River, was to leave his hometown of Okrika, to move even further into Igbo territory than Europeans might have felt comfortable doing, and therefore to maintain despite European moves, the advantage of the native middleman. Moreover, by subsequently marrying women from Ezinnihite itself, some of whom may have been daughters of his trading partners, he created bonds with his suppliers which extended beyond the purely commercial, positioned him advantageously vis-à-vis his European competitors, and yet remained within what was customarily normal and even meaningful (contextualized within the various customary ideologies of south east Nigerian nationalities) to his Igbo trading partners. Thus he cemented a loyalty to himself, which his competitors, both European and Igbo, would have found hard to match.

It is not known how those Europeans who had taken advantage of the rights to open inland factories and stations may have perceived and responded to men like Joshua Adinembo and (in particular) to their strategy of moving even closer to the producing source, at more than one level, than the European trader was able to. What is clear, is that for some Europeans at least, the activity of men like Adinembo was not

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517 Not to be confused with the more northerly and equally Igbo town of Ezinnifite, which was also an palm-produce generating town.

518 For the period since the late eighteen hundreds for which we have records, in-laws in south east Nigerian culture are by custom accorded special privileges, which even the son-of-the-soil may not have access to; these including for example the automatic granting of land for occupation, were the in-law to have decided, for whatever reason, to settle and live away from his own home. [Interview with Mazi Anyadiegwu of Oba, December 1991. Although this demand is rarely made, it seemed to be generally recognized as part of the in-law relationship. Interestingly neither, Thomas (1913), Basden (1938), nor Obi (1963), all of whom include significant commentary on Igbo land law, refer in any way to this custom].
necessarily unwelcome. This can be judged from the fact that he seems not to have lacked buyers for his produce once he reached the coast with his commodities, and that his mutually profitable relationship with such Europeans both earned their respect, and attracted their friendship. Such friendship was, moreover one that would have been visible and publicly recognized, perhaps in the form of the occasional presence of the European visitor to the house. For, only in such a context that can one understand how it became possible for his son Joshua Adinembo to assert that his father sought help with the whole idea of building a large house at home in Okrika by approaching his European acquaintances. As he narrates it, these friends of his father’s then returned sometime later with the drawing on which the building is supposedly based. Though this writer’s account suggests that the story of a foreign provenance might be inaccurate ⁵¹⁹, its believability seen from the local perspective perhaps only points to the success of Chief Adinembo’s own initial intention: to produce a building that would elevate his status not only amongst Europeans, but perhaps more critically amongst his own people who might now be more apt to view him with a regard similar in many respects to the one reserved for the administrators of colonial power.

Of course the opportunity had been offered earlier in the chapter, to explore the drawings more slowly, searching out from it, and from other kind of surrounding evidence, what information one could about its possible provenances (since

⁵¹⁹ It is not implausible, it might be added, that Tamuno Adinembo’s story is true to the extent that it conforms to an observed series of events. For, it is possible that such an approach was made to a European trading acquaintance, who in turn obtained such a plan from a Yoruba draftsman in Lagos. Though the provenance in this event remains Nigerian, it might be understood that for the local population (and perhaps even for Chief Adinembo himself) the drawing for all practical purposes would have been understood as having been produced in Europe.
it is neither signed nor dated). The building itself was moreover studied carefully, both for what it is, and for how it departs (if it can so be said to) from the drawing in which it is proposed. From that analysis, it seemed unlikely that the explanation which accounts for the drawing by claiming it is literally produced in Europe is accurate. Rather, such an explanation seems more a product of the post colonial situation in which Africa is often perceived by Africans themselves, only through the mist of the Colonial discourse on its nature. Thus, for many individuals, the building could not possibly have been produced by the regions indigenes who are considered to have been primitive that far back in time. Or, on the other hand, the narrative may have been a self-serving attempt to grant the building additional impressiveness by attributing it to a place that only the most internationalized of people could have been connected with in such a way in the 1920s, and by suggesting that its owner was important enough to have amongst his friends people from every part of the globe.

It may be that a reconstruction of the history and persona of other important characters besides that of the patron Mr. Adinembo himself, might contribute something to resolving some of the dilemmas the house’s history presents. One such critical figure would of course be that of the builder whom the Adinembo family would have employed in the execution of the structure. It is now known without doubt that the builder, who was in fact a contractor, was a man from Asaba, the latter a town inland from the Niger River, on the bank opposite from the side on which the town of Onitsha is located\textsuperscript{20}.

\textsuperscript{20} It might be noted here that Ezinnihite, the town in which Adinembo located his palm produce collection center, is not a Niger river town. It is therefore not possible to imagine that the (continued...)
The question put earlier to Madam Warigbani Adinembo regarding the possibility of a European involvement might have appeared leading and untypical for an interview situation hoping to remain objective. Yet the question itself was important, because of the tendency, common amongst contemporary Nigerians, to want to attribute the accomplishment of such technical or architectural feats, especially this early in the colonial experience, to Europeans. It is even more fortunate that the correct Onwudinjo family was finally traced, and to a small quarter of the town of Asaba521, and they were able to provide substantial additional historical context to the building of the Adinembo house.

It does come as a surprise to discover that James I. Onwudinjo received no formal training in building as such522. His early career consisted only of informal apprenticeships which details are related in a subsequent chapter, and from which is communicated that his masters had generally recognized his enthusiasm and ability to learn quickly when the issue at hand was related to building. None of this history nevertheless

520 (...continued)
connection between Adinembo and Onwudinjo his builder had anything to do with an encounter made possible by relationships linking Asaba to Ezinihitte.

521 Interestingly, this researcher had looked up the phone book, and was uncertain what to do with the fact that for the town of Asaba, only one Onwudinjo was listed (it is a common name in the area). I wrote this person, and got no reply, then went to see the individual armed with the phone book address. On finding the person so listed, and upon describing my project, this person was of the opinion that family I described must be related to his own, but that it was clearly not his own immediate family. He assured me that the son of the Onwudinjo of whom I spoke was a successful lawyer, who practiced in Lagos, and that this was as far as he could go with helping. Again, through the telephone book, I was able to locate an Ikoyi-resident Onwudinjo, of about four such names listed for Lagos. I wrote this person, got no reply, and then telephoned several months later. This lawyer turned out indeed to be the son of the Onwudinjo I sought, and through him, I was able to arrange very fruitful interviews with two of his father’s brothers in Asaba.


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prepares the observer for the flamboyance and style displayed in the Adinembo House.

Also surprising is the discovery that his eventual career as a builder seems not to have benefited from his early upbringing in Asaba, his home town which was one of the earliest settlements of significant numbers of Europeans (for reason of its status in the early history of the Protectorate), and which therefore offered the spectacle of the construction of the buildings in which they lived and the offices out of which they ran their affairs. This situation would seem to offer opportunities for entry into the building trade. It does seem that indigenes of Asaba and its surrounding settlements (Ilah for example) included a large proportion of the earlier population of non-customary builders in the south east.

One is even tempted to suggest of an origin in Asaba, that Onwudinjo may have had a powerful experience during World War I, such perhaps as observing the orderliness of European power as enacted by soldiery. Or, in the event that he saw military service in the war, it might even be suggested that the experience of the Cameroons, and of its large German colonial government-owned estates and buildings, may have been remarked by him, and is what resurfaces in James I. Onwudinjo’s creation of the Adinembo House. One might of course point to such an experience for Chief Adinembo himself. There is no evidence however to support such a theory in either case. Furthermore was either person’s participation in the war confirmed, scholarly work on the experience of Nigerian

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523 This is confirmed by several conversations in which the names of builders came often with an association with Asaba; most memorable for this dissertation might be the mention made earlier of George of Asaba, in relation to the building of the Ojiakor Ezenne house at Adazi Nnukwu.
soldiers in the First World War, which detail would be important to a legitimate interpretation of war-time experience, remains conspicuously silent.

It is seen in a later chapter that James Onwudinjo’s entry into building seems however not to have been a result of any contact with colonial building in his own hometown. Instead he seems to have learned the art of the new building in the town of Aba, a town which is (as was seen in a previous chapter) much closer to the coast itself, and therefore together with near coastal Igbo towns such as Akwete towns which shared the same commercial universe as did Okrika; certainly more so, at this time than they would share with the inland town of Asaba.

Onwudinjo’s story is made even more interesting by the fact, as will become apparent in Chapter 7, that even here in Aba, the man to whom he was apprenticed for a number of years was Yoruba; an itinerant builder who came from the Lagos area, perhaps therefore a man who may have been a native of Badagry.

There is nevertheless a certain sweetness to the discovery that the builder of the Adinembo House\(^2\); the house of the polygamist amongst whose wives number many Mbaise-Igbo women, ended up choosing an Igbo contractor from Asaba to build his mansion.

Also interesting for our previous statement on the likely nativity of those individuals who exhibited and lived out an

\(^2\) This building is still in the possession of the Adinembo family, though significant damage inflicted on it during the Nigerian Civil War (the Nigeria-Biafra war), has now left the building mainly uninhabitable, so that major areas of it are abandoned.
early desire for the cultural transformation which the new era seemed to promise, is that Asaba was the capital of the Niger Protectorate in previous decades, at which would have been stationed the governing Royal Niger Company’s administrative headquarters, its ‘Supreme Court’ (Adewoye [1977] : 38), as well as its soldiers, all accompanied by the paraphernalia of modern state governance: including office buildings and residences, executed in a tropical-Colonial style. Asaba therefore was the earliest inland town-settlement of European culture within the Igbo hinterland, which was not centered around Missionary activity. As such, its initial viability and subsequent sustainability would have depended on ensuring the creation of a labor pool who were reasonably skilled in the art of European building on the one hand, but amongst whom, on the other there would have had to be a pool of literate individuals (to work as clerks and lower level administrators for example). There is no question that the early presence of the three church missionary organizations here even prior to the Royal Niger Company’s arrival meant that there were already native people who could perform some of the tasks required of them in employment of the British.

Asaba did not remain the southern capital for long. With the removal of the capital to Lokoja and then to Calabar, Asaba went into a decline from which it has never recovered. Most of its skilled indigenes would therefore have left soon after

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We have indirect evidence for this in the fact that in the 1890’s the unlikely employment of a southerner in the colonial army (which preferred to enlist men from further afield in the north, in order to avoid problems of loyalty which might arise in waging campaigns against one’s own people) occurred when literacy was the primary skill sought, such as is the case in naval regiments. In such cases, the recruits apparently came mainly from the towns of Asaba, Aboh, Onitsha. Moreover, though we do not know their place of origin, the Asaba garrison in 1889 included not only five British Officers, but also two native officers (Ukpabi [1987]:41-2).
to find skilled or literacy related work elsewhere. This seems to be how Mr. Onwudinjo, who was later to become contracted to build the Adinembo house, left Asaba (where he had in all likelihood already been so involved, possibly on government construction contracts526) for Port Harcourt, a new town not far from Okrika, which in 1911 had been selected both as the Nigerian Railways Corporation's north-south corridor's southern termination, and as the site of a new sea-port terminal (Osuntokun [1979]: 14). As did many Nigerians born in the thirties with whom this writer spoke, some readers may have difficulty with the idea that Nigerians outside the Colony of Lagos could have not only acquired the building skills of the complexity needed to produce the Adinembo house, but also could have been motivated to constitute the agreement in the form of a written contract. Yet the evidence from the archive at Enugu, indicates that the British administration insisted on written contracts with even the most basic of its service suppliers (for obvious reasons of accounting), and that many Igbo men entered into contracts with the administration in many areas, particularly in building. We need not be surprised therefore, given this fact, as well as the impression it may have made on the minds of those so contracted, and with the general proliferation and dispersal of qualified lawyers and legal clerks all over south eastern Nigeria, that Mr. Adinembo (for whom the written contract would surely have been nothing new) and Mr. Onwudinjo527, would

526 It is not impossible to imagine that Mr. Onwudinjo may have been employed either by the Royal Niger Company as a soldier.... or as a building contractor. However, what one might assume about his age, does make it less than likely.

527 Whose work in Asaba may therefore have meant he was conversant with both the tenor of European constructive practice, and with the tenets of British conceptions of legality and agreement.
choose to execute a written contract to carry out the project\textsuperscript{528}.

Both Mazi Onwudinjo's personal biography as it is presented so far, and that of Chief Adinembo, as well as the historical situations of Asaba and of Okrika in which (as these have been elaborated here) they found themselves, present a picture which departs significantly from the representations of life among Igbo and Izhon peoples which colonial administrators, and anthropologists have, as was seen earlier, tended to provide. That is, we see here evidence not just of the one individual Mr. Onwudinjo involved in an activity and tradition which varied from that to which his background and absence of formal education would have prepared us for, but we also find that suggested and implied in the social organization which allowed him to practice his trade, is the fact that he was not alone; that other individuals had been able to acquire enough knowledge of modern European building technique, to allow them to produce, unsupervised by whites, buildings on which is invariably stamped their own personality.

Yet, there are aspects of the historical condition of the Adinembo House's possibility, which we may never recover. We may never know the circumstances of the meeting of Chief Adinembo with Mr. Onwudinjo. That is, we may never understand exactly how it was that Mr. Onwudinjo was brought to Chief Adinembo's attention, how they related to each other, and how

\textsuperscript{528} Indeed, at the time of its construction, anti-Igbo riots erupted in Okrika. Since the builder Mazi Onwudinjo was an Igbo from Asaba, and since the majority of his builder's hailed from various parts of Igboland, the construction process had to be suspended for a few months, as the builders all departed for their places of origin. There is no indication that under the circumstance any attempt was made to read the contract in terms of its implication for such a situation, or that the builder may have attempted to make any claim for an increased contract sum due, for example, to the prolonged building time that resulted. Such action would be quite normal with any building contract.
their inter-relationship changed in time. That they became good friends seems suggested by Ogbuefi Onwudinjo's recollection of Chief Adinembo's presence in their house in Port Harcourt, of which they have poignant memories of the latter's person and his distinctive laughter.

Specifically in relation to the building process, we do not know whether any kind of competitive tendering process was involved, or if Mr. Onwudinjo's reputation and skill was such as to mean that Chief Adinembo would have considered no one else. And, while we have been able to establish that both the conception and the execution are those of Nigerians, we are unable to be specific about which Nigerian exactly would have produced the drawing. It has also not been possible to account sufficiently for differences between the drawing and the executed building. And this, not because differences from drawing to building are anything but the norm, but because no access has been had to recollections or documentation which reveal the day to day interaction between patron and builder. One photograph produced during construction, of which we know neither its provenance, its purpose, nor its date of

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529 To digress a little here, it should be noted that in relation to the earlier questioning of Mrs. Adinembo, in which I inquired from her about the possibility that Europeans were involved in the conception and in the construction of the building, that when I first questioned Tamuno Adinembo on this matter, he had said without hesitation, and forcefully, that his father got the plan from one of the Europeans with whom he conducted business, and with whom he was well acquainted. Our analysis clearly challenges this reportage, but its meaning may lie more significantly in the way contemporary Nigerians remember their own history, and the role Europeans played in it. It seems inconceivable to many Nigerians, as to Europeans who are partly responsible for encouraging this historical distortion, that any Nigerians in the period when Okrika was supposedly better known for cannibalism and heathenism, could have been controlling the production of this kind of edifice.

530 The drawings produced for the production of almost any building would indicate this difference quite easily. In architectural history the scholarly study of the forms of this difference in its own right (as opposed to as an appendage to the study of the history of the production of the icons of twentieth century modern architecture) is rare in the twentieth century (but see Robin Middleton 'AA Files _______').
production. The photograph recalls many more questions than it answers however. Not the least important being the question of the photographer identity. Who might this person have been only some twelve years or so after it was clear that in south eastern Nigeria only Europeans, and Sierra Leonians (as attested by one confirmed instance) are likely to have had access to cameras? Much information which would be useful to this writing, and of great interest generally, we have recourse only to cautious speculation.

A Preliminary Concluding Interpretation

An attempt has nevertheless been made here to question the nature of a particular building, and to suggest that it may not be what it appears at first to project. The question has in a way been, once we recognize the extent of the building’s African-ness, what then to call the building, if one is to label it at all. A particularly apt metaphor here is presented in another aspect of Okrika life itself. Okrika culture recognizes many forms or types of marriage, in each form of which comes a particular understanding of the ownership of children. These forms of marriage are known as ya and igwa forms marriages. The iya marriage is contracted only between members of the same House. Under this marriage, divorce is

531 The Sierra Leone-originated Mr. Adams of Enugu photographed Chief Ojiakor of Adazi Nnukwu in about 1917-1920.

532 See Chief E.D.W. Opuogulaya (1975) op. cit.

533 The Izhon (most typically Kalabari) 'House' or wari operates in a similar fashion to the Igbo clan or umunna (which it seems to have replaced here), but for the fact that the former is based more on corporate identity and relationships of commerce and trade, than on kinship ties and/or lineage descent. All the members of the same 'House' are therefore rarely related by affinal ties (Alagoa and Pombo [1972:45-69]).
not recognized (or possible). Finally the offspring of the marriage are the legal possession of the husband.

An igwa marriage may on the other hand be contracted with any individual, including members of other ‘Houses’, and with those amongst them who are already married under ya. In igwa however, the offspring of the union do not belong to the husband, but to either the wife’s ya husband (if previously married under ya), or to the igwa wife’s own father or her oldest brother.

Though we know that in the contemporary period "....the hitherto tight customary rope around the possession of children born under the igwa system of marriage, is also slackening under the pressure of modern times [and that]...a majority of grown men and young people [now] engage in igwa marriage....", we must mention that a third form of marriage seems to have been recognized as a response to the problem of ownership of one’s offspring. In this third, and unnamed form, the marriage is contracted with the foreigner [that is with a non-Okrika and non-Izhon person], who seems to have been mainly Igbo: "The non-possession of one’s own children, combined with the difficulty in marrying a girl of one’s choice from a different family, urged people to save up money to marry wives from Ibo-land whereby they could possess their own children."

It may therefore be appropriate to view the problem as one which has involved a struggle over the ownership of offspring which results from the liaison between Europe and southern Nigeria, and in Okrikan terms, which dispute results from unclarity as to which kind of marriage was entered into at the outset. We see also that European writers have tended to
assume in treating similar offspring in Cameroon or in western Nigeria as well as in the Cote d’Ivoire, that they entered into a conjugal contract which gives them rights to ownership. This chapter has attempted to challenge the basis for such an assumption.
In the previous chapter, a preliminary narrative of the personal history and career of the builder Jonathan Onwudinjo was presented. This was in order to form some sense of his development as a builder, and of the relationship, much as it was, that existed between himself and the man who was perhaps his most significant individual patron, Chief Joshua Adinembo.

In this chapter, a clearer picture of the nature of these contexts for southeastern Nigeria in the period is accessed, alternatively, through a reconstruction of other aspects of the biography of James Onwudinjo. Moreover, the chapter focuses on the lives of other builders whose experiences are parallel to that of James Onwudinjo’s, and who number amongst their own patrons, many of the individuals and associations whose built structures have formed significant parts of the investigation so far.

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534 For English translation see following page.
A reconstruction of the biographies of the builders is important for other reasons. Perhaps the most significant one is that it ensures the avoidance of a common pitfall of scholarship on the production of art and architecture in African contexts; namely the pervasive construction of a universe of anonymity, in which the creators of the objects of interest are largely silent and nameless.

It may indeed be possible to claim that the assertion, still heard beyond the world of the specialists in African studies, that it is inaccurate to apply the terms art and/or architecture to the objects of African ceremonial life, and to the structures in which the objects may be stored (and in which Africans themselves also reside), stems from the absence...
of the individual in the construction of the significance of the object, and of the objects history. That is, granted that indeed most, but by no means all, pre-modern artifacts that indicate a serious aesthetic intent, are used in relation to some aspect of religious life, it is nevertheless illogical to then conclude from this fact that the objects do not exist, in their own right (and for the society) as art and architecture.

That this has been assumed stems from a basic omission. Until recently\(^{536}\), rarely was the maker of the object brought into a construction of the world the objects inhabit; as a result the language that surrounds artistic production, the construction of standards of judgement which motivates stylistic learning and transformation, and the nature of the relationship between the artist and architect, and the institutions which consume the art, are subsumed by the values of the African consumers of the object. It would seem apparent that had this world been opened to the scholar, it would be clear that in the actual process of making objects, and in their subsequent distribution, the bulk of the time is not involved with religious thought; or at least no more so than its presence is observed in any other aspect of social existence\(^{537}\).

\(^{536}\) Fagg, Pemberton and Abiodun's *Yoruba Sculpture* and Barbara Johnson's *Four Dan Sculptors*. In these works, the individual artists involvement in the creation of the work of art, and the extent to which the work is innovative even within the supposed limits of a so-called tradition, is clearly developed by these writers.

\(^{537}\) If spirituality pervades African existence more so than it does that of the European or the multiple European based dominant culture of America, it has not seemed to prevent the recognition in both worlds (and the application of the closest English term to the phenomenon in translation) of to take one example, the activity we may identify as Trade.
The above notwithstanding, there remain other reasons for the attention to biography as part of the interpretation of history explored in this work. This reason is moreover a purely architectural one, and one that arises from the buildings as they present themselves. For the church building especially, were one to follow a trajectory from any of the coastal towns and cities (including in this instance the riverside towns such as Onitsha and Idah which are thinkable as being 'coastal') to the more inland site, the path seems to map a particularly architectural journey. This journey, as observed in the changes in the nature of the architecture of the 1910s and 1920s, seems to be one in which a local concern for what Europeans may have thought of their artifacts, and with showing (to each other and to the world beyond) that they could reproduce with accuracy the objects of the European world if they so chose to do, is progressively less important and that the interest of the builder is increasingly directed at how to produce the most innovative architecture, judged from the more assured center of the locality's frame for encountering other societies and their cultures.

So, for example, it may be imagined that between the geographical vector described by a route leading from the edge of the coast at Bonny, Akwete or Okrika, inland to Ufuma and Ujari, one also describes simultaneously a cultural vector marked by what appears to be an increasing freedom in the interpretation of an 'original European' form, and also traces a chronological path.

From the two late 14th-century Scottish churches introduced earlier on at the beginning of the chapter (St. Monan's Parish

The idea that this is a progress to the interior is by now perhaps too loaded with preconception to be applied easily in this text.
Church and the Inverkeithing Parish Church), and St. Peter’s Okrika on Nigeria’s southeastern coast, the visible differences would appear minimal. St. Peter’s appears to be properly within the tradition of Northern Europe, an assertion which it displays with a flourish in some of its detail (fig. 32). Its difference from the Scottish church seems to be reserved for some aspects of its interior, but most particularly in the placement of furniture and of fixings within it, and for this reason, we had already seen, the plaque becomes necessary; reminding constantly that it not be attributed to the white missionary.

Between St. Peter’s Church, Okrika and St. Mark’s Ajalli, over two hundred fifty miles inland from the coast as the bird flies\(^5^{39}\), a geographical vector seems increasingly to be described, into which path other church buildings (including the ones described to various degrees in previous chapters viz: St. Emmanuel’s Church, Enugu-Ukwu, St. Mark’s Ajalli, and the old Anglican church building at Ufuma) may be placed. Also simultaneously described is a cultural vector marked by what appears to be an increasing freedom with the incorporation of a southeast Nigerian aesthetic within the reinterpretation of a second-hand Okiriké-European original.

This difference is not simply one of the inaccuracies of memory; of the fact that the builders, whether or not with the assistance of a European person, failed to reproduce an Okrikan original exactly, because of the absence of drawings. Rather, as we note of the incorporation of elements from the Igbo temple-house, the differences arise from an attempt, quite consciously so, to recast the idea of the church

\(^{539}\) A figure which would be closer to three hundred and fifty miles by the available roads and paths which connected the towns and villages of the south eastern Nigeria of the early twentieth centuries.
building to the extent that might have been acceptable at the time, in terms which had some local resonances with customary signifiers of the spiritual realm.

The series of church buildings also trace an approximate chronological path. This may indicate that, before the 1940s after which period church building generally proceeded only in close conformity to an architectural drawing, this freedom of invention increased the further away from the initial moment of conversion one travels, though we may not state this conclusively.¹⁴⁰

The detailed nature of these series of transformations will unfold as part of the context of the biographies, and largely therefore towards the concluding end of the chapter.

In the transformative transmission of architectural style and typology, the drawing was, despite the Adinembo House's experience, largely absent. This fact was indicated in the introductory chapter. Though neither the exploration of the mechanics of architectural culture in the absence of drawing, nor the investigation of the differences in the architecture thus produced, form more of a focus for the present work than is made of it above (and in this chapter), it helps in the making of a preliminary assessment, which part is significant for the focus of this dissertation, that the biographies may be reconstructible to a degree that enables two possibilities.

¹⁴⁰ It may after all also be true, on the same logic, that because generally speaking the closer a place was to the coast (or to the path of the major rivers) the earlier its experience of Christian missionary work, the differences would be expected to decrease not increase. Certainly, one finds examples that would contradict such an argument, even though within Okrika itself, this does seem to have been the general trend. St. Peter's remains the most European appearing of the plethora of Okrikan Church buildings.
The first is the making possible of the understanding (complemented by the buildings on the trajectory indicated earlier) of the internal, critical world of the designer mason and the builder. The second, is that one is able to comprehend the ways in which the intentional aesthetic debates carried on in this world, no matter how obscured by indirection this discourse might appear, justifies the unqualified recognition of its products as architecture.

From Akwete and Okrika to Enugu Ukwu

The importance of Nimo as one a the centers of the new architectural culture, due to the coincidence of a strong culture of customary architecture, a progressive leader (Chief Onyiuke) and the temporary sojourn of the Roman Catholic priest Reverend Father Bubendorff, has been established previously. It therefore is convenient to locate the construction of the biographies of the builders of this period in Nimo, since we have more information available from this period than seems to have survived from the earlier places such as the Church Missionary Society’s Onitsha Industrial Mission. Nevertheless, and for good reason which will become clear, the narrative commences not at Nimo, but in the neighboring town of Enugu Ukwu.

It may be recalled that the name of the head builder of Emmanuel Church, Enugu Ukwu, had emerged in the church building’s history, but that it did so without a modicum of

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541 Clearly, a similar argument is extendable, in theory at least, to the universe of the creator of artifacts and wall ornamentation.

542 Enugu Ukwu and Nimo seem to have no ties of clanship. This means for example that they recognize that they do not share a common history, that their migrations which in the distant past bring them to common adjacent present sites does not derive from a connected past, and that their traditions and ceremonial life though both distinctively Igbo in form, vary significantly from each other.
a biographical context. Apart from confirming the ethnicity of the person named, this name has, as a result, been quite without meaning. However, further information arises as we shall see to fill in some of this anonymity, through observational leads offered up in the larger locality to which Enugu Ukwu belongs.

Though the reader does by now recognize that rough-cut stone buildings are occasionally observed as one travels in southeastern Nigeria, an unusually high density of them occurs in the Njikoka LGA\textsuperscript{443} to which Enugu Ukwu belongs. Many are in disrepair, some due however to being bombed out during what is locally still referred to, more out of habit than out of any real and lingering animosity, as the Biafran war.

Though many of the ones that continue to exist were erected in the late nineteen forties and the early fifties, and are difficult to differentiate stylistically from the earlier buildings of the twenties and thirties, a good number of those that do survive, were built in the period of our study.

Knowledge of this fact results from a fortuitous encounter, and one that is ultimately critical to the resolution of this narrative. For, though the architecture itself is bound to take center stage as object of the discussion we enter into, it seemed (especially in the light of the previous discussion on church buildings), that an overriding, invisible presence

\textsuperscript{443} This is represented for example by a count of over eleven of this type of building on both sides of a seven kilometer stretch of the old Awka-Onitsha road (roughly from Nawfia to Abagana). This road was major one in the period from the sixties up to about 1975, but has since been relegated to a status of less importance since the completion of a network of expressways which by-pass the body of most towns. One discovers, on travelling inward on both sides, that this pattern is repeated with only a slightly less density, when the areas of the obodo (town or village) which are not so close to the road are visited.
was that of the identity of the builders. That is, with such a concentration of buildings in one area, understanding their productive context became an imperative. It seemed critical to understand something, not only about those for whom the buildings were erected, but also (and more importantly in the first instance), something about those who were their actual builders.

Thomas Isiadinso has been encountered previously, in relation to the Emmanuel Church. However, the pedagogical locus which his craft circumscribes, appears to be centered on the town of Nimo, which in some places shares a common border with Enugu Ukwu. That is, it happens to be in the town of Nimo, more so than in Enugu Ukwu that one observed the development of an architectural style to which a flourish may be attributed to an extent not observed in Enugu Ukwu in the period even though the builders who produced Nimo architecture, often pointed to Thomas Isiadinso of the Isionye quarter of Enugu Ukwu, as having been their ultimate teacher.

Thomas Isiadinso had a peculiar career, and one which serves well to illustrate the basis on which the new architecture was developed. We have no actual date for his birth, but know that he died in 1937, and that this happened at a mature age. He may therefore have been anything from as old as 85, to as young as 60 at the time he passed away. This would mean that he was born no later than about 1875. Whatever the case actually was, it is remembered that as a young boy he was captured or sold into slavery to Umuchukwu (that is

Biographical details for his life were put together from several interviews, which themselves traversed wide range of subjects. My informants included Chinyelugo: Chief F.G.N Okoye of Enugu Ukwu, a now retired contractor who has been working trans nationally since the 1960s, his wife Ochiora: Mrs. Monica Chiebonam Okoye, and finally master-mason of Nimo, Mazi Michael Nguko, alias Mallam.
Arochukwu), then the Aro town which superintended the famous and even notorious oracle Ibiniukpabi or Long JuJu.

Apart then from their well known participation in commerce, the Aro ultimately also played a role in the modernization of Igbo culture, spectacularly indicated in the fact that some of the other individuals whose histories we follow in this study, and who ultimately were responsible for the reception of new building trades in the hinterland, seem to have had an unfortunate early history of Aro affiliation.

The Aro, as the Igbo speaking indigenes of Arochukwu are known, were long distance traders, certainly during the period of concentrated trade relations with Europeans on the coast, and probably well before this. This is a rather interesting coincidence, as it will be realized over and over again, that many of the most unusual individuals, whose actions proved to be the agency for dramatic cultural reorientations, including those changes that occurred in the sphere of building and architecture, were men who had either been enslaved at one point or another by the Aro, and moved to an Aro settlement from which they itinerated with their owners, or, they were individuals who had exiled themselves.

545 They traded in all kinds of items whose value and weight would have made its exchange profitable for the transport-less journeys involved. Their items of trade were therefore either light and valuable, as say would have been the glass beads used in beadwork, or they would have been self transporting, as were slaves. Of course Aro slavery had a peculiar form, in the sense that it did not involve them carrying out raids into other territory. Rather, as a center of religious practice to which contesting parties came quite willingly to lodge an appeal (in the case of an unresolved judicial matter), and in which the loosing party was 'swallowed' by the oracle (in reality they were retained as Aro slaves or sold to Europeans), this particular commodity, though heavy by comparison was still a very profitable (and for a time the most profitable) form of commerce.

546 References abound on the subject. For a detailed investigation see Dike (1990), and for a short and unusually closely observed description see Ekejiuba (1972) op.cit.
for any number of reasons from their original homes, and had thence sought employment as an aid, servant, or apprentice of an Arochukwu or other Aro merchant. It would seem therefore that at least in the very early period, one must recognize that for hinterland Igbos, who unlike their Efik, Izhon and near-Niger-River Anioma-Igbo/Aniocha-Igbo neighbors had no easy access to the world beyond their community, the Aro became the channel through which contact with the outer world passed. Arochukwu slave trading was nominally disbanded in the early 1900's following the British 1902 campaigns against the Aro, and against their home base of Arochukwu in particular, where the long Juju was housed. Though the Aro themselves never had direct contact with the Europeans whose goods they carried as exchange commodities, the long period of their history as middlemen between the Igbo hinterland and the Izhon and Efik populations with whom they traded respectively over the eastern Niger delta and across the Cross River [the Izhon and the Efik being the one’s who had direct trading relations with the Europeans at the coastal towns of Bonny, Okrika and Brass, or at the inland riverine port of Old Calabar], made them a prosperous town. By the 1890s, the major Aro families were certainly in the position to be able to afford erecting modest sized and grandly proportioned mansions, in a style that departs from Igbo near coastal traditions. By the early 1900s, after the campaign (which by the way did not eradicate

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\[547\] Aro settlements outside Arochukwu itself include AroNdizuogu, Ndikelionwu, Ujalli et cetera. Their settlements in northern Igbo communities with Nri (Nshi) or Idenmili religious affiliations and those with Awka commercial relationships however generally avoided the dominant forms they took in other Igbo areas, becoming instead one of a village constituting any one town of many villages, and becoming moreover a village long since assimilated, and which therefore maintains little actual contact with Arochukwu itself. This seems to have occurred largely because such towns were not politically and culturally isolated from commercial activity in the nineteenth century, and that as such the Aro found little to profit from in the face of local competition and involvement with long distance trade.
slavery, only its more obvious forms in the trans Atlantic trade), wealthy Aro traders would have visited the coast more regularly, and would have acquainted themselves with the large European buildings there.

The circumstances of Thomas Isiadinso’s sale into slavery are yet to be reconstructed. It may have been a matter of family or clan dispute in which he became involved as pawn, or, and this is a more likely possibility given how he returned home, he may have been kidnapped by a semi-local team of professional child stealers. Whatever the case, Mazi Nguko has said that Thomas Isiadinso learned his trade as an apprentice apparently involved with the erection of buildings at Arochukwu. At the invasion of Arochukwu by a British led West African infantry force, or in Mazi Nguko’s words, "when Umuchukwu sent all its slaves away", Thomas Isiadinso returned to his hometown of Enugu Ukwu. Since he was enslaved as a child, he seemed not to have known his way home, and found his direction basically by asking his way as he went, finally making it all the way home.

This must have occurred between the year 1896 and 1902, if we are to believe Nguko’s testimony. However, there is a possibility, as has been mentioned already, that slavery was not finally eradicated simply by this British invasion but continued to exist as an internal and local practice in one form or another. Reports indicate that an internal trade in slaves, and even the occasional establishment of a plantation remained a not unusual practice which existed well into the

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548 Another builder whose own career is explored subsequently.
twentieth century⁴⁴⁹. Isiadinso’s return may thus be located anywhere between 1896 and 1916, but is more likely to have occurred before 1910 by which time he would have been in his late twenties or early thirties.

Whatever the case was, it would seem that his reputation spread rapidly soon after his return, and though we do not know what smaller buildings he may have worked on immediately following this moment, we will observe that by the 1920s and right up to the 1930s he was called upon to supervise the building of many important buildings including not only Emmanuel Church at Enugu Ukwu his hometown, but also, of many mansion type houses at Enugu⁵⁵⁰ and in surrounding towns.

Ultimately however, no account of significant detail seems possible for Isiadinso’s training. It is not known for example whether he had any formal training whatsoever. What we do know is that some time after his return to Enugu Ukwu, he had set up his own building and carpentry workshop, where many individuals who were also subsequently to become important figures in the history of architecture in the area received their first apprenticeships in the actual practice of non-customary building.

Here, we deliberately indicate that most of Isiadinso’s apprentices, had received some formal training before they came to work for him, at the hands of Fr. Bubenrdooff, the Roman Catholic priest introduced in a previous chapter, who

⁴⁴⁹ Chief Onyiuke of Nimo, whom we shall encounter shortly, had to (1933) sell his own daughter into married slavery of sorts, to a trader from Onitsha. She was recaptured several years later by her brothers, who then repatriated her back to Nimo.

⁵⁵⁰ Enugu Ukwu is not the same place as Enugu. The latter is originally a colonial town. At the time it was one only of three regional colonial capitals of Nigeria.
ran a technical training school, as part of his mission station at Nimo. It is therefore important to also understand the nature of this school but seen this time from the experience of the indigenous student. In such an understanding must be included the nature of the training the school would have offered its graduates before their subsequent apprenticeships with Isiadinso. Clearly, this will indicate the extent to which it is possible to think of them as fully formed by the time they would have completed their training, and on the other hand, the degree to which it remained possible that Isiadinso could be a significant influence in the apprentice's comprehension of the occupation, its methods, and of the formation of a professional self-identity.

Fr. Bubendorff is, as already indicated an important figure in the history of the Catholic mission in south eastern Nigeria. Part of the reason for this success in Nimo seems to lie in his having struck up a cordial relationship with one of the high ranking titled men of Nimo society, Chief Onyiuke, who had some claim to the Eze-ship of Nimo. For Onyiuke himself, association with a European may have been intended as a way of consolidating his claim to power through association with an individual who could pass as symbol of the new and now apparently most powerful authority... the European. The conversion of such an important personality to Christianity (which he however failed ultimately to achieve) would have been an even more sure footing on which to build the Church in Nimo. It was in this period that Buberndorff also hit upon the idea of training young men in the art of western building. In all likelihood as suggested previously, this was a response to the much older Onitsha Training
Mission\textsuperscript{551}, but also for the practical purpose of providing the builders who would be required to build the many church buildings and clergy accommodation that would then become necessary, in order that the missionary project be successful. It will become apparent that many of the famous builders of the period covered by the dissertation’s study passed through this college, or trained with its practicing graduates\textsuperscript{552}.

For the period when the school was located at Nimo the question needs to be raised about what the motivations might have been that drew the young men who joined the technical workshop towards this career (the question applies equally to Adazi Nnukwu). This is fairly answered by understanding that there were basically two other options open to individuals in what was then a somewhat remote, rural town. The first alternative was to be employed as one of many of the family’s labor force, working on the family’s farms, and then helping sell the foodstuffs produced which was surplus to the family’s needs at the many surrounding markets. The second alternative, which required parental consent, and which would be granted only if the family could afford to sacrifice the labor such an individual might otherwise be able to contribute to family work, and which consent was therefore not necessarily easily granted in the early days, was to be sent to the elementary school (primary school) where one would

\textsuperscript{551} On high ground in town of Onitsha, now occupied by the exquisite 1960’s and 1980’s architecture of All Saint’s Cathedral Church of the Anglican Church of Nigeria.

\textsuperscript{552} It should be re-emphasized however mention first however, that the project did not itself last long, primarily because due to another misunderstanding in which dispute Bubendorff attempted to intervene (in this case probably to do with a conspiracy against Chief Onyiuke whose claim to being the Chief of Nimo would at the time have been contested by many of its citizens), Fr. Bubendorff was forced to leave Nimo. He travelled North, finally settling in the town of Adazi-Nnukwu some six or so miles away, where he once again set about establishing the Catholic church as well as the schools and technical workshops by which it was to be accompanied.
learn to read and write, for the purpose either of becoming an official of the Church, or with the ultimate goal of entering the Colonial administration itself. Preferred roles in such an instance would then be that of the court interpreter, the court messenger, and most lucratively that of the court scribe, known as the Court Clerk. Entering the building trade, as it was offered in Nimo, was here a third alternative, and one that would have been at the time rarely available to most young men.

The idea of working on the farm, apart from the discomfort it brings for young individuals having constantly to operate under the regime of the older members of the family, seems even then to have been unattractive, perhaps because it was already considered comparatively hard labor for the low remuneration it offered. Farm work, moreover, certainly did not provide the kinds of financial remuneration that work as a literate individual was able to, not to mention the intense sense of authority which the latter made contingent. This difference was even then widely observable in the institution of the court clerk whose seemingly limitless power, not to mention typically corruptly acquired wealth, was there for all to behold.

Nevertheless, court clerkships were only attainable for a minority of literate individuals since each court might represent whole areas which themselves consisted of anything from four to nineteen towns. A recognition of this fact may therefore have prompted those not interested in the possibility of joining the caste of church officials, to consider instead the idea of becoming a builder. As did clerkship, the latter mentioned career in itself offered the same possibility of working for the colonial administration,
as carpenter or as mason with the Public Works Department. It also offered the probability of getting financial rewards which if not commensurable with the ill-gotten gains of some unscrupulous court clerks, certainly outstripped anything they might be able to tease out of the 'patricians' with whom they would have had to work on the family farm. Moreover, for those who had any familiarity with the practices of other established carpenters, it would have been general knowledge by this time that carpenters could also choose to be self-employed, working for individuals in the local community, or creating functional items like European style chairs and tables, for onward transmission to the market at Onitsha for sale to its more cosmopolitan public. This alternative gave the individual a greater degree of freedom than would employment with the still new Colonial government's technical departments, and also afforded the possibility (for those individuals who might not savor emigrating to other towns or even to the city) of making one's living at home.

The description above is of course a somewhat generalized one.

Such a generalized picture is nevertheless useful, as will become apparent, for its providing an overall picture from which position one may better understand the particular biographies of named builders; and from which to pose questions of interpretation. It will also become clear that the biographies allow a clearer understanding of the total context out from which the buildings already reviewed here emerge. However, if one is to understand the extent to which such a context is shared by various individual builders, it

553 The classical structure of the Igbo village is one in which the male family head would possess family lands. Older unmarried sons of his, as well as his unmarried younger brothers therefore owed their labor to him and to the unit's farmlands.
might be justified to provide further biographical detail of the historical paths which lead the young individuals into the career in which they finally settled. Many, but not all of the builders narrated here, are individuals who were involved in the construction of some of the buildings investigated in previous chapters.

Histories and the biographies of some builders.
The biographical accounts below include more of the actual work of the individuals interviewed than is typical for historical reconstructions. However, by including such extensive quotations, a texture and voice emerges which adds a depth and dimension to the information provided in the other chapters which seems otherwise not possible. It seems especially important as some of this work's readers may have no familiarity with the reality of the context, and may thus have difficulty imagining its unfolding in a manner that does not insert it within a more European-like (and pre-industrial) scenography.

The personal histories of five builders are described, and below is a summary of what each person's career history contributes to our textural knowledge of that time and place. Nicholas Ide's career opens up the world of native apprenticeship, of the skills acquired, and of the aesthetic world inhabited. Jonas Obinaju who was a carpenter, also

554 Many of the biographies are of builders who are of Nimo origin, and who were still living in 1992, and whom I had the opportunity to interview. Not all of them, it should be noted went to the Nimo workshop, but it seemed clear that its very presence in the town inspired many, even those who were unable to gain entry into the workshop, to seek other avenues for ultimately becoming builders.
learned his craft as a native apprentice\textsuperscript{555}. His narrative takes us deeper into the apprentices's world, especially as it indicates the role degree to which their existence was an emphatically itinerant one. It also reveals how the processes they underwent influenced their acquisition and construction of a historical memory. Simon Okpa's career also involves the nature (and conception) of apprenticeship, but moreover divulges the changing status of the carpenter in then contemporary culture. His biography also locates the manner in which the first contact with the idea of the new building culture might occur, in his case through the offices of a personal and benevolent guardian. Michael Nguko's narrative introduces (in addition to all the issues raised by previous descriptions) the way in which the division of labor operated in the newly emerging professional building sphere, as well as the nature of power relations between the builder and his patron-client. Additionally, Nguko's career allows the exploration of notions of creativity in the context, together with its construction of aesthetic preference. Ezekiel Obiegbu's story departs from that of the builders mentioned above, because his career was, from the start, located outside the sphere of Nimo. It therefore becomes possible to compare the experience of the builder from a less advantaged location in which the culture of customary building was not easily accessible, to the careers of those individuals who hailing from a place like Nimo in which the Bubendorff school was located, would have been more likely to have contact with such a culture. The narratives are concluded by that of James Onwudinjo of Asaba (and Port Harcourt) whose house at Okrika

\textsuperscript{555} The term native apprentice is used to indicate training at the hands of a local carpenter who himself would also have been trained largely (or only) through apprenticeship. These may be separated from those who had some degree of formal institutional training before embarking on a career which often commenced with an apprenticeship with a local builder.
the reader should now be familiar with, allows the continued exploration of the relationship between the builder and his patron, especially that given both itineration and the changing multi-ethnicity of south eastern Nigeria (in comparison say with south western Nigeria), the builder is more likely to be faced with a patron who may not be of the same ethnic group as himself.

Nicholas Ide, Nimo
Nicholas Ide, who also hailed from Nimo, was a product of Thomas Isiadinso workshop at Enugu Ukwu. In fact, together with Isaiah Onyedimma he worked first as co-apprentice, and then as co-employee, in Isiadinso’s team of bricklayers. They thus already represent the second generation of Njikoka area builders, and the one just before that of Jonas Obinaju whose own biography up to the 1940s is detailed in the following section.

For Ide, the idea of becoming a bricklayer seems to have been instigated and encouraged by Chief Michael Onyiuke, who apparently found the former a likeable, bright young man; the kind of young person on whom he could bestow his legendary philanthropic tendencies. It is in fact the case that not only did Chief Onyiuke encourage Ide’s move into building, but also recommended Ide to Isiadinso and petitioned the latter to admit Ide into the Enugu Ukwu workshop.

Nicholas Ide’s apprenticeship with Isiadinso lasted the by now customary three year period from 1922 to 1925. We do know that he did learn bricklaying, and that his first site was at
Itu, near Calabar, where Onyedimma, in 1925, was working as a head foreman, erecting a two-story building for a French company. Though we do not know exactly which building this was, it is likely to have been in a similar style to the many timber and brick houses that one still finds today in the Cross River and Akwa Ibom states, many of which were prefabricated in England and assembled on site in Nigeria. Their earliest manifestations are to be found in buildings such as the house built for Mary Slessor, in the government lodge, and in the many older colonial buildings that one would have found in Lagos. Experience on such a building would have demanded the highest levels of competence then available locally, and thus indicates perhaps the quality of both Ide’s and Onyedimma’s expertise and skills.

The project at Itu lasted about three years, after which in 1928 he moved to Aba, where the same French company was involved in another building project. Here he remained for about a year and a half, before in his own words ‘...going free’. This seems to suggest that he may have in fact worked for Onyedimma rather than with him, and that therefore the Aba project was the last one on which he worked as part of someone else’s building team. He moved yet again, this time heading to Port Harcourt, which since its institution as the terminus of the north-south railway line from Kano in

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556 Itu was a waterside town along the Cross river route between Calabar and Arochukwu. Its location had occasionally brought it into conflict with Calabar itself over control of river trade. This trade included a substantial slave fair and subsequently a high turnover in palm oil, in whose productive region it was located (Dike and Ekejiuba [1990]: 253). It is therefore remained an important center even after the slave trade was no longer existent.

557 This was probably the same CFAO for whom he was working by the time Jonas Obinagu joined him as apprentice in Onitsha, several years later.

558 Slessor was a nurse whose empathy for the poor and sick is renowned in Nigeria. She is often thought of as the Nigerian Florence Nightingale. She was, however, a British national.
Hausaland, had become a burgeoning town. Here, he found employment with the Nigerian Railway Corporation, work which involved a stop by stop erection of train station buildings from Port Harcourt to Enugu Ngwo just outside of the town of Enugu.

He also did not spend a lot of time on the railway station project (it was clearly work on which he was a contractor rather than an employee), for by 1929 he had terminated his employment with the Nigerian Railways, and had taken a position with the Port Harcourt section of the Public Work’s Department (PWD hence). This of course meant, as it did for the others who had ended up with the PWD, that they traded the independence of a free-lance builder, for the security of a civil servant. However, olu oyibo or white man’s work\textsuperscript{559} certainly allowed the possibility of retirement while one was still fully able to pursue a working life, a critical point in a society in which, as far as we know, the elderly ceased to work only if disability or titular position (and the wealth which this assumes) exempted one. For Nicholas Ide retired to his hometown of Nimo in 1937\textsuperscript{560}, and has only recently, due to failing health, ceased to be involved in construction. To illustrate this, the following are projects on which he worked (not including his own house of 1961) subsequent to his return, and for which he was largely responsible. Apart from

\textsuperscript{559} The connotations when this Igbo term is used today smacks less of the idea that it is the esteemed work of the whiteman, than it does that it is the work that is easy..lazy people’s work..work that does not task one too much...work that one in which one can take things easy. Of course, these connotations may not be the same as the ones they had in the 1920s and 1930s, in which period it could well have also (or only) meant work of status granting work of the literate and mainly white person.

\textsuperscript{560} The same year in which Chief Onyiuke died, and from my calculation within a year or two also of the passing of his teacher Thomas Isiadinso.
the David Okpo house, at Avo-Omimi, Enugu Ukwu, the remainder were all in Nimo itself\textsuperscript{561}.

As with Jonas Obinaju who is introduced later, an attempt was made to enter a discussion regarding aspects of the skills to be learned in building and how this was achieved, as well as to discover what aesthetic frameworks may have been applied to the design or appreciation of the building. Nicholas Ide was in general terms able to confirm that most of his work was built from plans or from sketch plans at least\textsuperscript{562}. Therefore he must have been literate (in order to be able to read the text of the drawing) and familiar with at least the most standard of the conventions of building technological drawing. He however did not draw himself, and generally indicated that clients would have drawings made elsewhere, and simply handed to him to execute.

Asked which buildings of the ones he built were most beautiful, he had no difficulty remembering and deciding which ones he might choose, nor did he have difficulty listing the houses themselves in terms of their owner\textsuperscript{563}.

However, as was the case with another interviewee, Jonas Obinagu whose own narrative is explored below, Ide again seemed to have much more difficulty expressing in Igbo exactly

\textsuperscript{561} These include the following: Obiamalu family house, Albert Obiamalu’s house, Nwachukwu Iwelu’s house, and Michael Chinemelu’s (Chinemeta?) house.

\textsuperscript{562} He actually did use the Igbo term sketchi (pronounced Skay-chi).

\textsuperscript{563} These were Goddy Ucheonye’s house at Uruokohia, Pius Oroakpo’s, Patty Igboogulu’s, Ruben Ideghede’s, Mr. Obiji’s, Mr. Joseph Ojialu’s, Nwoye Aruoji’s, and finally Sylvester Igbiala’s house at the village of Egbengwu, Nimo.
what it was about the particular buildings he was choosing warranted them being considered.

Jonas Obinaju, Carpenter

Seventy-six year old\textsuperscript{544} Jonas Obinagu hails from the Uruchime quarter of the Etiti village of Nimo. Unlike Nicholas Ide, his own path to a building career makes him only an indirect product of Thomas Isiadinso of Enugu Ukwu’s local workshop. Obinaju was educated up to primary level 3, a point at which there was a curriculum break of sorts. Rather than continue in school, but perhaps because his Results\textsuperscript{545} were not such as to allow him to continue further, he commenced a working life while he was still a young boy, his first job being that of domestic servant (i gba boy-i). In this capacity, he apparently travelled widely over south eastern Nigeria following wherever his Oga (Master) went, and occasionally changing boss. This was common occupation for boys and young men to take up, especially with relatives or with individuals who were school teachers by occupation, a custom meant partly to instill a sense of discipline and understanding of the difficulties of life in the young individual, but partly also out of necessity in a situation in which families were often too large for the family head to provide for adequately.

\textsuperscript{544} This age is approximate, worked out from his statement that he attended primary school in Port Harcourt, that his teacher or note was someone who later became a judge (the late Justice Odogwu), and that this was in 1925 or thereabouts. Later, he mentions that he did not go beyond primary level 3. Since he would have been about age 7 or 8 at leaving school say sometime between 1923 and 1925, it follows that his age today is 76 +|- 4.

\textsuperscript{545} This word is capitalized to indicate that it functioned here as an Igbo word. That is, that its meaning, judging from the writer’s conversation, is more concrete, more categoric and more bounded, than the term with which one is familiar with in English. The precise sense of the meaning however would only be captured for a reader unfamiliar with this location, by a more detailed laying out of the texture of oral narratives, and of interviews, than there is presently space for.
When Jonas was mature enough to seek employment as an independent, he opted to search for work in the construction industry for the reason, he has claimed that he apparently performed poorly in primary school. From this construction, it is clear that Obinaju phrases his participation in the building industry in such a way as to suggest its having been a result of his inability to participate in the other alternative, namely that of completing elementary school and then going on to secondary school. For young men of a poor background, this career was therefore a reasonable choice, combining good wage earning prospects with a sense of belonging to a progressing world.

It seems that he was taken on as an apprentice by Isaiah Onyedimma, a carpenter who also hailed from Nimo\textsuperscript{566}, and whose brother Mathias, also worked in the building trade as a mason. The two Onyedimma brothers had in fact been trained at the Bubendorff workshop in its Adazi-Nnukwu manifestation, and Isaiah himself had gone on to sub-contracting work for the then French-owned group CFAO\textsuperscript{567}. CFAO was involved with a myriad of activities in south eastern Nigeria, including general building contracting, largely for the colonial state, but also for other private organizations. As a result, the young Jonas Obinagu accompanying his master, toured up and down Eastern Nigeria, working on one project or another, but finally ending up in Onitsha were the company had long had a presence, and which functioned as its regional headquarters.

The period at Onitsha is one he has remembered as a pause in terms of his career development, though the length of time

\textsuperscript{566} From the village of Ifite-enu

\textsuperscript{567} Compagnie Francaise d'Afrique Occidentale
involved in this intercession seems beyond recall. This was followed again by a period of much travelling activity. First they went to work at Lokoja, a town at the confluence of the Niger and the Benue rivers, and which had functioned for a period as the headquarters of the Royal Niger Company, and thus as nominal capital of a proto-colonial state. The itineration did not cease here however. Once again, following the Onyedimma brothers, in a particularly nomadic moment, he found himself travelling south, to a site some three hundred miles away, on the Forcados River (just south of the Itsekiri kingdom of Warri, and which served as a small port city), followed then by a move on up to Warri itself, then back to Onitsha, then on to Benin City, and then back again finally to the company's headquarters at Onitsha.

It is unclear what the nature of the work was at all these places, or in fact that they were all building projects as opposed say to more engineering type activity. Nevertheless, an individual writ large in his memory is that of the person of Ekete. This individual is described as

onye ocha... Ingi lishu. Anyi bu umuazi na akpo ya Ekete...onye Itali ka obu. Afa nya na asusu ndi befa bu Mr. Garozim...Mr Garozim!

A white man...English. We kids called him Ekete...he came from Italy. In his own language he was called Mr. Garozim...Garozim! [implying amazement at white names].

In this statement is observed the idea of the European distributed in such a way that Englishmen could come from Italy. As for Mr. Garozim, he was apparently the foreman, basically the European supervisor with whom the workers would

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This itineration really must represent the position they occupy in a hierarchy; the fact that as labor, they had little opportunity to control the frequency of redistribution, and of allocation of work, the name Ekete in fact may indicate the vastness of the gulf separating Obinaju from the European technicians in whose charge they were.
have had regular contact, and whose particular manner, spectacular as it seems to have been for these Igbos, achieved a somewhat mythic standing.

All these events probably occurred over a period of some three years, considered the normal length of apprenticeship in these parts. For it seems that after the eventual return to Onitsha, he left his master Mazi Onyedimma, and headed for the village town of Onitsha Ugbo, where he worked with a company whose name he recalls as 'Mosenda' [566].

Though it has not been possible to locate the registered name of such a company in its original European appellation, Mazi Obinagu thinks of his experience here in terms of having done well, since from the proceeds of this work he was able to buy himself a much desired round table, for the sum of three shillings and sixpence. This sum represents about a-week-and-a-half’s earnings, not taking expenditures into consideration, and thus was an important but not overly extravagant purchase.

Hearing him speak, it becomes clear that Obinaju’s personal history, as he narrates it, seems inseparable from the objects he acquired through his life and which surround him. To listen to him tell his history, it becomes clear that for members of this community (and in this period) each object seems to be invisibly inscribed with the substance of the individual’s life, and act both as narrative mnemonic devices, and as historical markers..

[566] No company bearing this name (or a name which approximates to this one), working in Nigeria at the time has yet been identified.
It is in wondering why such importance is attached by him to a purchase of this relatively small magnitude (he remembers it with amusement, as if to suggest that it was so important to him then, but that this is not how he would regard such an object and its purpose today), that we enter into the kinds of relationship he would have had with his one time master Isaiah Onyedimma.

Apparently, the relationship of apprenticeship between two south easterners (in this case between two Igbos of the same town) in the context of earning a living working on building projects contracted by European companies (whose ultimate client would be the Colonial state, but possibly also other European companies, including CFAO itself), takes its own particular form. Jonas Obinagu states that when he received his payment for work, he handed it over in its entirety to his master Onyedimma, who then gave to him whatever small portion of that Onyedimma felt was adequate for his apprentices day to day needs. One infers from this therefore that the master and his apprentices formed a kind of productive household (since apprentices usually lived with their masters) modelled somewhat closely on the lines of a family, a form whose implications we will return to at a later point in this chapter.

Returning to his career, after his stint with ‘Mosenda’, he was next employed in Onitsha town itself, working for the town’s government owned and administered hospital. Most of the work he was involved with related to repair and maintenance of existing building fixtures, furniture and other parts of the hospital’s buildings. Obinaju recalls being paid wages on a daily basis (7d a day). Interestingly, he also added that the Public Works Department, a government
department, supplied them with all or most of the tools and materials with which they worked.

In this regard, they differ markedly from the English world of master builders and their guilds with whom one may be tempted to compare them. For, though possessing a professional history that parallels in many ways that of a pre-industrial European craftsman, they appear to operate within a colonial world in which the productional organization of work is of course encouraged to structure itself in a manner that accords with the norms of then industrialized Europe.

The question that arises here, as it does with other individual builders employed in the Colonial administration, is what the modes of transfer from the governmental sphere might have been? That is, did the skills learned for the work for the Colonial state, producing architecture we might let pass as European become subsequently employed in creating and producing buildings for indigenous clients? Did the experience of this work transfer to the indigenous milieu, and if so how?

For Obinaju, this seems to have been the case. He details that at least in the period when he worked for the hospital...when in other words he was a secure salaried individual, that the official closing time was 2pm. He also recalls that they did occasionally finish work only to go to another location in order to work on a private project, usually of a modest scale, for their fellow colleagues. He claims for example to have

570 Individuals from a wide variety of places of origin would normally be employed in the setting of a government institution employing labor on a day by day basis. It may be noted with interest then that those colleagues he remembers from his days employed in this organization include a Joseph Molue from Ibuso (a cross-Niger river western Igbo town as is also Asaba and Onitsha Ugbo) who was the head (continued...)
worked on building Mr. W.B. Akpu's house, a man who worked as a ward servant in the hospital. They also similarly worked on the house of one Jonathan Ogidi, who was a cook at the hospital.

Unfortunately, when pressed to provide information as to the nature of these houses architecturally speaking, Obinaju seemed unable to remember what may have made them distinctive (that is their uniqueness may well have been naturalized so many years later), or he lacked the vocabulary to elaborate his recall. We are therefore not, in this case, able to answer the question just posed in any satisfactory manner.

He did mention however that they received no monetary reward for the work they did undertake for their friends' houses, which may indicate that they in return got regular favors from these individuals instead of pay as such. For example, it is likely that the hospital cook may have been in a position to provide them with lunch on a daily basis, free of charge...a fact made even more probable by the fact that both individuals were also fellow Nimo indigenes.

All in all, he seems to have been content with work at the hospital, judging from the fact that by the time he retired from his position here in 1965, he had been employed with them for twenty three years. This writer queried the reason Obinaju stayed on in such a position for such a long time, bearing in mind the knowledge that many in his position at this time preferred to remain independent, and to work only as

bricklayer, as well as Edward Uduqa from Ila (also a cross-Niger Igbo town). This suggests indeed that western Igbo people’s, of all Igbos may have acquired the new building skills ahead of other Igbo communities.
contractor, which thus afforded the possibility of 'professionally' developing. To this he responded:

"Kedu ife ibu n’uche aju....
Nne anoro, nna anoro
Onwelu onye no qa ‘zum?
Ebe nno na nya nw泷yo nwelu pee echi dee...

What do you have in mind in asking....
My mother was no more, so also my father
Was anyone going to bring me up [and see me through school?]
Since in doing what I did I have someone [I raised a person] who now has a Ph.D\(^{571}\), [why would one even ask that question...]

The twenty-three year period prior to 1965 during which Obinaju worked for the hospital, is strictly speaking of course, outside the one in which we are interested, and in fact provides us with no particularly critical information. The period of his apprenticeship does however fall into the latter part of the 1930s, and as we saw, gives us a glimpse into the nature of apprenticeship as experienced by the second generation of Nimo builders.

Simon & Richard Okpa, Awato, Umudiaba village, Nimo

Strictly speaking, Simon Okpa’s career lies beyond our period of interest, since he only started his training, as an apprentice at Onitsha with carpenter Raymond Isieyina’s home based workshop. The year was 1939, and he was aged 17, a fact he remembers quite clearly as having been also the same year "mbge ebido nuba agha Hitler"...that is in the year when the war against Hitler was begun. Yet, lying right at this juncture, the year in which the dissertation’s period

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\(^{571}\) As it turns out, apart from the doctoral degree holding son, he has a daughter who is Nurse in Charge at a large hospital in another town in eastern Nigeria, and from whom he has nine grandchildren, two of whom presently live in the United States. There photographs were hung all over the walls of his modest home’s living room.
terminates, he is relevant as an individual who may illustrate in his own experience, the state of the craft of building at the point at which we end. Simon Okpa is important moreover because he represents the end point of a tradition that was to change radically in the years after World War II.

It seems that as had always been the case, but as may increasingly have become so, he would rather have been involved with something more white collar than carpentry, perhaps a post in the civil service, or working as an administrator with a private organization. Carpentry was however the only positive choice open to him, which he laments, though not with real regret, as

\[\text{ife ilitiretu na eme mmadu...} \]
\[\text{[..what illiteracy does to one]}\]

implying the constraints on his choices imposed by a lack of a higher education.

This situation resulted in the first instance from his not coming, as also did not all the other carpenters, from a more than ordinary family\(^{572}\), made worse in his case by the fact that his mother had been widowed young\(^{573}\). His career therefore starts soon after the passing of away of his father when, not having completed his training at Isieyina's, the carpentry career was interrupted by his being sent away to help the family's financial situation, and as was still normal in the time, to work as a domestic servant for one Raymond Obi. He

\(^{572}\) According to Okpa, \text{Mnew' na nnaw' were inyom nni} [my mother and father were poor of food (i.e. so poor they could not even afford to buy sufficient food for the family)].

\(^{573}\) \text{A lubalum olu maka na nnaw' nwuchulu a nwuchu, na maka n'omwero ka'o si ra nnaw, tinyekwelu na mu aguro akwukwo andi na mu bu ogbenye.}

I started work this early because my father died before his time, and because my mother had nothing to her name, all made worse for not having been properly educated, but recognizing that I was a poverty stricken person.
seems not to have remained here for long, and it is unestablished why the former left Raymond Obi’s employ. Whatever the motivation was, his next job, also as a domestic servant, was in the employ of the Kotuma\(^{574}\) of Abagana, the Court Messenger of the Abagana Native Court\(^{575}\), which was several miles from Onitsha but not far at all from Nimo. All this occurred over a period of some three years, taking him to late 1942, after which time he returned to Nimo, because his brother (with whom he co-served and who acted as guardian and companion) left to go and work in Jos\(^{576}\). At Nimo, he recommenced his training and apprenticeship in carpentry in the workshop of the carpenter Ikewelugo for two further years. He therefore became a qualified carpenter at the beginning of 1945, and thus belongs effectively to a post-war generation.

The new directions that were opening up to the carpenter, are perhaps best illustrated by Okpa’s ability/genius in not, as would normally be the case, then attaching himself with a

\(^{574}\) Court Messenger, a man of not inconsequential power, in the colonial scheme of things as they were reinvented by the local populations.

\(^{575}\) An individual like the Kotuma (the Igbo word for court messenger), must be understood as a kind of social monument not communicated by the English word court messenger. He is surrounded by a whole mystique and realm of oral narratives that objectify him in unique ways. The person say of the Sheriff of a small American western town during the mid-1800s might provide one with a sense of the centrality and institutionality (even as folklore) of these individuals. Court messengers were powerful figures in this period of Nigeria’s experience of Colonialism. Simon Okpa would therefore have seen his employment in the capacity of a house servant for such an individual, as somewhat of an elevation.

\(^{576}\) Simon Okpa’s brother, Richard Okpa, reoccurs in the narrative. It seems that while in his early teens, and before he had properly completed his apprenticeship at Isieyina’s, Simon went to live with his older brother Richard in the town of Jos, which is in the present day northern Nigerian state of Plateau. Simon’s return to another master Ikewelugo’s in 1943, was only occasioned by the fact of this brother’s decision to leave Jos, which forced Simon to return back to the south. It is unclear what his brother, who is older than Simon, had been doing in Jos, but it was not building related, as Simon claims that his brother learned bricklaying at a later stage in his life. Apparently, Richard had been both a farmer and an Ngwo Palm-Wine tapper before, according to Simon, he became tantalized and greedy for the idea of working as a suited gentleman of the civil service struck him.
master’s atelier for a number of years, moving around from one building site to another, until he felt experienced enough and independent enough to seek out work on his own, or to join a technical arm of an organization linked to the civil-service.

Rather we find that he set himself up as a mirror maker; that is he cut mirror holders and inserted mirrors into them, for sale at the market to customers who seem to have been largely female.

He remembers that he earned a surprisingly good profit from this work⁷⁷, recalling that one of the first and most unhesitatingly made purchases he remembers, was buying a piece of Abada cloth for his mother. According to him, he made about L8 a week from his work (significantly more than the 7s a day, ...or L3.50 a week, which Jonas Obinagu had said he made working at the Onitsha Hospital].

However, it seems that yet again and as occurred in Nicholas Ide’s own experience the paternal figure of Chief F.G. Onyiuke stepped in. Onyiuke most have sensed that such a beginning whilst good, would ultimately leave the young carpenter quite without real skills, so that he insisted on Simon Okpa’s getting into a more professional job, ultimately securing for him a Labor Card, without which he would not have been able to take up employment, as he ultimately did, with the Lagos branch of the United African Company (UAC).

⁷⁷ Ọghbe ọ bụ bidolu luba nkili mirror, ife gabalum nke ọma nno...ego mekata daputaba. When I started making looking glasses, things really started going well. Money just started falling right out...
Simon Okpa’s first job in Lagos was with the firm Struction, a position that paid him 1s 3d a day, or 1s 3d per unit for the sawing out from a tree trunk, of wood for planks with which they subsequently erected the building. Many such buildings were domestic houses in the affluent Ikoyi neighborhood of Lagos Island.

It is interesting to note that Pius Ozo, who was the Work’s Supervisor on most of these jobs, and who hailed from the town of Nise\textsuperscript{578}, which is not very far from Nimo, himself had apparently been a former Houseboy of the same Chief Onyiuke who had encouraged the entry of many young Nimo people into building, and who had pressed upon Simon Okpa to leave his looking-mirror entrepreneurship for a more ‘serious’ job in Lagos.

Yet one remains puzzled as to how a firm like Struction could, given the range of highly skilled builder’s craftsmen that must have been available to them in a place like Lagos\textsuperscript{579}, choose in the first place to employ a little experienced locally trained carpenter from Nimo. One also wonders moreover, how Okpa was able to keep up with the kinds of demands made on him.

The answer to the first question is that it is likely that Chief Onyiuke did have some influence in the business world of Lagos, and was able to help along those for whom he was patron. Once there, Simon Okpa’s survival lay in the spirit of brotherhood and mutual assistance that would have existed

\textsuperscript{578} Asiliagbata Ozo extended family of Nise, whose conceptual Obi is located just after Afor Nise.

\textsuperscript{579} Where Yoruba builders had been building in a European manner for over a century.
between himself (sent over by Chief Onyiuke), and Pius Ozo\textsuperscript{580}, a previous employee of the same patron, to whom they were both indebted.

Nevertheless, it is pertinent to interrogate the skills, whatever they were, or however inadequate they may have been initially, that an individual like Simon Okpa, trained in rural Nimo, would have brought to the work places like Struction, of a major metropolis like Lagos.

Interestingly, Simon Okpa states that the principal requirements or unspoken properties that masters like Ikewelugo (from whom he received part of his apprenticeship) sought in potential trainees, were Character combined with Respectfulness and Obedience towards one's seniors. These are hardly skills at all in the technical sense. In other words the desire for a kind of code of intelligent humility, a property which implies that the same disciplinary regime which occurred in the family dominated the master's work socialization of his apprentices, was maintained even up to the beginning of World War II.

Though it may not seem immediately obvious from the present, the gaining of building skills would, for a rural Igbo person of the early century, seem to involve significant reorientation in how the physical world might be perceived and constituted. Questions abound about how the idea of precision, of standardization, of the fact of dividing the

\textsuperscript{580} Ozo apparently taught them on the job without making it look obvious. So for example, if a senior European individual walked around and picked on Simon to give a specific set of instructions for a particular task, the norm was for the person so chosen to nod his head as if understanding and receiving the instructions, but fully secure in the knowledge that Pius Ozo, working nearby, had listened in as the conversation, and was there to explain any aspects of the instruction's requirement, that the individual so instructed had failed to grasp.
world up into equal (not approximately equal) parts was communicated, and how indigenous people responded to this. So that while for example, a highly geometricized schema is revealed by both the traditional ornamented doors hung around the entrance porch of the Ozo title-holder’s obi (fig. 74), as much as is true of the Kalabari nduen fogbara ancestral screen (figs. 112 and 113 [see earlier]), the measuring out of the rectangular surface appears never to have been interested in an absolute regularity. The aesthetic which results is a topographical representation of a geometric idea, more than it is a trigonometrically accurate reality.

One sensed that for Simon Okpa, the awe of the notion of a mensurated universe had long since evaporated (either because this was in fact the reality at that moment in history, or because his memory has failed to retain the experience of a once-present sense of awe). Simon Okpa stated matter-of-factly, that their first instruction was about the rule. He was taught about feet and inches, what a quarter, a half and a three quarter inch was. How to work with fractions, adding and multiplying, et cetera. The regime was indeed quite strict. During this period, the master very much resembled a school master, to the extent that even though he was, as were other apprentices, at least fully 17 years old, any one of them could, for failing to correctly answer a test question or task, have been rewarded with a proper caning. Simon Okpa himself was no stranger to the cane, as he remembered that they also had to learn how to construct technical drawings, and that he was very bad at drawing anything. This therefore got him regularly into the master’s disfavor. Yet such disfavor was bound, in the contexts in which their education took place, to force a student to reach the limit of his capabilities always conscious of the master carpenter’s gaze.
There were only four apprentices including himself at the time he was in training at Ikewelugo's. Of these, Clement Ajagu (also of Nimo) was the head apprentice, by virtue of having previously received some instruction from Jonas Obenaga in Onitsha\(^{581}\). The experience of learning in such closely tutored and practice-centered circumstances, certainly would have instilled both discipline and skill in the young men.

The importance for his future of both his early experience in the Ikewelugo workshop and with the foreign-owned company Struction, and, of the good advice from Chief Onyiuke, may also be judged from Simon Okpa's subsequent history. This saw him leave Struction (it is unclear whether this was due to a lack of new work, or due to the enticements offered by others), for the prestigious employ of the United African Company (UAC), the beginning of an independence he had not had since the days of looking glass making. As with the looking-glass venture, he was happy at UAC, commenting for example that they paid him the handsome salary of L8 a week\(^{582}\), finally up to his earnings from his mirror-making days, but with the opportunity of continuing to develop his professional skills.

The range of experience to be had at UAC was impressive. He worked doing repairs on boats (ocean-going vessels), on the repair of fenders, and even on the construction project for the Iddo slip-way. But as regards architectural construction

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\(^{581}\) Jonas Obinaju?... the latter of whom had after all worked for 23 years at the General Hospital at Onitsha?

\(^{582}\) He added the comment

...kamu bido luba ebe anwa, ego we wputa

...[no sooner had] I started working there, than did money start pouring out
work more specifically, Simon Okpa worked on several of the Colonial-style residences on Lugard Avenue, as well as on the construction of the building which was to house the Ebutte-Meta operations of the Lebanese-Nigerian owned, general retail and car distributorship firm of Leventis.

This work put him in a good position to be asked by private individuals also to spend his spare time (usually Saturdays and Sundays) working on their private projects. He recalls working on many such projects, including one for a Mr. E.S.P. Ikpo who was a native of his own hometown of Nimo, and whose project’s master-mason was his brother-in-law Mr. Emmanuel Igu, installing roofs especially, complete with the process-related paraphernalia of work-plates, rafters, purlins et cetera583. But be these facts as they may, his freelance work was not restricted to the Nimo community (not to mention the Igbo-speaking community, of Lagos. For, Simon Okpa also built in Badagry, famous for its plethora of early twentieth century houses (see fig. 114) of the Brazilo-Nigerian style584, for a Yoruba Muslim by the name of Baba Sule. In all probability, this house itself would also have been in the same then popular style.

This work is of course largely of the post-World War II era, and indicates that little may have changed across the war years, even though change occurred soon after. It reveals, in other words the consolidation of a particular organization of

583 These are his exact words, and they were...spoken in English.

584 See da Cunha ([1985] op. cit.) and Maraffato ([1983] op. cit.)
building practice, as much as it also illustrates the stability that such a practice eventually achieved from uncertain beginnings.

Taken together however, Simon Okpa’s carpentry was a very technical affair, involving little of the artistry of joinery or of cabinet-making for example, and consisting mainly of constructional carpentry such as roof-work. It would be wrong however to conclude from this that the consolidation of the practice of building, in which much had been acquired of European building practice, served only to suppress the possibilities that a development of local architectural practice might have otherwise resulted in. Rather, as the Brazilo-Nigerian style of the house on which Okpa worked for Baba Sule might indicate, there was innovation involved in the work they did as freelance skilled workers, and this shows clear evidence of artistry and the inventiveness to which these skills were sometimes applied. This is certainly observable in the story of another building craftsman who exhibited much talent in his own history: Mr. Michael Nguko, also of Nimo, and popularly known by the Muslim appellation of Mallam.

- It seems he only left western Nigeria to return to the south east, as a result of the worsening political situation of the post 1965 period. It is unclear whether he returned directly to Nimo, or worked out of Enugu for a while, but he continued to be involved with roofing projects in the east, as is indicated by a project he undertook at the town of Oji [Oji is located on the river of the same name on the intersection between this river and the then main artery connecting Enugu to Onitsha, via incidentally both Enugu Ukwu and Nimo, and also the location of a large electricity generating installation, that supplied power to the coal mines], working on a site on which his brother-in-law Ben Gbulie, the latter who was the site supervisor.
Michael Nguko (alias Mallam), of the Amafum quarter of the village of Etiti Nimo, town of Nimo.

Michael Nguko was another of Thomas Isiadinso’s apprentices, and the one who seemed most able to relate the biography of his former teacher’s life586. As however only one of the second generation which included Mathias Onyedimma (same person as Isaiah or a brother?...and if same person then Nicholas Ide’s mate?), Udemma Ikemme587 alias Mkemfulu iche588 and a Mathias Agbim, it is interesting that unlike them, Nguko’s career distinguishes him from most of the others. With this work it is valid to begin to speak of the rise of a set of builders who are masters of their work, in the sense that the technical

586 Two visits were made to Nguko in the space of as many days, helped substantially by the presence of Nimo indigene Uche Okeke (former Professor of Art at the Universities of Nigeria at Nsukka, and at the University of Port Harcourt, a well known artist and poet in his own right, and founder and Director of the Asele Institute [see acknowledgements] in Nimo). Conversation was therefore made easier by their presences, but also by the fact that whilst they asked their own questions around issues in which I was interested, I had the opportunity to record the conversations themes without omission, but also had the opportunity to rethink the direction in which the interview proceeded, and therefore to formulate subsequent interview questions.

587 This master mason would merit investigation of the same depth as the other individuals detailed here. However, his name only came up late in the process of interviewing, and I as researcher already had a heavy load to interrogate. He in particular seems to have fitted best into the idea of a wild, short-tempered (‘hot-tempered’ as Nigerian English puts it....Nguko actually described him as agu mmadu, or ‘leopard of man’) genius of a man, who in all likelihood was the master-mason for the Nwokedi family stone mansion in the town of Achalla (the Igweship of Achalla is still held by a direct descendant of Udemma’s patron, the distinguished legal practitioner Barrister Charles Nwokedi).

588 This is a shortening of arua nkem o di iche, that is when I build my own, it is seen to be different, the shortened version of which translates to mine is different. The idea of architectural uniqueness and individuality is clearly well established in this culture, and would add to the substantial challenge to colonial ethnographical descriptions (often maintained even in writing today, that this society was not individualistic, or that somehow (in social theory) individualism and aesthetic invention has to be sacrificed to the communal will. Here the opposite seems to be valued. Difference is a mark of something to be envied, of something to be respected, of something to be proud of. All these elements of the culture of building begin to justify the application of the term architect to these individuals, in recognition of the fact that they did not just function as reflectors of society in a materialist mirror. They quite often invented the image and took society along with them.
and practical aspects of the work are regarded as having been mastered, and that instead the possibility of being creative, and the extent of one’s creativity takes center-stage.

It ought to be noted first however, that unlike some of the others, Nguko came into apprenticeship later than was the norm. Though, again, it is unclear exactly when he was born589, he was well into adulthood, probably about thirty years old, when he joined the Isiadinso workshop, having previously been

589 The discussion around the issue of his date of birth proceeded in the following manner:

Interviewer: Nna anyi, kedu kwanu aro one i di
   Our father, how old would you say you are?

Mallam: Aro one n’di. Aro one n’di... M ma ama...? M ma ama?... I maqonu oge gbọ afu...madu anaronu echeta gbẹ nne mulu onye. Ife gbọ chetalu bu na a no gom n’ezigbo irenye we bia jebe na nke Isiadinso.
   How old am I?... How old am I?...would I know? Would I Know?...you know how it was in those days...one did not really remember when one was born. What I do remember is that I was of a mature age when I went to Isiadinso’s.

Tupu mu bia muba olu apprenticesi, alubagolim olu ndi ozo digasi angha. Onwelumu oge mu na ebechebe ugwu...nya onwelu oge ana akapotolu ugwu nwere aka mu silu ofu kantu me omeni beche fa ugwu. Onwedulu oge mu nasilu maka ikpu uro...si eb’aa, we bulunu ezigbo nwere onye ama maka ikpu uro.. 0-o-oo! Olu mu lugasilu echika.
   Before I went into apprenticeship, I did many other things. Once I performed male circumcisions...once people would bring their young sons to me to perform the operation. At another time, I learned blacksmithing, and became quite well known for this. I tried my hand at many different things....

Mana, ita gi ajuyu ijulu e...o na adim ka mu di ebe ogu na ili gbẹ mu jebelu na nke Isiadinso. Ife’i ji neche etua bu maka na di okpala mu natalu agha Hitler na 1945. Nyaa na iyari nu ama gbẹ amulu onye mutalu nwa jelu nyabu agha na 1945.
   But to answer your question, it seems to me that I must have been about thirty when I went to Isiadinso’s. I say this because my first son returned from WW11 in 1945. That is, you must imagine when I could have been born to have a son old enough to have joined the 1945 war.
employed in many unlikely capacities including the performance of circumcision surgery, and work as a blacksmith\textsuperscript{590}.

In or before 1920\textsuperscript{591}, following a training under Isiadinso (a training similar to one of the others previously detailed), Michael Nguko worked briefly (probably as a sub-contractor) for the Italian construction firm Cappa [D’Alberto?], before moving to a salaried position with the colonial government’s Public Works Department, where he remained for the subsequent seven years. At PWD, he started work under the supervision of head-masons Solomon Obiefuna and Louis Obagwu (also of Nimo), reporting most typically to the latter. Initially, the PWD work involved the fabrication and installation of roadway curb-side gutters (form-work et cetera), as well as the civil works for the new water works designed to satisfy the new Colonial capital’s water demands. Later however, this work expanded to include work that was more architectural.

It is not clear why he eventually decided to leave the Public Works Department after seven years of service (he would then have been aged about twenty-eight years). Since it is known however that he left with his mentor Louis Obagwu, it seems likely that Nguko’s departure comes in response more of loyalty to Obagwu than it results from his natural volition. This of course does not really answer the question why Obagwu

\textsuperscript{590} That one individual might earn a living from such a combination of skills and activities, seems unlikely viewed from our contemporary practices of labor-division and labor-specialization. Such practices were however common in nineteenth century Europe, through the offices of the ‘barber’. This is now memorialized (if gruesomely) in the modern, popular imagination of the English by Wheeler’s adaptation ([Wheeler [1912]]) of Christopher Bond’s Sweeney Todd (Wheeler’s full title is Sweeney Todd, the demon barber of Fleet Street). The dread constructed by the text, may however be little more than a modern discomfort with a previous arrangement of occupational categories.

\textsuperscript{591} Nguko marks this by his memory of the great influenza epidemic which hit Nimo and other places during 1918.
himself left, to which one might imagine several scenarios\textsuperscript{592}. Whatever the motivation actually was, Nguko’s itineration with Obagwu after this job begins to indicate that there was a scarcity of substantial work in the Enugu area at this moment in time, and that survival partly depended on one’s ability and willingness to relocate\textsuperscript{593}. This involved work sites not far from Enugu initially, but soon implied travel beyond Igboland, as was true for example of work he claims to have undertaken in Calabar, building that town’s Cathedral\textsuperscript{594}. He also seems, on completion of this particular church building, to have moved to the site of the erection of another smaller Anglican church, and this time in the company of another senior individual (that is not with Louis Obagwu) one Mr. Oranyelu, who at the time was with, or had just left a position as Clerk of the Works with the United African

\textsuperscript{592} He could have left as a result of a dispute with a PWD senior, he could have left because for his own particular age he felt capable of earning more money by working as a sub contractor or as a contractor (this after all would have been the time when even younger individuals of Enugu Ukwu origin such as the Dennis Okafor, would have started making their first and substantial profits from work as non-salaried building contractor.

\textsuperscript{593} To illustrate this, we may consider the narration by Nguko that at the end of the PWD project he followed Louis Obagwu to the next job, which was a bridge building project in the Ehaamufu area (at the village of Ugwumele). Then next, was a project for the Nigerian Railway Corporation, laying down lines and building stations for the line to Oturkpo. Then they went back to Ugwumele, and after that to Enugu.

\textsuperscript{594} It is unclear to what exactly is referred here. The old Anglican church building in Calabar, which was rebuilt in 1964, and has since been destroyed in the Nigerian civil war, was originally erected in 1911. The other church building, the Sacred Heart Roman Catholic church seems to have been a later arrival (ca.1950) although his building might well have replaced an earlier one. Finally, the church may have been the Primitive Methodist Church, introduced under a Sierra Leonian school master Reverend Nicol. Said however to have been completed about 1920, it seems a little early for the church Nguko refers to, which must have been nearing completion in about 1929. A last alternative is that he refers to another large church in Calabar, of which the writer has no knowledge, or that he uses (as do most Igbo speakers beyond Arochukwu) the term Calabar to refer to all Efik and Ibibio speakers. Nguko’s Calabar church may therefore relate to a cathedral in any of the other large towns of the extreme southeast, including for example the major denominational churches of Ikom or of Ikot Ekpene, or of Uyo.
Company, and who was yet again, a native of Enugu Ukwu (the home we also remember of Isiadinso and many others).  

Fortunately for Nguko, it was at this moment that the high rank Coal Corporation employee from Enugu-Ngwo, Mr Onoh decided to build himself a large mansion, for which erection as we have previously indicated, he invited the Enugu Ukwu and Nimo builders to partake of. This building does, even today, still posses a reputation as built not by humans but by mystical powers, and of Momi Wota, the river or sea goddess in particular. The reason for the mystery that surrounds the building of the house as Nguko recalled it, is located in the fact that certain operations of the actual building process itself took place only at night, for reasons that are not quite clear, but involved the illegal removal of building materials from the Public Works Department and the Colliery with which Onoh was involved in a relatively senior position. The illegality of this was underlain by the fact that such removals had to be incorporated into the building

595 Nguko also added that much later, he had built this individual's house, presumably at Enugu Ukwu.


597 Momi Wota (in Igbo), more typically known as Mami Wata in other West African locations. In this conversation, the information was given over in the quite non-hesitant manner indicated in the script below:

Author: Ka uno luchalu olu na Itonkon, ebe k'unu si ebaa we jebe.  
After the Itonkon Project, where next did you go to work in?

Nguko: Anyi nachiayalu Ugwumele, si ebaa je be Enugu. N'Enugu, anyi chokatalu olu ike gwo mmadu. Olu adiro cha. Chukwu we nye aka, obulu oge aa ka Onoh, mma C.C., jilu bido luba uno ya Mn'Enugu-Ngwo....okw'imanu nke mu na ekwu maka ya...nk'a ana asi na mami wata luu.  
We returned to Ugwumele, and then from there we went on to Enugu. In Enugu we sought after work till we were tired of looking. There seemed to be absolutely no work available. And so God lent us a hand, for it happened to be exactly at this same moment that Onoh, the father of the present C.C., started building his house in Enugu-Ngwo...you know the one I'm talking about...the one that is reputed for its having been built by Momi Wota.
at night to avoid detection by the colonial administrators, and thus for the unknowing populace would, for its unusual appearance, its style, and its appearance literally overnight, would be a natural locus of the invention of a mythical explanation.

Nguko’s role in this project was that of a junior partner of the more experienced masters with whom he went along, as is indicated by the fact that he was getting paid the sum of 2 1/2 d a day or 1s 3d a week, a paltry sum even for that period, and meant more as an allowance and encouragement for perseverance into the future.

After the completion of the Onoh house, the group dispersed, and he returned to Enugu town itself and worked at a salaried government job. Much of the work he was involved with at this phase was at Enugu Mgbo.

At his retirement, Michael Nguko went back to Nimo, where he found no lack of patrons willing to employ him to build their residences. Of these, the Agbim house, near Oye Nimo (the Nimo market that trades on oye days) is one he recalled having built soon after his return, at a location which, as seems to have been the case with many of these New Architecture buildings (compare with the Uzoka House at Awka, and the Adinembo house at Okrika), literally locates it in a forest, away from the more dense sections of Nimo where land was no longer to be had. Such a had the advantage however of giving the builders access to a ready supply of timber, part of which was cut in clearing the land for the site. He recalls specifically that items for the roof assembly, such as purlins and rafters, were obtained from mature hardwood trees that grew on the site.
The extent to which his reputation must have spread on his return is indicated by the range of houses on which he worked, and which though only as numerous as the lists produced by other builders of Nimo, is distinguished by including houses only of the wealthier and most important personalities and families of the town. This is true for example of the large and old Agbim family, well known in Nimo, and distinguished for being one of the few Nimo Anglican Protestant families in a world that was largely Roman Catholic. Mallam also built for the branch of the Onyiuke family which by that time possessed the Kingship of the town, the then current Eze for whose brother (the immediately preceding Eze Nimo) the master mason Thomas Isiadinso had previously built. Other families for whom he built subsequently include, the Nwandu family of Enugu Ukwu, the Nkwonta family of Enugu Ukwu, and the F.G.N.

598 A respected family as Nimo indigenes would frame it.

599 In this light is important to note that Mallam himself is Anglican, and would therefore have been of the same actual congregations as were the Agbims, which may partly explain how it comes to be that he is selected to be their 'architect'. Even more interesting moreover, is that Thomas Isiadinso, Mallam's reputable teacher who died in 1937, was himself Anglican, despite having become one of the best known graduates of the Bubendorf Roman Catholic technical school. He of course went on subsequently to train many Catholic builders himself, and both he and Mallam were themselves to work on Church buildings for both Roman Catholic and Anglican Protestant congregations. Enugu Ukwu, from where Isiadinso hails, and the neighbor of Nimo, is a complete denominational reversal, having been substantially involved with the Church Missionary Society Isiadinso's context of work would have therefore been at this point in time, quite the opposite of his students, which would have been that of a minority individual seeking employment in a majority (and sometimes so with hostility) community of which he, speaking denominationally, was not part.

The history of how such close neighbors came to be so apposite denominationally, confirms an underlying theme of this dissertation, which has been that inter town competition is a quite significant factor in the ideology of progress. Such polarizations served to intensify the race for success, a race which for the closeness and cordiality of Nimo - Enugu Ukwu relationships in this early century, underscores the fact that Enugu Ukwu is an important town of the Nri theological network, and that Nimo is adamantly neither of Nri, nor therefore on the other hand subject to the pressures of the exploitation of Aro migrants [It seems generally to be the case that only independently wealthy and successful non Nri towns were able to resist the incursions of the Aro. Nri and Aro hegemony effectively divided control of trade and religious affairs over Igbo speaking south east Nigeria.

600 Who we remember was apart from other things Mallam's own teacher.
Okoye family of Enugu Ukwu, all rather interestingly being Enugu families whose heads had little if any formal education, but who became substantially wealthy through their involvement in the building contracting, in places as far afield as Northern Nigeria, Lagos and Enugu. It is interesting that for most of these patrons, who already had their own stone houses, and which buildings by this time were in all probability built by Isiadinso or David Uchefuna (these two were Enugu Ukwu indigenes), Mallam Michael Nguko was called in to replace a traditional wall and gate with one of his own creation. However, his work was certainly not limited to this kind of project. He for example conceived and executed the unogu of the Dennis Awulu family of Enugu Ukwu.

This new independence soon saw the beginning of a new career producing a number of unique buildings and architectural objects beyond his hometown of Nimo, a fact that must imply a sort of coming out of retirement. For, he built subsequently in Ukehe, in Aba, Calabar, Port Harcourt, Onitsha, and even moved to live and build in Minna (far from Igbo land itself). This latter move and sojourn indicates that Nigerian muslims of the Hausa ethnic group, appear to have become enamored of Nguko’s work, perhaps suggesting that it was a style in which many of these new Hausa patrons, many especially those of them in the business and political circles for which they would have had opportunity to be well travelled in the south, found

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601 We already noted earlier that the wall and gate in traditional Igbo architecture played a major role as a marker of social status certainly, but generally also as an aesthetic indicator of the good aesthetic sense of an owner and his wives. It is therefore significant that this important architectural element is one that is identified with by the most successful Igbos (even) of their day, but significantly those Igbos who somewhat surprising for their generation, had not been to the ubiquitous mission school. For this reason, and for the fact that its style is scrupulously avoided by the more educated but equally successful individuals of the same and other neighboring Igbo towns, it may be valid to consider this the inheritor of the Igbo ideal of architectural for, as, that is, the epitome of the new and modern Igbo style.
an uncanny attraction. Given the earlier comment about the range of his sources for ideas, including a photograph of Mecca, it is not as difficult to understand this, considering that for these patrons some of its poignancy derives from a degree of resemblance to Islamic Hausa architecture\textsuperscript{602}.

Through his career Mallam Nguko has produced more than a few non-domestic buildings. These include St. Paul’s Nimo (fig. 7 [see earlier]), its oldest Anglican church as well as, the Church of the Assumption, Nimo, the large Roman Catholic church and the Catholic Seminary at Okpunoku in Awka. Both Nimo buildings have since been substantially remodelled and ‘modernized’, so that for both only the entrance area retains something of the original form, fully so for St. Paul’s, and to a lesser degree for the Roman Catholic church. From what is left of St. Paul’s, which retains the original footprint, we still recognize the inventiveness of its architect.

Nguko’s St. Paul’s and the Nguko house

Though not a detailed part of the present study, two buildings by Mallam might illustrate his creative genius. The first is the church of St. Paul’s, Nimo which was just mentioned above, (fig. 115), the second is a house he commenced erecting for himself, but which he has never been able to complete. St. Paul’s is located, as are many of the early churches in Igboland, on a large site, which site it shares with a related primary school. The site is located not far from the Oye Nimo market, just of a roadway that descends slowly down hill and

\textsuperscript{602} It is interesting that now in his eighties but still as strong and healthy as a sixty five year old, Nguko only last year (1992) had been hired by the Babangida family (apparently by the former military President’s brother) to build his house or take charge of the building if the gate and of the surrounding wall. The style thus still finds patrons in Northern Nigeria (though no longer in the south east), and though half a decade in front of the period we study, indicates its continued resistance to the more western influenced architectural styles that are prevalent today.
off of which road the entrance to the church compound is located. The main body of the church seems unremarkable, partly it seem, because of the post Nigerian Civil war renovation of the building, in which the external surface has been covered up and painted, depriving it off much of the surface quality that a brick or stone surface might have once lent it. The only vestige of what may have once been a more interesting surface is in the east-side entrance, which entrance is also the one most directly (though glancingly) facing the main compound gateway. The form of this portico is striking. It consists of a rectangular entrance way, topped by an arched circular architrave that is cut of below its axis and thus is slightly narrow at its base. This entrance door is flanked by two narrower entrance ways (now blocked in) which terminate in arches. The whole of this assembly is bound by a larger semi-circular form which springs from the same pier as do the smaller openings. The form and silhouette of the elevation itself is however unusual. The line follows the large semicircular archway for a moment, and then departs, sagging slowly, then becoming a straight line, which finally terminates in a small circular form. The base of this form is horizontal.

One might think of it as if it were hung over the large arched form. The center of the arch is crowned by a stoutly proportioned cross. Towards the edge of the elevation (and behind the parapet of this elevation’s wall) are located a pair of finials which commence in a square section but which progress through a series of changing forms which terminate in a pin point. As a whole, the silhouette recalls, vaguely, anything from an Italian or Latin American church, through Byzantine architecture to the idea of a mosque, especially as the latter might appear in silhouette and viewed from a
distance. In the center of the circular 'ears' is inserted a 'Star of David' form, deliberately delineated as two interlocking triangles. This form is bounded emphatically by a circle formed as a heavy molding.

The complexity of linear shapes and forms breaks the surface up into many spaces. Most of it is covered over in a series of nearly circular shapes which forms a nearly regular crystal structured pattern. This is achieved, as in other cases, by a purposeful picking out of the pattern of the irregular stone joints with a raised plaster pointing. The central panel just over the entrance, bounded by a 'St. Paul's Church Nimo' inscription, is different in being covered (outside the central circular disc) in a series of diagonal lines. These are laid on a background of finely textured pebble-dash like surface. The color of this central panel, sandy and green, is also distinct from most of the rest of the larger semi-circular pediment.

In this elevation, Nguko appears eclectic, putting together aspects of architectural form from a number of cultures, together with inventions of his own which are located within then contemporary Nigerian culture. Thus while there are aspects of it that refer to 'Mecca', to Byzantium, and to Italy, the Star of David form is, for example one that appears in many of his buildings, and is a logo that appears on the Nigerian penny. It apparently becomes a sign of well being, a sign that is found therefore at the entrance to many buildings, especially on buildings belonging to members of

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603 The Penny is no longer in use in Nigeria. Though the Pound and penny were Colonial currencies carried over into the post-independence period, after 1974, Nigeria converted to a currency form in which the Naira was the replacement, itself constituted of one hundred Kobo. The Kobo, in fact was the local term applied to the penny in colonial times.
the then newly expanding nouveau-riche class whose wealth was produced through, commerce and contract work. The Star of David sign here may be interpreted as located within the largely Roman Catholic setting; a message therefore to this majority (and a statement of assuredness perhaps) meant to indicate the grace and blessing which God sends to the Protestant church; in short its own self assured prosperity.

The intentionality of Nguko's eclecticism and the possibility that this is in fact reveals an aesthetic preference that is not simply ephemeral, might be judged from what is perhaps the most characteristic aspect of the elevation; Nguko’s interest in a constantly changing texture. This is brought out maximally in his own house, most particularly in the oldest section of this still unfinished building; the ground level of the main entrance-portico (fig. 116).

In this composition, several aspects of the Nimo church are repeated, but because it is in a larger scale, their purposefulness seems more obvious. This portico also consists of a pair of circular moldings, one enclosing the other, over a central entrance archway. As in St. Paul’s church, the inner arch springs from below its axis, so that the horizontal line at this level does not represent the arch’s greatest width. What is particularly interesting is the treatment of the surfaces. As is seen in a detail (fig. 117), Nguko is intent on juxtaposing a variety of textures within a single frame. The texture of the lower section resembles much the texture of the St. Paul’s facade. The pier at the margin emphasizes a strict horizontal and vertical regime. Adjacent to this, the stonework is picked out in narrow horizontal bands, each

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604 Many of whom were in fact of Enugu Ukwu and Nimo origin.
unit rendered as an extended oval. The final section, between the arched molds, and diagonally opposite the section described just previously consists of stonework whose pointing is picked out so that it resembles a stack of pentagonal shapes.

Nguko's preference thus seems clear. An assemblage of different textures and patterns, each within clearly bounded spaces, are juxtaposed next to each other; the effect is both dazzling and engaging, but never disorienting; perhaps because it is all held together by the boldness of the linear sections such as is observed of the arched moldings. Both preferences and strategies are commonly observed in a number of well known African art forms, in which surfaces are covered by patterns. Perhaps most comparable in this regard is the fabric that consists the costume of the Igbo masquerade in such forms as the agbogho mmonwu; colorful, of varying pattern, and all assembled together into a stylistically coherent (and specifically identifiable) whole. Yet, it forms a well recognized, and one might add beautiful, aesthetic. This play with contrast and oppositionality in the constitution of an overall balance is a central quality of many African patterned aesthetics, recognized in traditions as diverse as those of the Igbo, the Yoruba and the Kuba. In Shoowa (Kuba) pile cloth for example (fig. 118), a pattern with the potentiality for regularity, may be varied constantly across the surface, challenging the eye to locate a center which does not exist. One of the Kuba cloths illustrated here does not create borders around any locatable pattern, while the other one separates its different but related patterns by distinct breaks. They thus shares a quality of irregularity with the Igbo costume (and with Nguko's wall), even if for the latter the changes are often more sudden, while for some Shoowa cloth
patterns, the shifts occur continuously and with subtlety. When, not uncommonly, the Shoowa cloth pattern is made up from joined strips, the pattern shifts are as abrupt as they seem in Nguko’s patterns. For both pattern senses though, regularity seems anathema.

Michael Nguko has allowed that some of his ideas for the Church’s plan (though not for the porticoes) came out of a discussion with Bishop Obiefuna. This indicates that the knowledge necessary to singlehandedly come up with an agreeable plan for a Church was still a task that a builder at this point would not feel qualified to claim exclusively. The possibility of ceasing the position of authority over a field of knowledge as might have been claimed by say a master mason in the same context in the Europe of the nineteenth century had yet to arise here. This is not to say that even today, an architect may build a church without the dialogical interventions of a Bishop and a building committee. It is to say that the distribution of power and authority for architectural projects are significantly different at the time from what they are today.

Pressed further for example, Nguko certainly recognizes his own inventiveness, and the originality of the inspirations he has derived from a variety of sources. He also seemed aware that the recognition of such sources by others may well then have led to the Bishop’s disapproval of the façade. Nguko, for example, indicates that his inspiration came partly from

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605 Towards the end of which of course the professionalization of the architect as such occurred.

606 Refer to other discussion elsewhere in the text in which responding builders often credited how the building was designed, how it looked, the dispersal of elements such as windows in the building, as coming from the wishes and desires of the Patron...even if we have evidence that this is not exactly the case.

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photographs of Mecca, some of whose architecture he found quite interesting. Even if the Bishop failed to recognize this affinity, the personal style is in an indirect way responsible for the fact, as will be commented on subsequently, that Muslim Nigerians have found his style desirable. Furthermore, it is interesting that the ordinary citizens of Nimo recognized his architecture for this property, as appears to be indicated by the fact that he is generally called (and known) by the alias Mallam.\textsuperscript{607}

Mallam Nguko does indeed seem to have spent a significant amount of time in northern Nigeria, which partly explains his being addressed as Mallam in his hometown of Nimo, though it seems (and he was insistent on this fact being well understood) that his experience of the architecture there was not such as to have impressed him particularly, nor does it seem that he saw any of those buildings of the North which might be impressive before the style he became known for in Igboland was well in place.

Getting excited about the aesthetic excellence of the St. Paul design, and of his ability to appropriate the forms of other cultures, he maintained an unexpected enthusiasm about the design even as we spoke of it so long after. In trying to sum up it effect he stated quite appropriately that:

\begin{quote}
Ona egbu nu ka mmanya
It of course makes one as drunk as does palm wine.
\end{quote}

Of the builders whom the present writer met in the process of the research project, Nguko more than any of the other

\textsuperscript{607}Mallam is a Hausa word for a local, communal, Muslim cleric. Sometimes, 'mallam' is used to indicate respect (or recognition of an individual's wisdom) outside religious function, in everyday Northern Nigerian life.
builders in this study, had a talent for articulating the culture and aesthetic of the world of his craft that matched his own abilities to design and to build. This may or may not derive from the context in which he was raised (not to mention an innate talent), in which we find that his father was a well known sculptor (presumably he was also a farmer or trader of sorts) and that Mallam’s own son started at a tender age to be interested in the making of things, often copying the sculpture that Mallam Michael Nguko himself dabbled with in his spare time. This enables the entering of the architect’s mode of conceiving of his art, and of the methods and contexts of the process of carrying out his work.

A most striking thing in the architectural forms of his work such as we see in the gate houses (fig 119), and in the decorative schemas with which they are embellished, is the sense that such conceptions inhere the use of drawing. This stems from the sense of symmetry, the tangential meeting of circular elements, the floral patterning, the layered horizontal planarity of architectonic elements of the portal, and the floral and lyrical plasterwork moldings. One is therefore surprised to discover that this is not the case, or at least that it was not so until relatively recently. Nguko has claimed that he only finally acceded to the use of drawing when involved in another project, a headmaster of a school at Enugu-Ngwo, who himself hailed from Oghe, actually taught him how to draw plans and elevations, and even how to make

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608 This same son eventually went on to an art education at the prestigious IWF (Institute of Management and Technology) art school at Enugu, whose tradition of excellence goes back to an early sixties founding as the Government Trade Center, an early government arts and technical college.

609 Enugu Ngwo is, incidentally, the site of the Onoh stone mansion that ‘womi wota’ built, and which building was mentioned earlier in brief.
technical drawings for the resolution of the more complex decorative ideas he was wont to have.

Drawing as a tool for creativity (how to delineate an idea on paper), and complete with some knowledge of drafting conventions, is a skill he acquired much later on in his career, in a setting which was informal. This headmaster, for whom Nguko was building a house at Asata, then a new district of the colonial town of Enugu, and with whom he subsequently became good friends\(^{610}\) advised that it is best to be able both to draw and to be a skilled builder.

For the moment, this text departs from the issue of what historical meaning may be attributed to the fact that such advice is given by a headmaster, and that this same headmaster is actually conversant enough with technical drawing to teach some of it to an already well-skilled builder.

Nevertheless, most of ‘Mallam’ Nguko’s work is not built with the knowledge of drawing as a critical tool for creative practice. Thus, the interesting issue is how to understand the possibility of putting up buildings, like Mallam’s, without the benefit of drawings. Clearly, Mallam has a great capacity for remembering...for retaining in his mind the many things of architectural interest he had seen. He also clearly had a talent for creating in the abstraction of his mind, and for innovating with materials and their own suggestive paths, right in the process of building itself. Furthermore, he also applies a system of construction, which though not geometric itself, employs gravity, the weight of objects, the catenary effect of the string and other such ancient building methods

\(^{610}\) This same headmaster ultimately became his brother in law by marriage to Michael Nguko’s sister.
to good effect. It is not that these are formalized outside the actual practices themselves, and that Mallam would be able to teach other individuals with ease as to how to go about working this way\(^{611}\). Pressed himself as to how he proceeded to create and erect some of the schemes for which he is well known (fig. 120), he seemed only able to be lyrical about it.

Writer: Ebe isilu na i naro ese ife ese tupu i luba aluba, onazinu agba ghali ka i nwelu ike si luta otutu udi uno na kwa ichomma ya nke munwa fugolu bu n’aka gi ka odi.

Since you say you do not draw before you start building, it is (is it not) a bit puzzling that some of your buildings that I have seen and which are clearly in your personal style, were buildable to start with, and that moreover their ornamentation was possible to install. [Implied in the Igbo is a question demanding explanation which the English translation cannot quite capture.]

Nguko: Emmmm...Okwa ima ife ana akpo iketu?....

Do you know what an Iketu is?

Writer: Mba, anunurom nya bu okwu. Kedu ife obu?

No, I’ve never heard that [Igbo] word before. What does it mean ...

Nguko: Imaro ife a na akpo iketu! nya bu uno ududo na alulu onwe ya...ebe o na esilu umu aruru onya... ebe, o bu nya k’a n’akpo iketu. I nenenugo ka ududo si atu nyabu ife ma o na alu nya? Osi eba o tupu onweya dado ebe ozo...nkaa abulu ofu laayini ...etua ka o ya esi lulu nya na aga, na ekewa.... N’izizi, nya bu ife puta o na a gbam yalii. M nodukata mu nebe nya nkkili. M’nodu nno na ekili ya ma ona alu nya bu ife..na amenu ya undastudi... mekatata ofu mbosi nghota aghugho nya bu ududo ji alu uno. System nya dinu egwu. Obu etua kamu nwa sikwu alu uno. M puta, mjilu anya nkiti neta etu mu cholu ka ife sidi, mmakwunye ya plom, na atuya atu mu tusia nya etua ona adi bevul. Ududo kam’bunu. Anarom e-use i nu fom woki ndi kapinta na adi alu udu molding ina afu na uno mu lusiliu..oputa ona agba ndi mmadu ghali kamu si emenwu nya bu ife.

\(^{611}\) Indeed one of his former students, who dropped out, has indicated that this difficulty was exactly what was impossible for himself in particular to deal with, and that it often lead to in tolerable frictions between master and student. It seems nevertheless, that Nguko did take on a significant number of apprentices himself, and that this may partly account for a proliferation of the style in which he built.
You do not know what an iketu is?....the house that the spider builds for itself...where it sets traps for ants and insects...yeah? ...well that is what an iketu is. Have you ever watched a spider build its house? It throws itself from one place to the next...and that become some line...that's how it builds its house and continues to expand on it and to divide it up. At first, that process puzzled me. Once in a while I'd stop everything and watch the spider. I'd just stop and watch that thing..sort of understudying it...and then all of a sudden I understood the spider's house building secret. Its system is really quite fantastic. That is exactly how I build my buildings. I just use my eyes to work out how I want things to be, then on to a string I attach the [weight], and then throw it a throwing, and when I've thrown it, it always comes out bevelled. I am the spider of course. I do not use carpenters form-work for installing my moldings either..that generally still puzzles people...

At a later point in the interview, questions were redirected to the issue of the constructivity and style of the building, to which response fits well into the discussions above, for it further illustrates the degree to which an architectural language, admittedly a beautifully lyrical one, is used in the explanation of the object. The question concerned the granolitic/sand-quartzitic stone, which is the only masonry material available in quantity, but which requires an inefficient quarrying process. One was particularly intrigued by the improvisation that had become standard in his use of this material, but also in the quite flat surface he sometimes achieved as a means of creating textural interest. Some of the strategies and their effect are apparently intentional: the creation of surface interest through not just the linear decorative elements like the line of a plant-like floral pattern, but also through the surface texture itself; the juxtaposition of stones of different sizes, whose jointing then could also add to the brilliance of the patterning formed
by the mortar at the joints. In confirming such observations Mallam summed up his approach with the statement:

Ime okwute ka olaru...di ka n'ya na Chi n'ya si we ke ya, ifu na ife oya aputa ya adimma na anya
If you make stone lie in properly, to lie down...like itself and its Chi created it, you will see that it will bring its beauty out to the eye.

Here we observe a number of conjunctions of a so-called traditional viewpoint with a new architecture and its interpretation, which should help put paid to the idea that somehow these architectural objects were not fully understood and absorbed within an Igbo linguistic. This fact would also dispute any attempt to see it in terms of a European object in Africa. For though in common English parlance stones are laid, they do not create themselves, and in this creation have no aid of a chi. This is, at a broad level, nothing if not an architectural statement, granting to the object itself a certain aesthetic autonomy.

Thus encouraged to speak of his achievements as a builder, Michael Nguko then went on to speak of other projects attributable to him, many of which he hardly recalls because according to him, as soon as one project is finished he does not dwell on it, but moves right away to the next. One he chose to remember however, was a building he worked on for a man from Enugu Ukwu, from the Osili quarter, which house became popularly known, subsequently, as Osombuno, that is

612 The idea of the inherent creative force within a material itself certainly exists in European thought as well, but this, more typically, would only be explicitly expressed (and with understanding) in the realms of architectural theory itself, and possibly perhaps also in philosophy.

613 Here he mentioned a house for a Mr. Akpambo.

614 O-o so mu bu uno.
‘only I am a house’, the ‘I’ in the phrase being the building personalized as speaker, and addressing the viewer as to its own beauty, architecture here taking on its own voice. He stated with some amusement, that if there was money to be had in the kind of work he had chosen to be employed in, he would be a very well off man indeed.

Another aspect of Nguko’s career which might link the aesthetic to the historical must be returned to. This is the question of his links to Muslim architecture. It had already been noted that he admits a pictorial familiarity with the Muslim architecture of the Qabba and its surrounding buildings, which, that said, nevertheless does not seem to have any close resemblance to his own work. It could of course be that he is calling the architecture of any place in the central Muslim world Mecca, being, as a southern Christian probably quite ignorant of the geography of the middle east and of Islam outside Nigeria.

Nguko’s sojourn in northern Nigeria was lived in the company of Essieme Felix Agbim, most likely of the same family as Mathias Agbim with whom he had worked in the 1920s and of the Agbim family for whom he had built a house in their compound by the Oye market at Nimo. Michael Nguko’s desire to travel to exotic places, perhaps sparked by the frequent travels of the earlier part of his career (and perhaps indicated in his dreaming over pictures of Mecca) is what explains his having pestered Mr. Agbim, who worked for the Nigerian Railways, into letting him (Nguko) follow to Northern Nigeria. For several years, Nguko lived a semi-nomadic life, initially (and while an escort to Felix Agbim) moving frequently from one
relatively remote place to another. He first worked at Kwura, and then at Joko near Bukuru, where a power-station was being built, then Bukuru itself, before finally residing in the old Muslim metropolis like Kano. He lived in Kano for six years. He also lived in Katsina, where he remained for at least a couple of years, working with a Stone Mason from Asaba called Okomma, on the building of the Colonial administration's Native Court courthouse there.

The recognition of Nguko's talent and skill, even though he was neither Fulani, nor, Hausa nor Kanuri, and even though he was not Muslim, is indicated by his adoption as builder by not only the Igbo communities of pre-Uprising, pre-Genocide Hausaland, but by Muslim Hausa patrons. These patrons include Alhaji Lafi of Kano, for whom Nguko claims to have built at least seven houses. This is indeed a great feat, as Hausaland has an ancient history of architecture, and lacked no supply of eminent builders.

It is interesting that Nguko did not volunteer this information, a significant part of his life, in the initial interview, even following my comments on the similarity his

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615 Of course this only implies the marginality of these places to south eastern Nigerians, and not necessarily to Northern Nigerian people in whose social universe such towns are more crucially located.

616 Asaba we recall is the Igbo speaking western Igbo town, once the Niger Company's headquarters, and from which a number of builder architects have also emerged, most notably James I. Onwudinjo of Port Harcourt fame.

617 The three major, dominant, ethnic groups of northern Nigeria.

618 Referred to here are the anti-Igbo and anti-southerner riots and massacre that occurred in many northern Nigerian old cities in the 1966 and 1967 period, and which together with other political developments, ultimately lead to the Nigerian Civil war.

619 See for example J.C. Moughton (1987): [Hausa Architecture].
work bears to Hausa architecture. In the second interview, he admitted only that he had seen photographs of Mecca, though he ultimately returned to the subject of Hausaland, in the narrative of his nomadic existence, and of his ultimate professional successes in Kano and Katsina.

James I. Onwudinjo
Perhaps the other builder whose skill and creativity matches that of Mazi Nguko, who was as widely travelled, and who himself also resided in northern Nigeria at some moments during his career, is the builder who may have designed, and certainly erected, the Adinembo House at Okrika 620. It was indicated in an earlier chapter that Onwudinjo’s initial training, as far as has been verifiable, was at the hands of an unnamed Yoruba builder from Abeokuta621, to whom he was apprenticed in the eastern Nigerian town of Aba. The attempt here will be to explore his career in more detail, in order to understand his own experience to the extent that is possible, and to compare this experience with that of other builders included in the enquiry.

620 Of course there are likely to have been many other builders who would also fit this description. Reference is made here only to those of the group for whose biographies were researched for the dissertation.

621 Abeokuta was an early location in which the Church Missionary Society found significant success, and posses a group of mission buildings which may be the oldest extant ones in the country. The model for the Omitsha Industrial Mission was established here first, so that, were a similar enquiry to be carried out for south-western Nigeria, this town would hold pride of place in the history.

The Abeokuta Industrial School’s trainees were amongst the earliest itinerant builders schooled in the British colonial building tradition, and they will be found in places that one is surprised to recognize, given how early in the century they are recognized, and the distance from the security of Yorubaland in which they are encountered. (This seems to be a not uncommon and recurring fact, as the builder of the Asitonka Koko house, also in Okrika, a house which is older than the Adinembo House, was said to be Yoruba).
It was also mentioned earlier that the town of Asaba was an early proto-colonial capital, during the last decade of the nineteenth century, and that though this town was Onwudinjo's hometown, he did not participate in the building of its many colonial period structures. In fact, the only building with which he was involved in his hometown, and this in 1924, was the Holy Trinity church, a small neighborhood church, distinguished only by its gothicized windows, and its decorative wooden trimmings. As will become obvious moreover, this really occurs only in the later part of his career.\footnote{Presumably before the commencement of the Adinembo House, which is said also to have commenced in the same year.}

James Onwudinjo's building career seems therefore to have commenced at Aba, where he was apprenticed to the Yoruba builder mentioned previously, for a contracted period of five years. It is unclear how he made the builders acquaintance, but given the trust which seems to have allowed the young man to take on a lengthier contract than the normal three year period, and moreover to make such an exception with an individual who, for being of a different ethnic group, may have been viewed with suspicion, only such a relationship would seem to explain the fact of James Onwudinjo's being entrusted to his care.

It is possible that the relationship to the builder may well have been established at Asaba; that the Yoruba builder may have himself worked on the Royal Niger Company's buildings at Asaba, before subsequently moving on to Aba. Perhaps James Onwudinjo became acquainted to the man in circumstances that are not professional. The Yoruba builder may for example, during his sojourn in Asaba, have lived in the same neighborhood as the Onwudinjo family. It certainly is
plausible that it was in such a circumstance that they became acquainted, and that the young James Onwudinjo (perhaps one of the spritely young boys that one finds in most neighborhoods) determined to enter the same trade as the man who was much older than himself, and whose adult stories (of the tantalizing and much larger universe that he would have had knowledge of) may have seemed irresistible.

According to the latter's now elderly sons, on settling into life at Aba, James Onwudinjo's enthusiasm, keen interest, and ability to learn quickly, especially when ever the issue at hand was related to building, are said to have been recognized by James' Yoruba master (and by all others for whom the former subsequently worked).

As a result, following the five year period of apprenticeship on which he would have worked on sites erecting that town's well known colonial buildings, James Onwudinjo left Aba for the northern Nigerian, then new regional capital town of Kaduna, where he worked for the colonial Public Works Department (PWD) as a mason. The first confirmed date in which all this may be placed is 1918, the year in which James Onwudinjo returned to Aba from Kaduna. This date would then place the commencement of his initial sojourn at Aba somewhere between the years 1909-1911.

Whatever the case was, he is said to have remained in Aba only briefly after his return from Kaduna, before moving down

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623 The testimony here was offered by Ogbuefi Onwudinjo, who remembers this clearly, because his father had often narrated in his presence, that he (Ogbuefi Onwudinjo) had been born in the year of his return from Kaduna, a year he of course remembers well as the year of his birth.

624 Depending on one's assumptions as to how long he remained at Kaduna.
further south to Port Harcourt where he remained for the rest of his working life\textsuperscript{625}. Port Harcourt seems to have been a milieu in which he thrived. Both his contentedness with the city, and a measure of his success here, is indicated by the fact that back in his hometown of Asaba, the extended Onwudinjo family subsequently became known (indeed is still so known) by the pseudo praise-name 'Port Harcourt'. In the context of then contemporary Asaba, this appellation may have come on the wings of Onwudinjo family narratives in their local community about the distant golden city in which they now resided.

Returning to the reality of his early career, and in particular on the course it took during his short second stay in Aba, the following seems to be part of the reason he ultimately decided to depart Aba for Port Harcourt. In Aba, he found employment once again at the Public Works Department, erecting buildings for the colonial administration. However, even though he seems to have risen in rank over time, finally achieving the position of head foreman, he nevertheless chose to resign the position following a dispute with his employers.

Entry into James Onwudinjo's personality might be had by understanding the issues around the dispute, and the manner in which his decision to leave seems to have unfolded. At the Public Works Department, where builders were employed on a contract by contract basis, Onwudinjo found himself in the presence of another gifted mason, Mr. Dako a native of

\textsuperscript{625} In a manner of speaking, this career may be seen as one that follows the initiation of one new colonial town after another. A move from Asaba, to Aba, to Kaduna and then to Port Harcourt, may easily be understood to follow the path of the progressive elaboration of the Nigerian Colonial state, and of the establishment of provincial and regional capitals (and their buildings) to buttress the developing structure.
Ogbaru²⁶. Their relationship became strained around a constant jostle for who, of the two of them, was to be recognized as most able, and therefore who was to be put above the other in the hierarchy of work gangs. This soon developed into an intense (even hateful) rivalry. The narrative of the relationship is of course heard from one side only, since Mr. Dako’s own family had not been located at the time of writing. Aspects of it may therefore be open to contestation.

Both Mr. Dako and Mr. Onwudinjo were obviously skilled individuals. Indeed, the British supervisors were increasingly confident in their ability, that they tended to give them work without close supervision. Onwudinjo in particular became recognized for his ability to read even the most difficult and complex plans with ease, and to execute its detail to the letter.

Ndi ocha bia zia, fa atupulu ya pulaani..

The whites then learned to just give him plans (without a thought)²⁷.

Given its descriptive strategy, the statement itself does in fact include the notion that plan reading was a novel form of literacy, and one whose acquisition was esteemed by the Africans in these situations. There is a subtext within it

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²⁶ Ogbaru is, like Asaba, also an Igbo town not far from the the banks of the Niger river, further south on this river and thus nearer to the coast than is Asaba. It has been mentioned briefly in relation to the photograph of teachers at the Catholic school at Adazi, which photograph was posed in front of the palace mansion of their patron and benefactor, Chief Ojiako. It was the first station of the Church Missionary Society in Igbo land, and thus produced some of the early individuals literate in English, one of its famous sons being Chief Justice Kaine of Ossomari, who was pictured in the same photograph as a young elementary school teacher.

²⁷ Literal translation ‘the whites would simply throw a plan at him’. The throw here did not seem to refer to a disrespect for the recipient, but rather implied (given the context of the story and its subsequent generation) that the administrator allocating work had come to know by this time that there was no need to confer with Onwudinjo, nor to explain what work was required by the plan.
therefore, that indicates the progressive assumption of an intellectual (if not political) equality with the European colonial administrators for whom they built, and more specifically, with the various European operatives who would have been directly responsible and answerable for the execution of work.

Mr. Dako may himself have been no less impressive. Certainly it seems that a struggle emerged in the context of their particular department, as to who was to be appointed as a senior over the other. Specifically, it may be assumed that Dako was employed there first, and felt that based simply on this point he ought to have priority over such an appointment to headship. This is particularly likely as the source of Dako’s intense machinations, which escalated to the point when it is alleged he conspired to have Onwudinjo harmed physically. This embroilment, ultimately appears to have ended up in the Native Court at Port Harcourt, to which Onwudinjo was summoned to answer a query. Indeed, though the Onwudinjo’s claim to be the injured party in the dispute, the family oral history states at a point that ‘...Dako was a wicked man ([na] Dako di wicked’), a reference to the fact that the injured party (as far as the Onwudinjos are concerned) ended up as the accused in court. Dako’s aim must

628 This visit may well have been James Onwudinjo’s first visit to Port Harcourt, and the one that may have opened his eyes up to its possibilities.

629 It seems justified to call the narrative by this formal name; for the detail in which such a history was remembered, especially as it applied to the experience of another individual, albeit one’s own father, goes well beyond the bounds of ordinary memory. The stories had obviously been told and retold, to the point that it was clearly inscribed in the minds of my informants who could have hardly been more than early teenagers at the time.

630 In fact, in the history of the Native Court in Igboland, Ogbaru indigenes were amongst the earliest Igbos to begin to possess trained lawyers in their midst, so that it seems possible to imagine that (continued...)
have been to intimidate his competitor, since in the circumstance it was unlikely that Onwudinjo would be found guilty.⁶³¹

Mr. Dako’s tactics are said not to have stopped here, for it seems he combined such pressure with a constant lobbying of the colonial administrators with whom they worked, presenting James Onwudinjo in the worst light possible, aided perhaps again by fellow ethnic Ogbarus, many of whom would have been considered ‘gentlemen’ by the British for the degree to which they would have received a formal education; one which moreover usually meant that many indigenes of the former town were able to converse and write in perfect and grammatically correct English.

The result (and response by the state administrators) was perhaps to be expected. For five days following the Native Court encounter, after having been Chief Clerk (of Works) for three years, Mr. Dako was promoted to the position of Headman (Foreman Grade II), a position which elevated him above his rival. In the words of the Asaba informants,

aka nsi nya [nke Dako] aba-a nya n’onu
his [Dako’s] dirty fingers were thus thrust into James Onwudinjo’s mouth.

This allegory is quite apt. For the new position came with a salary of £30.00, almost twice the £16 a month salary that

⁶³⁰(...continued)
Mr. Dako was exploiting the greater access he may have had to juridical procedure (and to its politics) than he knew Onwudinjo was likely to have access to.

⁶³¹ Although the Native Court was one in which the Court Clerk existed, and therefore was a literate court, whose proceedings would have been recorded, little from this early period survives in the archive. Much was destroyed in the Nigerian Civil War, including indexes. There is therefore currently no documentation to help with building up a clearer picture of what would have been involved in this dispute, beyond the oral narrative obtained.
the Chief Clerk (of the works) was receiving at that point. This so incensed Mr. Onwudinjo, that he resigned almost immediately, abandoning his pension, his gratuity"32, and all the comforts offered by employment or association with the civil service. It is remembered by his offspring (some of whom were the writers informants) that their father was literally in tears when he related his resignation to his wife that evening. For the family it seemed that the world had come to an end, and Mrs. Onwudinjo was none too sure about the wisdom of such a principled but impractical decision. She was apt to think her husband too proud. Such a victory appears to confirm either that Dako had a less rebellious nature which may have endeared him to the European staff, or, on the other hand, it might indicate that he was judged, 'wicked' or not, the superior mason of the pair.

What is surprising then, is that this departure may have been a blessing in disguise. Perhaps as a result of his Native Court experience of Port Harcourt, Onwudinjo left Aba (in about 1922/23) and travelled to Port Harcourt, in which town he apparently already had some of his brothers and sisters resident. He found employment initially at the Public Works Department here, again as a builder, in which position he was involved in the construction of government buildings in the Niger Delta riverine towns, especially at the Kalabari provincial capital town of Degema. However, it seems the regime was far too regimented here for his personality, work starts and stops being rigidly timed, and calls to work being announced by the use of a whistle. It is not clear if there was a dispute around his resistance to working in such a

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32 Both words were spoken in English. The meanings in the contexts seemed well understood, especially in terms of the alieness of the concept, in contrast to african forms of financial stability projected into old age (basically through the production of ones children).
regimented context, or whether he took the decision to leave on his own. Still, after only a short stint at the PWD in Port Harcourt, he had left it, and commenced working as a self-employed builder. This would have been in the year 1923 or 1924, the year we may note, in which according to the Adinembo family, Chief Joshua Adinembo commenced the construction of his own mansion at Okrika.

Here may lie clues regarding his entry into the world of the Izhon and Kalabari clientele. For by working at Buguma, and moreover on a project whose political importance can hardly be gainsaid for the Kalabari communities which it would serve, it is not unlikely that Onwudinjo would have been offered the opportunity of becoming acquainted with numerous important personalities of this ethnic group, or on the other hand (assuming that he worked in a role which would have made him visible as a leader of the construction process) that he was ‘discovered’ in this role during a chance visit to the representative of the colonial state perhaps occupying temporary offices on the same site, by an important Kalabari personality.

Yet another scenario is imaginable. In Okrika, there is another large house, the Koko House, which is confirmed by all informants to have pre-dated the Adinembo House. The Koko house moreover, is said to have been built by a Yoruba builder, but again one whose name has been forgotten. It is not entirely unlikely that this builder may be the same one to which Onwudinjo had been apprenticed in Aba. Alternatively,

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633 It must be noted that the two families have had no knowledge of each other for perhaps twenty-five or thirty years (and probably longer), for the Adinembo’s were especially taken aback by my announcement several months after our first interview, that I had finally discovered the Onwudinjo family at Asaba.
assuming the two Yoruba men were not the same individual, they may have known each other, being co-nationals in the same trade so far away from home (Yorubaland, southwestern Nigeria). Given either scenario, it is possible that at a latter point, when these particular individuals may have been in retirement, but were nevertheless approached by Chief Adinembo, they recommended the younger Igbo mason (Onwudinjo) with whom they had been associated for long periods.

On resigning his Public Works Department position, he retained Port Harcourt as a base and from here travelled around various sites in the surrounding area (Buguma and Degema for example) to erect buildings for private individual's or for church building committees (fig. 121). Whatever the reason for his leaving might have been, he seems to have gained a reputation amongst the local business, professional, entrepreneurial and religious communities as a man of immense ability and talent in the art of building. That is, the Adinembo house, it turns out, is (as indicated above) only one of several buildings in which he was involved as head of a private building organization, in some of which he was the head mason, but he built as far afield as Bakana and Brass and of course Okrika itself. These include work for Chief Kalio, an important Okrika personality.

He of course worked with other individuals, the most notable of whom seems to have been a carpenter Mr Eduamaodu, who was a fellow Asaba indigene, as well as with another western Igbo man, the late Mr. Osadunkwu, who was a mason from the town of Illah. Clearly then, Mr Onwudinjo who had no formal

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634 Interviews with Ogbuefi Onwudinjo, oldest surviving son of the late builder James I. Onwudinjo, May 1993.
schooling beyond the elementary school acquired from work and partly from being a talented individual, the knowledge and skill to control other builders, acquire contracts to build, and supervise the building process successfully.

An overall interpretation
It is an indication of the world in which all these builders were formed, that they all had 'English', Christian, first names: James, Jonathan, Mathias, Michael, Simon, Ezekiel and even Stanislov. It is noteworthy moreover, that these names are not names used in the context only of encounters with the colonial government or with other European concerns, but are the names used by them in their local, domestic, everyday-life situations. And, given (as indicated in a previous chapter) the importance of naming for southern Nigerians generally, it may be imagined the extent to which the culture of 'progress', the culture of the new international world in which the architecture was born, had become dispersed into the emerging, self-transforming Igbo cultures of the early twentieth century.

The texture of south eastern Nigerian life in this chapter has been achieved through an exploration of the life and career histories of some of the individuals involved in the building culture of the period under investigation. In doing so, we have attempted to understand, given the other realities of their location, how the new architecture could have arisen. If Enugu Ukwu and Nimo are in anyway typical of the same

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635 'Obulu na ogulu akwukwo rime, o ka eme ife ..'(if he had any significant education, he would have done great things), said his brother.

636 Though the builder’s focused on are Igbo, it should be assumed that Izhon, Efik, Ibibio and Eko culture (the other groups of the south east) were undergoing, or had already undergone, an equally intense self-transforming process.
developments that may be assumed for Onitsha two decades earlier, and for Arochukwu and Abriba subsequently, it has been observed here that the process of the individual builder’s formation often, but not always, involved training and apprenticeship under partial European supervision. Alternatively, or additionally, the would-be builder underwent apprenticeship through the experience of working and learning under a native individual who had received such a training a generation earlier. Given that these individuals were conversant with their own building customs to start with, and had the benefit of working under a non-European in which contexts they clearly became more freely inventive, it can be claimed with some justification, that the buildings, whether or not they took on more or less European, or more or less African forms, are products of the unique juncture between a local and an alien universe. In other words, that this culture emerges against a background of an assertive European culture which is represented by both the Mission and the Colonial government does nothing to diminish its autonomy.

Of particular importance moreover is that by the process involved in these biographical discoveries, a theoretical departure becomes thinkable in the study of buildings generally. The error of the namelessness that accompanies the textual construction of a particular world of architectural creativity, seems revealed. This world is the one that has become labelled, after its boundary has been defined, as the vernacular. Indeed, the very absence of a sense of the historical, and of the actors involved, a suppression of their identities and interconnections, is what has then made it

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This is not as unfair as it might appear. Studies of buildings produced outside the contexts of the architecture for the powerful, defined in relation to the writer’s own location, are still (continued...)
possible to define this architectural world as vernacular. And this, regardless of whether one speaks of Jackson, Mississippi, of Arthington, Liberia, or of Tarbert, the New Hebrides, Scotland.

Given this, the buildings presented in the following chapter present a specific challenge, given that for them, there is little possibility that their authors might be recuperated; their creators are in other words certainly nameless. Apart then from the fact that where they were once located is known, little else seems possible to retrieve of them beyond the occasional mention they receive in the colonial document, and this would tend to answer to the label vernacular, simply for the reason, if for no other, that they cannot speak back. A number of such buildings are visited next, in order to assess the extent to which they share, with all the buildings explored in the dissertation up to this point, commonalities both of architecturality, and of their conscious manipulation and absorption of elements from the modern world. More significantly however, it is likely that this exercise might provide us with the critical final element by which to take a comprehension of the bulk of the buildings explored in previous chapters to a valid (because incorporating a local dimension) conclusion.

\[637(...)continued\]

undertaken today, in such a way as to privilege typology or function or distribution, over historical content in these places.
Architectural postures: Cognitions of architecturality in ‘traditional’ practices

A la pointe de l’île Brokkedon, le George Shotton était couché dans la vase, toute à fait semblable à la carcasse d’un monstre marin[...].

Maintenant, elle appartenait au fleuve, à cette ville. Elle connaissait chaque rue, chaque maison, elle savait reconnaître les arbres et les oiseaux, elle pouvait lire dans le ciel, deviner le vent, entendre chaque détail de la nuit. Elle connaissait les gens aussi, elle savait leurs noms, leurs surnoms pidgin.


Extracts from J.M.G Le Clezio (1991), Omitsaba.

Even for the buildings reviewed in the previous chapters, it seems pertinent (and this was argued there) to provide a scenario for them within the milieu of those buildings produced either before, or in the period that is contemporary with them, but which buildings are normally accepted as vernacular and/or traditional. Such a context, and an assessment of its complexity, ought to reveal the extent to which such ‘vernaculars’, as they have been communicated across time to the present through the constructions of various written texts, carry within them (perhaps even against
the representation the text itself appears to favor) the ideas and expressions of architecturality and of a positively changeable architectural culture, that is more easily recognized in the new architecture of houses, mansions and church buildings. In this way, it may be established whether the architecture of these churches and stone houses is prefigured in 'tradition', or the extent on the other hand to which its possibility is conceivable only with a local assumption of an alien, European idea of the meaningfulness (and/or textuality) of buildings. In order to enable this inquiry then, a selection of 'traditional' buildings is first presented and critically assessed. In presenting them here, one must become aware of the historical routes through which knowledge of them has reached the present, and which route certainly colors the manner of their representation. As such, a large part of the material which forms the basis of the chapter is not the product of this writer's original field research. As such a substantial part of the chapter is involved with analysis and interpretation which derives from a critical and close re-reading of the work of previous scholars and writers (including photographs and unpublished documents), a re-reading which often gave up its embedded, previously un-commented upon information. The chapter proceeds with a critical description of a small number of these kinds of building, leaving a more directed interrogation and questioning-for-meaning to the latter part of the chapter. The chapter ends then with an interpretation of the elemental discoveries made within the buildings in terms of the concerns and interests expressed above.

Before this section is entered though, it needs to be noted that though the dissertation ranges over south eastern Nigeria, each of its geographical areas has not been equally
represented in the text. This has resulted from the decision made earlier to make the tracing of particular histories priority over geographical representation. And, though this section would give the opportunity to include a range of buildings that do cover the whole of the south east, based as it is on case studies which as such depart from a strictly historical framework, the reader will observe that there remains an absence here of such broad representation. Most critically, the inclusion of Izhon buildings, given our previous exploration of the Adinembo House would seem to be required. However, given the material available for such an inclusion, it was not thought useful to do so in the final analysis. That is, because in Izhonland (more than say Igboland) the full impact of the European presence erased the large majority of such buildings well before any useful records exist, those ones that have survived say through [Amaury Talbot’s] descriptions and/or photographs and that might be usefully introduced here, do not provide the kinds of evidence for the architectural past that the Igbo buildings below allow.

There are however a small number of exceptions to this. The numerous publications by Amaury Talbot, by the G.T. Basden (Rev.), by Northcote Thomas, and by A.A. Whitehouse, are remarkable for the contributions they might be able to offer to a study such as this one. This section will at least then be opened by a presentation of architectural cases from Efik, Izhon and Ibibio communities as accessed mainly through the above mentioned writers.

It has been alluded to that it was in the process of the missionary, often evangelical movement, with its brave and
formal entry to the interior\textsuperscript{38} that the first permanent European territorial occupations occurred, as was say the case for the 1857 establishment of the Anglican CMS congregation at Onitsha, albeit largely at this stage through the zeal of repatriated and long since Christianized Sierra Leonians\textsuperscript{39}. Nevertheless, such settlements were rare, and though in the following five decades commercial activity was to see an increase in settlements in the form of factories up and down the rivers, we should not be surprised to find that even by the beginning of the period in which the dissertation’s interest is focused (say 1889), white government officials here, on the supposedly more metropolitan coast, were forced to remain aboard ship, and to run the affairs of the fledgling colonial state from this location. In the case of the eastern delta, on the Sombreiro, a ship called the George Shotton, remained the seat of government even right up to 1904, when the first Colonial administration buildings, similar in style to the many structures and houses already erected in Lagos island, were completed on the island of Degema\textsuperscript{40}.

It is not surprising to find therefore that it is only in the immediate subsequent years, and not before, that descriptions

\textsuperscript{38} News of Christianity had in fact reached inland territory through the offices of Igbo ex slaves, who by then worked as travelling operatives for their masters, and who being Christian, took its message with them to spread in the dense interactions of the markets they attended.

\textsuperscript{39} Elizabeth Isichei states that at this juncture, '...All the missionaries, and almost all the Nigerian traders, were Christian Africans from Sierra Leone, often of Igbo origin'. Isichei (1982) op.cit., p110. (See also Dixon-Fyle [1989] op.cit). It is unclear how much this claim might be regarded as extreme; certainly even if it is an approximation of the truth, it suggests that the critical difference of the history of the Mission in southern Nigeria (in comparison to other places in Africa and in South America), has yet to be written with the stridency it calls for.

The Onitsha mission after the departure of the Expedition was ministered by John Christopher, a Sierra Leonian and former victim of enslavement, whose ancestral origins were in Igboland.

\textsuperscript{40} Talbot (1932) p. 17, plus other more academic histories.
of southeastern Nigeria and its representation departs from the phantasmagoric and highly mythicized forms in which it was most usually apprehended, and takes on a semblance of reality and close attention to detail. And yet, we are perhaps surprised to find, in the use of illustrations and photographs as textual support, that the construction of a reality which varies significantly from the actual, continues afoot, often in the face of the difficulty with which one might assume the photograph, by its nature, might resist.

One of the earliest individuals to not only penetrate southeastern Nigeria on other than the access given by a river, but to also leave us with a record of sorts, was Percy Amaury Talbot, who worked for the Colonial service. Both the chronology of his published writing, and the cartography which his writings map, perhaps suggest that he may well have been one of the residents of the George Shotton, not the

641 In architectural writing particularly, this would have been normalized by the paraphernalia of the Primitive hut, which had by the early modern period (18th century) certainly achieved in its many appearances, the status of an icon.

642 Since her work on the German photographs of Bamum (Cameroon) royal court life, Christaud Geary has been involved in work to historicize the strategies of construction that underlie the representationality of early colonial period photography. In this sense, some of the approaches taken in the analysis of photographs here to a somewhat different aim, share many of the same interests.

643 There had of course been previous travellers inland, Roger Casement (see Northrup [1979]), A.G. Leonard, and William Baikie to take some examples. Like those mentioned here, many have left memorable descriptions. However, none have so consistently combined text with photographic illustrations to the extent typical of Talbot.

644 The earliest is a thick 1907 (?) volume on the private realms of women's social life, which is focused particularly on sexuality and fertility, followed in 1912 by another, then others right up to about 1932.

645 From the coastal Eko and Kalabari Izhon, inland to Oban, then beyond these Ibibio and Efik groups into Igboland, thence through Ika Igbo to Edo and then ultimately to Yorubaland.
least because he was there in a capacity of colonial administrator".

Amaury Talbot's earliest writing appears to be his most heavily prejudicial, and shares with then contemporary writing of many of his fellow Englishmen of the period, a prejudice against local life and culture, that lies partly against the formative politics of a colonist ideology. This writing style does however become less and less strident, becoming with each subsequent work, both more mature and more understanding of the culture of south easterners. The later books therefore encourage a less cautious reading than one might otherwise have assumed. Though the narrative style is maintained, the text is more analytical, pausing to give a detailed presentation and explication of the south easterners understanding of the world and of existence in mythology, religion and its related art. In fact, for all the difference this world might appear to present in comparison to the one from which he comes, and in which his reader's would have originally been situated, the emergence of an attempt to humanize the Ibibios, Efiks and Igbos is noticeable. This is achieved by an attempt to connect them, no matter how tenuously, to the acceptable *civilitas* of ancient Egypt, Crete, and Assyria. He of course was hardly unique in this for the period in which he wrote (Frobenius [1913]), and the tradition has a pedigree (Bowditch [1821]). Nevertheless, what does distinguish his own writing, is not only the density of the delineated and photographic representation and their

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"A small British endowment is established at the Royal Anthropological Institute in his name, indicating the importance that may be attached to his work, but the present writer is unaware as to the possible existence of a monograph of his sojourn in Nigeria. However, he labels himself '...of the Nigerian Political Service', which indicates that it is indeed in the capacity of a colonial representative that he is in the country. Quite later, we have enough information from the kind of work he publishes if from nothing else, that he is a Colonial Officer.
scenography emersed in the evidence of architecture and its interiors, but also the close dialogue that does exist between the text itself and these illustrations which lend them support.

Generally exteriors are located and contextualized in such a way as to confirm the fact that this society is one in which few individuals, and buildings 'speak English'. Generally, these photographs are successful at persuading the reader of this proposition. The interior photographs are however used for slightly differing intentions, many (especially those in the chapter on women), seemingly enter into the private world of powerful women in order to locate the ordinariness of the places from which their powers derive (figs. 126 and 127), or, less commonly (where men's treasure-house interiors are involved), in order to indicate that it is in the domestic interiors of the wealthy individuals, that any elements worthy of being graced by the recognition of aesthetic intent, is only to be found (fig. 122). In the former interiors, the spaces are deep, shadowed, but without loss of detail, and of nothing particularly note worthy, while for the treasure houses, we rarely see the interior as such, but rather are presented with an object (the treasure box or an elaborate mud couch) which fills the frame more or less completely, thus excluding the context of the interior in which the object would have been found.

A particularly believable world, and one which the reader might more easily empathize with, does therefore become represented. We may illustrate this briefly by selection from In the Shadow of the Bush; with the characterization of the
village of Oban and its neighborhood, and in particular with the persona of the woman Owo Ita.

The title *In the Shadow of the Bush* itself of course suggests a distinction from that other possibility; a stage set for pure savagery. He avoids this, by the locating Oban not in the heart of the dark itself, as Joseph Conrad did for a fictional work, but only adjacent to its (perhaps) awe inspiring, (certainly) threatening shadow. And, this is not just left to the well-trained imagination of his intended European audience, but is made quite specific by taking the reader literally on the road to Oban and giving the real context, as he perceives it to be, in which Oban existed. This is achieved through an account of his experience of this road as he makes his way to Oban, a narrative which is supported by photographs. Generally, the world is one that is represented as a jungle, impenetrable in every other direction but the one which the path to Oban opens up, and peopled (in the nodes of human settlement along this path), by a population who though barbarianized by his text, are nevertheless cast in interpretative terms which allow an empathy with their existence in terms which depict the nobility of a struggle against the threatening jungle with which they have been juxtaposed. 'We' are really expected to recognize the greatness of our human spirit, in their holding off of this darkness. This is achieved partly by a relative

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"Talbot, using a colonial epigraphy, spells the name as Awaw Ita.

"The present writer of course admits that it is possible to argue that Talbot also did by that title mean, in all likelihood, that he himself was held in awe by the power of the bush. This seems undermined however by the choice of the term bush over forest. Bush tends to belittle power, to suggest something somewhat scruffy, lacking any suggestion of loftiness that 'Dark' or 'Forest' possessed for the European writer in that moment."
restraint from sensationalism and the use to which a realism is put:

They are most particular in the matter of personal cleanliness so far as bathing and the washing of garments are concerned, but the old habit of crowding together for safety, in case of attack from a hostile tribe, still influences them to build their compounds of small ill-ventilated rooms. They seem utterly indifferent to the extent of evil smells, and to this cause the high death rate among the children is chiefly due. So high is it, indeed, as to be hardly more than covered by the birth rate. [p12]

or even in the explanation of a myth which would normally offer up a possibility for emphasizing difference;

When ghosts come [then] to your house, seeking something, you inquire by the charm what sacrifice they are asking, and having found out, you take it to the beginning of the road, and offer it there.

This is the reason whenever you are near a town you see sacrifices set out for the ghosts, so that they should no longer enter within.

The more surreal aspects of the social life of Oban, such as the passage above, being constantly normalized by the realist contextualization provided by both the photograph (Shadow), and by architecture (‘...compounds small and of ill ventilated rooms...’).

The second chapter (by which time we are well into Oban) delves into Ekoi religion, and is unable to avoid the mystification of religious practice in terms such as JuJu. Nevertheless, it is again underwritten by a series of photographs showing the ‘Juju’ itself, most usually beside a thatched building to which it is related, sometimes clarified by a separate drawing (fig. 123), which avoids the imprecision of the photograph, and allows an apprehension of the detail
of the 'Juju' and of the architecture within which it remains framed.

Owo Itan, a woman of Oban seems to have held a particular interest for Talbot. Certainly of those individualized in the text, she is the only prominent woman, her husband, made even less important (as he seems actually to have been) than herself. For the present writer, she is even more critical, because not only do her own representations always occur contextualized within architecture, but further, and for the moment perhaps rather curiously, it happens to be the case that even more than the chapters on architecture, and the one on art, the chapter on women contains more illustrations of a decidedly architectural kind.

Owo Itan is introduced fairly late into the text, following chapters on such subjects as religion, and Ekpe. In a way, it may actually be argued that in these sections, Talbot proceeds from a general picture of society (i.e. Religion, etc.), to a particularized one (the individual Owo Itan), with the exclusive men’s club Ekpe in between both poles. Ekpe plays a primary role in Ekoi society, and since, as we shall see, Owo Itan is described in terms of magical power with which Ekpe concerns itself, it is justified to conceive of the logical progression of Talbot’s narrative in this way.

Owo Itan appears first in a chapter titled 'metamorphosis' in which Talbot links the belief in the re-embodiment of a mask by a departed spirit, the incorporation of mask like images in the Juju figures, with the generalized belief in the power of individuals to transform themselves even in the reality of
the present existence, from one form to another". Owo Itan, the writer narrates ‘...is suspected of a far more sinister familiar...’ than the men above for transforming her self at nights into a snake, licking her husbands wound, and thus preventing it from healing.

In subverting what might be the European reader’s amused disbelief, Talbot provides a photograph, which appears quite unposed, and in which we see Owo Itan, now subtitled ‘The Snake Woman’, standing with her obviously younger Husband, and separated by an object half their height, and assumedly a domestic and family-protective Juju. They are all photographed in front of a somewhat unattended adobe and thatch building (fig. 124), which the reader might easily assume to be their home, unless that is, he or she has been looking much more closely.

The building in front of which they stand, is in fact one we have encounter again (and as a photograph) in another text, and that is there described as an Ekpe house, the meeting place of the men’s ‘secret society’. It is therefore unclear why the Snake Woman and her husband stand in front of the Ekpe House to be photographed, especially as Owo Ita’s name is not

449 Particularly effective is the narrative of the men who confess to having attempted to kill a group of women, by transforming themselves into crocodiles, and pulling the women in to a river to drown as the women attempted a river crossing.

450 These narratives are taken from the records of hearings brought before the local court.

451 See Talbot (1932) p896 fig 216.

452 See Talbot (1912) fig 216. It is also intersecting to note that the two photographs are not taken in the same period. The one in front of which Owo Ita stands, is dilapidated (the lattice framework is worn through and visible in one photograph, but is still intact and invisible behind the earthen panels in the other), compared to the one without them. This latter photograph was therefore either taken earlier, or it was taken later and after the club house had been renovated.
mentioned in the description later on of the women’s own society of Nimm, and of its priestesses and their relationship to, and power over Ekpe.

In fact, it could be that the author, linking in his own mind the mythic power of Owo Itan, her old age and the wisdom one might assume she has access to, with the terribleness of Ekpe, he positions her here in order to reproduce her ‘reality’ more accurately. Thus he brings her personhood closer to the reading audience, while yet separating off her magical aspect, and making it therefore more different. This is a strategy employed earlier, when in describing what appears to be a women’s fertility rite from which men are totally excluded, quite harmless seeming photographs of the site of these enactments are juxtaposed with a description of the rite itself, which aims to communicate the degree to which this society is indeed different from ‘us’, and to which yet, we should not attach the label of barbarity as such, but instead conceive it as the evidence of the retention of a world view whose origins are traceable to the civility of Assyria and Ancient Egypt, and from which his Western world is separated only by the passage of time. That is, Oban, and ultimately all south-eastern Nigeria, is conceived of as different from ‘us’, but only in so far as they live in the time of the Assyrians and not in his own then contemporaneous time. Thus,

The ceremony is performed in the circle when the moon is full. The scene on bright moonlight nights is uncanny to a degree, and it is hard for any European who has come suddenly on such a sight, to believe that he is still in the twentieth century, and has not stumbled on some witches’ sabbat of the middle ages. [p10]

The text is therefore intent on conjuring up a particular world, one in which little contact of significance has occurred with cultures outside its own since the presumed
Egyptian diaspora, and whose transformative motive only arises in the battle, being lost slowly but surely, against the forest and its incivility which threatens constantly to engulf remaining vestiges of this more northerly civility.

The present writer is not concerned, as are other scholars, with how the construction of this world may be seen as the formation of a colonial ideology of action that was more satisfying for the local man on the ground than may have been the other kinds of ideological justifications of colonialism on offer at the Metropolis. Rather, the concern is with the technique of such construction, especially as this is revealed through the rather fortunate representations of architecture in these texts.

It was noted above that Owo Ita was photographed next to a building with which, once identified, she has an unclear relationship. This Ekpe clubhouse as represented, nevertheless cohabits the textual space with another of the same type, which though it may appear initially to continue the support of the text, in fact undermines the primary narrative, and allows a bleeding which ultimately puts its argument to death.

The beginnings of this subversion are observed in a chapter devoted to aspects of Ekoi material culture in which we find a photograph that is meant to depict the structure of the thatched roof of Ekoi architecture. Juxtaposed below it is another photograph of an individual in the process of weaving bags, the point seeming to be to allow the somewhat Semperian connection, to be made between the support against which the

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653 Text on colonial or missionary ideology in from London or Liverpool or Paris or Dublin.
weaving is made, and the possibility of conceiving of the roof as a sort of woven textile.

What however is quite visible, but which in the context we might fail to focus on, is the slightly over exposed presence of a medium sized bell hung on a small wooden belfry, behind which is a support post hung around with what appears to be a snake skin, and also what appears to be a European styled bowler hat (fig. 125).

The presence of the bell within such an interior suggests that this is unlikely to be a domestic interior, and instead is most likely to be an interior of the very same Ekpe houses whose exteriors we saw used as the backdrops to the proposition of an Other world, as represented by the possibility that Owo Itan has the power to transform herself into a snake. As such, the bell and the bowler hat have implications that work against the assumptions Talbot may have encouraged the reader to have throughout the text. For if we assume that both objects are of European or North American manufacture, and though we must assume that the role they play within Ekpe Clubhouse rites are quite different from their intended use in the European world, their presence here nevertheless testifies to a society that has had contact with other than itself or its close neighbors, and that has moreover, been in a position to exchange things of value for these items. Interestingly, because we know that the towns on the coast had church buildings and the belfry with its bell for a considerable period before the photograph was taken, and

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because we also know that the bowler hat became a standard item of 'traditional' attire (incorporated into a non-European costume), we must also see in the presence of both objects in this place, a culture which, unlike say the Yoruba ones which Clapperton encountered on his travels inland in Yorubaland in the 1820s, understands the function of these objects within European and Europeanized society itself. That is, the Ekpe Clubhouse whose function in Eko society resembles in a number of ways a cross between the town church and the gentleman’s club house of English fame, we understand the presence of both items in this particular interior as opposed to others.

Though we have little else to go by, it is not possible to explain this photograph in terms of the paradigm that Talbot has set up for the reader. It thus becomes doubly interesting then to explore the representations of all the interior and exterior spaces of the text in more detail, and to observe how the author has set about representing them, in the belief that this reveals some way of understanding his intentions.

Generally speaking, exteriors are located and contextualized in such a way as to confirm the fact that this society is one in which few individuals, and buildings ‘speak English’. These photographs are successful at persuading the reader of this proposition. The interior photographs are however used for slightly different intentions, many (especially those in the chapter on women), seeming to enter into the private world of powerful women in order it seems to locate the ordinariness of the places from which their powers derive, or, less commonly (where men’s treasure house interiors are involved), in order to indicate that it is in the domestic interiors of the wealthy individual’s house, that any elements worthy of being graced by the recognition of aesthetic intent, are only
to be found. In the former interiors, the spaces are deep, shadowed, but without loss of detail, and of nothing particularly noteworthy, while for the treasure houses, we rarely see the interior as such, but rather are presented with an object (the treasure box or an elaborate mud couch) which fills the frame more or less completely, thus excluding the context of the interior in which the object would have been found.

Taking them in the order in which they are presented to the reader, it might be confirmed that the illustration Nimm Woman’s room, with Corner Shrine (fig. 126) is represented in a way which communicates a simplicity which we are meant to read. It also is believable as a space inhabited by JuJu women, especially as supporting text apart, the only section in which darkness obscures our ability to see the details of the room, is precisely the corner in which the strange objects of the Nimm practitioner are kept.

The second interior titled Mboandem Woman’s Room, with Shrine (fig. 127), Cupboard, and Shelves beneath Niche Bed is similarly illustrated, framed again in such a way as to separate the room from both its actual surroundings and from the reader, and so darkened at the sacred places, that details of the shrine itself cannot be made out, though other aspects of the room (the ceiling or the internal ornamentations of the wall surfaces for example)\(^{655}\) can be seen.

\(^{655}\) It is unclear how this particular illustration comes to be here, since though it is rendered in the same hand as the other illustrations in the text, Talbot himself suggests that though we find the women of this cult in the Kameroons, it has not been possible to find the same cult in Nigeria.\(^{[Shadow p97]}\) It is thus must be an illustration copied from another authors photograph, possibly from that of the Dr. Mansfield’s mentioned in the same text.
The third illustration, seems to illustrate an interior courtyard, in which is found the 'Juju Enyere', and for the moment depicts nothing on which comment is made here. The next architectural illustration depicts the interior of the 'treasure house of one of the priests of a local shrine' (fig. 128). The tendency has already been mentioned to include the space as such only when women's spaces are the focus of analysis. Here therefore, in a male space of the treasure house, is offered little more really than the decorated seat, set in a visual perspective which draws the viewer into it.

It is interesting here to note that Talbot mentions that the seat draws his attention as an aesthetic object, and in the same breath mentions that the Eko slave-traders amassed European goods such as glass, china and pottery. What he fails to observe perhaps, is that even though Itagbun was not a slave-trader (as far as is the scant evidence suggests), and even though Talbot is writing in a period after the slave-trade had ceased to be of major importance (though at this time an internal trade was not unheard of), that the decorative scheme on the earth-formed seat, and the overall physical form of the seat itself, departs from forms that may be recognized as traditional.

It is difficult to understand this omission, since in the execution of such a painstaking delineation of the seat's ornamentation, it is difficult to accept that the similarity it bears to the decorative schemes of European china could not have struck Talbot, especially when compared say with the equally floral but more historically Eko ornamentation of either the Mboandem Woman's room he illustrated earlier, or the sitting platform of the treasure chamber at Nfunum which we find only a few pages later, and which is distinguished by
the semi-floral semi geometric graphics, and by the inclusion in the same composition of zoomorphic and humanistic figures. Nevertheless, we see from further description of another (deserted) treasure house which appears to be similarly ornamented that Talbot was either blind to this possibility, or sought to lead his reader away from the likelihood that this connection might be made:

In one of the deserted houses the 'treasure chamber' remains intact, and is a really beautiful specimen of native ornamentation. No color is employed; the whole is made up clay with a surface smooth as that of pottery. The pattern, of conventionalized leafs, is left in relief by the depression of the background, like those already described at Abijang.

Another subsequent architectural representation is an interior courtyard of an abandoned building (fig. 129), supposedly belonging to one Nenkui, committed to prison by the Colonial authorities, at the time of Talbot's visit. In its original form according to his own description, it consisted of heavy sculpted pillars which supported the roof edge of the courtyard. The enclosing walls were also judiciously ornamented, with Ekoi customary motifs, raised in relief and apparently once painted in bright colors.

The owner of the building, Nekui, is introduced to us in detail, by the end of which description the reader seems destined to assume that the interior before us is indeed the habitation of a 'Juju' priest involved activities that we as readers are meant to view as strange. Perhaps more than any of the other interiors, this one holds, or is depicted to hold all the curious elements that other focuses in the narrative have not found gathered into one object. That is, here we have the earth and thatch constituted building, the apparently traditionally decorated walls, the large posts and their carvings, and finally the fetishized tree set in the middle
of the courtyard, testifying to the exoticism of the by then imprisoned former occupant.

And yet, even here the covering up is not possible to complete. That is, the whole setting in which the earth based couch is placed, as well as the mud couch itself, recalls other places. The pre-modern architecture of the interior courtyard itself recalls Onitsha, Benin Edo and Yoruba architecture\textsuperscript{656}, that is may indicate contact with other southern Nigerian cultures. More significant however is the earthen platform seat. About this seat, we notice that its form consists of a horizontal surface, which extends to the edge, but that at this edge, it is bounded by a raised and rounded surface meant to function as the seat’s armrests. On the surface behind the seat is painted a panel whose overall dimensions coincides with that of the length of the seat. This panel’s schema (fig. 122 abd 128), divides the surface into two individual panels, such that a semi-circular motif marks the hypothetical middle point, in the same way that this motif is also found at the two ends of the over-arching panel. In this way, the seat itself is divided in such a way as to suggest a conception which has divided the seating places into two.

Some of the properties of this seat, if not the actual decorative style, are strongly reminiscent of European furniture. That is, the specific introduction of the hand-rest in the particular form it is found here, and the

\textsuperscript{656} The posts that presumably lined the edges of the courtyard show further evidence of a foreign Yoruba influence, at the head of the post. The trapezoidal shaped sections which surmount a circular base, are the which slot into fitting notches in the ring beam that would normally support the roof as it overhangs the courtyard’s circulation space. This is exactly the method that one finds in the houses and palaces of the Yoruba high ranked class, the only difference being that in Yorubaland, the columns themselves would have been that much figurally carved.
disposition of the panel's ornamentation around the seat, seems to suggest some degree of familiarity with the European sofa or couch seat, with which Oban area's traveling traders may have been familiar with from the semi-European interiors of, perhaps, the houses of Old Calabar. Of course this illustration, and a subsequent one (a photograph of an Ekpe House interior titled 'Interior of Egbo [Ekpe] House, Ojo Akangba, Showing Type of Native Fresco' (fig. 130), which interior platform seats bears some similarity with the Nenkui compound interior, but which is more distinctly customary in both the decorative scheme, which is more figural and the earthen seating, which is less separated from the walls and horizontals surfaces of wall and floor which surround it, and therefore which are closer to the customary idea of seating as platform than is the earlier illustration, which separates the seat by a number of strategies. This photograph, the last architectural interior in this volume, does not provide the evidence alone from which to reach a more serious conclusion. This will be attended to in a section on a meeting house at Bende, described further on in this chapter.

It might be interesting indeed to let not only 'traditional' buildings respond through our exploration to the representation made of them by Talbot. It might be even more interesting to see whether any local text responds directly to Talbot's own text. One of the results of a conception such as is Talbot's (or some of the writer's mentioned in chapter 1), of assuming the validity of a sphere of architectural production that is understood as vernacular, is that its culturality is not recognized. For if it is assumed that the construction of enclosures is a purely functional affair, with little significance in the reproduction of society generally, and of culture specifically, if at best it is only a
reflection of other dimensions of society, then its service as index from which to read society’s structuration, implies its disjunction from the realm in which architectural signification is actively recognized by the conscious individual creator, and is manipulated as such°°°. The ramification for a project of writing such as this one is manifold, most important being the challenge that might otherwise be posed to its author, that one imposes a category and analysis on the objects of our study that is not appropriate to it°°°.

Below, an attempt will be made to present challenges to Talbot’s presentation in order finally to assert that there is now, and was in the nineteenth century and early 20th centuries, a culture of architecture. Moreover it will be shown also that this culture did, amongst other things recognize the categories commonly assumed to be observable of any architectural constellation: style, individual creators, historicity and change. Moreover, it will be illustrated that even in the absence of documents, and with the limitation of a technological and material world which could erect monuments

°°° That is architecture as a sense making phenomenon, as one that partakes of social production and reproduction, separates it from its other: building production that serves as social mirror, executed by craftsmen belabored by the unflinching weight of a tradition to which they must conform.

°°° In the institutions of art history for example, outside the specialized world of the Africanist, it actually does remain the case generally, that the status of African art objects as art, is only accorded a politically correct nod of approval or of acceptance, against real subterranean prejudices which are unspoken if they are even considered. A review of the syllabuses of art history departments in the West, or of grants awarded by American art historical patrons (of either their complete disinterest in the subject, or of the telling categorizations of survey courses dividing global art history into an Ancient, medieval, Renaissance, ancien regime, enlightenment, and modern, and in which African art, might appear only with the proviso that it remain within its own distinct and separate box (the application of a similar restriction is generally is true, incidentally, of the institutional condition of Islamic art studies). This form of recognition has long been rejected by specialized knowledge of African art, whose limited institutional power has prohibited the possibility of any influential change in this direction.
that outlive its creators, the latter are nevertheless remembered in oral history⁶⁵⁹. In the process the implication will be voiced that because its architecture’s representation in the European text reads with the same prejudice as that produced of other African places, what is discover here (and its interrogation of the construction of its nature which has become widely written), also applies to those diverse other African sites.

For western African near coastal areas, one of the more well known indications of this is found in both Akan and Fon oral tradition as collected in the early 20th century⁶⁶⁰. One well known Akan narrative apparently supplies that the rectilinear-plan form building entered Akan architectural history via the spider⁶⁶¹. The narrative is best viewed in the context not only of the importance of the spider in Akan mythology, but also in terms of its structure also, most especially in how this is appropriated in the construction of architectural difference and how this difference effects a radical alteration of the existing.

For south eastern Nigeria, what little research has been carried out on this subject by others, indicates however that few specifically architectural narratives, comparable to the Akan story are remembered. There is one recorded, ironically, by Amaury Talbot in the first decade of the twentieth century.

⁶⁵⁹ The importance of these lies in the fact that for many areas of the western world, it would be difficult to imagine an architectural history without the document, and without the stone edifice that, fortunately for the architectural historian, survived centuries. It seems doubly certain therefore that an architectural culture is supported here, if it survives into history, and the more difficult circumstances of its own reality.


⁶⁶¹ Part of this narrative is reproduced in Prussin (1986:ch 6)
It bears a striking resemblance to the Akan story, in its reference to the white visitor and to a house full of the good things of life, except that it does not, unlike the Akan story, end with the series of flights which ultimately explained in the Akan cycle, the arrival of the new architectural style to local society. The few more specifically architecture-historiographic narratives which have been recorded are by all indications variants of more recent provenance. The contexts and subjects of their stories are, as will be seen, not particularly focused on an architectural historiography. Nevertheless they contain critical statements about the social attitudes to building and to architecturality. In fact, because they narrate other events, that is because they are discursive, we find them more revelatory. Since however they are quite specific in the architectural references they do make, we are forced only to introduce them in relation to the buildings (which form the main body of work revealed in this present research) and other texts to which they are relevant.

These southeast Nigerian narratives, told by professional bards may accrete the status of oral tradition as it has sometimes been defined\(^{662}\). This would include for example the previously cited Epic of Ameke Okoye (see p7 of this work)\(^{663}\).

As related to our area of study in particular, that is of Igbo and Izhon architecture, one apparently Izhon oral narrative\(^{664}\),

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\(^{662}\) Here, I mean to refer to Jan Vansina's categorization, in which oral tradition is separated from oral history (Vansina [1968]).

\(^{663}\) See Azuonye and Udechukwu (1984).

\(^{664}\) The narrative was told to the writer by a middle aged Ikwerre-Igbo man who had only just heard it from the approximately ninety year old Izhon-speaking mother of one of his Kalabari friends. The (continued...)
which unlike the songs we will be looking at in subsequent sections focus’s specifically on architecture and stylistic change, does survive. This narrative discloses the introduction of a new architectural style by a foreigner, but which in this case is not a mythological figure like the spider, but seems to be (or at least represents the possibility) of a real historical figure. Let us hear the story as it was told the writer, in the context of a drinking bar, in which other people (friends of the narrator who was a businessman) were present:

Narrator: Onye obuna ma na Ikwerre bu na ana Igbo ka fa si gbadata eba
Every one knows that Ikwerres came down here from Igboland.....

Bar customer: Eeeeh...we know now, oro oru k’unu bu. Anyi lefulu unu elefu, i bia eba ikolu anyi nonsense
Yeeah! Of course we know, weren’t you guys just slaves. We sold you for cheap, and you have the audacity to come here tell narrate to us your stupid stories....

Narrator: Anam ege ge nti. Onwelu nke ima..biko kamu na akogidi akuko mu na ako...as ifu na gi no mgbe nne nnama

narrative was offered in the context of an evening drinking-bar discussion, at the end of a frustrating day of field work, and at the moment when the writer was resigned to a failure to obtain critical information from a collaborator. It actually came about during an argument about Ikwerre/Izhon hostilities, about their related histories in the eastern Delta areas surrounding present day Port Harcourt, and in the presence of a few Kalabari patrons, who did not challenge him, but seemed to concur.

Ikwerre Igbo, is only comprehensible to a northern Igbo speaker with a lot of straining (as say a person from Oxford England or from Vermont New Hampshire might have trouble understanding rural Scottish speech). Most Ikwerre’s however have learned to speak a variety of more central sounding Igbo. In the context of the bar, in which many of his audience were more northerly Igbo (the Izhon’s present spoke Igbo fluently, and had lived as far afield as Nkwerre and Nsukka in upland Igboland), the narrator entered the debate speaking this non Ikwerre Igbo.

The Ikwerre are an ethnic group who share many similarities with the Igbo, and whose language is in fact a dialect of Igbo (no different from Awka Igbo than is say Abakaliki Igbo. Generally however, they do not like to refer to themselves as Igbos, a result perhaps of the experiences of the Nigerian civil war. Ikwerres settlements border that of the Izhon in and around the Port Harcourt area.
Am I listening to your idle speech?. Aren’t you just an ignoramus? Let me be, to tell the story I have started...or were you also there this man’s mother was telling me this story...were you? (to the customer whose mother told the story) Am I lying?...am I lying?

Bar customer (whose mother was narrator): Obu eziokwu ka ina ekwu...rapunu nnam...a.
You tell the truth...just ignore him...

Narrator: Tupu anyi bia eba, Ndi Ijo bu so uno ata ka fa ma alu. Imanu na nkwu na ngwo julu be fa, andi na mmili na ado na ana oge obuna. Nya fa bia fa alugobesia nya n’otosi...square-square, mana kamana aru ya na ana ya bu kwa ofu igu na afifia afu ka fa jibu alu uno. N’oge afu ka ofu onye Igbo ana akpo Ejiofor...okwa afa nya?!...ehe, Ejiofor ji si Ossomari we gbadata na akuku be fa-a. Odi mu ka onwelu ochu o gbulu na be fa, asi Ossomari we chupu ya.

Before we came here [to the coastal delta], the Ijo [Izhon] knew only how to build frame and mat type houses. You know of course that palm oil and raffia palm trees are abundant in their land, and the land is always water logged. In building therefore they built square houses on stilts, but the walls and floor were all made of palm trunks and frond. It was then that an Igbo man named Ejiofor...was that his name?...yes?!....Ejiofor came down from Ossomari. I think she said that he committed some taboo violation, and Ossomari people chased him away...

Ka’oputaa eba-a we si nobu etua ka oya esi lu uno nke nya. Aja ulo koji luba ya bu uno. Olusia nga bia tebe ya etebe ka fa si eme be fa... tesia nga mebe ya decorati. Ma ndi Ikwerre...oo, ma ndi mba mmiri...oo, onye obuna abia na agba ya nkiri, obu fa so mma n’anya. Owebulu na onye chozia ilu uno ofu, osi n’oya adi ka nke Ejiofor luu. Okwanu etua ka ndi Ijo na ndi Ikwerre silu bidu ludebe uno ata, bido luba uno ka Igbo si alu.

When he came down to these parts, he told (members of the place in which he was newly settled) that it was in this way that he was to build his own house. He started to build it in clay much to everyone’s amazement. And he finished building it then started to smooth and polish it like they did in his hometown. Once he finished this, he started decorating it. Not only Ikwerres, but even also Izhon people all came to gaze at it, it looked so beautiful to them. Thus it was that anyone who wanted to build a new house, wanted it to look like Ejiofor’s. That, you know,
is how Izhon people and Ikwerre people commenced not to build thatch houses, and started to build like the Igbo do.

This narrative seems to achieve the status of oral tradition, even though others present, urbanites all, were by their attention unfamiliar with it. It relates events that occurred well before the period of our study, and perhaps in the eighteenth century, since recent memory does not recollect that the Izhon or the Ikwerre once did not build clay adobe houses, though they certainly did also build thatch ones. Nevertheless, and despite the fact that as history the narrative is not as descriptive as we might wish, its very retention of the memory of the change, and its characterization of change in terms of appearance (beauty, polish, gaze), provides further evidence of the cultural recognition of the signification applicable to building. Moreover, the building is not represented as resulting from any changed social circumstance, nor even as resulting from the imposition of the will of a powerful individual leader of an invading warrior race. Rather, Ejiofor, a migrant, influences and constitutes cultural change, by insisting on building in materials (and in a style) considered new. Traditionalist theory would in fact make it highly unlikely that a member of a society, let alone one whose existence depends on the goodwill of his host town, would have influence enough to force a society to bend easily to non-conformist challenges of a foreigner. The buildings to be investigated in the main body of the text here, must therefore be understood within this context, imbued as it was with changeability, the recognition of genius, freedom to be innovative, the desire to emulate and be competitive, and finally the expectation that all these characteristics and processes are normal. That is, the narrative effuses a sense of the admiration of the beautiful, and the desire to follow
it, rather than of the new as taboo, and as something that threatens social fabric.

Because this narrative does leave us with a vague historical framework (the 1750s perhaps), one is rightly suspicious of an attempt to characterize the twentieth century architecture of the near-coastal southeast as unchanging, in the way that many texts written in the 1920s and 1930s, and even of the 1950s might do. At the same time, these texts might be forgiven because their authors were typically in their fields only a brief moment. It might be supposed then that they were forced to sum up an architectural culture from the little they were able to observe of it during a brief visit. That is, one might parallel the lack of historical depth in this writing, with the reality of the restriction under which its authors worked, and which did not allow the possibility of appreciating the transformation over time of what might appear at first to be traditional. It may even be possible to argue that, had they been able to observe the Ejiofor architectural transformation, the change in style which seems to have so powerfully affected the local populations, would have been lost on them. That is, it might be expected that they would have remained oblivious to this difference, and might not have been persuaded away from the very same conclusions they have reached.

Interestingly, and as suggested previously, the very buildings that the early writers of the colony shows his readers, exhibit the changes that are denied in the text. Below, some of them are represented as further challenges to the previous perceptions of them.
An Mbari Structure at Oratta ca.1895

Recently, critic and writer Chinua Achebe, whose own text *Things Fall Apart* might be read as a response to Conrad’s preoccupations in *Heart of Darkness*, posits the Oratta Igbo institution known as mbari as one of the ideas around which ‘Igbo traditional’ identity is hung (Cole and Aniakor [1984]). An architectural festival of sorts, mbari and its related buildings, have received the attention of those who had possessed the technological means to record them, from as early as the interest that seems indicated by Whitehouse’s photographs and commentary of 1904 to the discourses of more recent scholars. Although this art form appears uniquely to be, as far as we have evidence, at least a late nineteenth century phenomenon, it nevertheless occurs fully within the ideological universe of customary non-Christian Igbo religious belief. Like the three other buildings described in this section, mbari are relatively small structures (fig. 131). Although they have been observed grouped in a compound, the footprint of each one seems hardly ever to exceed twenty-five square meters (i.e each side rarely exceeds five meters).

It is interesting that all the main characteristics of mbari as a building type appear to have been formulated by the time the photograph was taken. This suggests that the tradition predates the turn of the century by at least some twenty years, given the time in which one might expect such a culture to be fully formed subsequent to a hypothetical initial origin (invention). For what might then be seen as the realization of its fully developed aesthetic, the mbari’s stylized figures depicting the Goddess Ala along with her children may be


668 Cole (1975).
noted, as may the incorporation of various anthropomorphic figures both real and imagined in scenes which portray the terror of Ala’s wrath, or of dangerous animals devouring distressed human victims. Mbari aesthetic had by this time involved the use of geometrically generated, painted decorative panels on the structure’s surfaces, and the piercing of the mud surfaces by shallow, circular depressions (fig. 132). Further, though the 1903 photograph contains little obvious reference to the world beyond Igboland, the 1904 mbari which may nevertheless be older than the 1903 one does acknowledge the presence of the European in contemporary Igbo universe. Specifically, it represents the normal mode by which the European travelled these parts in the earlier colonial period, namely the Hollywood popularized caravan train, complete with porters, gun-slinging pipe-smoking soldiers and the obligatory head of the Mission lying comfortably in his hammock transported by carriers. However, the representation and the form of its incorporation is clearly narrative. The figure of the deity, seated on a horse is set perpendicular to the direction in which the train travels (fig. 133). Ala is therefore witness to the traversal of her realm by the European, but seems (if her elevated placement is anything to judge by) securely in control. In fact, the representation even suggests that Ala has willed the European presence amongst her people, further proof perhaps of her generosity.

Whatever the case, it is clear that many of the mbari structure’s characteristics which defy an easy categorization

69 It is known that in the late 19th century, it was not uncommon for communities to vie with each other for the chance of persuading European traders or missionaries to establish settlements amongst them, apparently for the advantage of increased commercial opportunities that such a presence might bring.
as traditional, presented challenges to the assumptions that may have been made, to the extent that it has been found necessary to separate it off from the other south eastern Nigerian buildings with which it might otherwise share the traditionist label. Given that is the properties assumed in defining the indigenous in architecture, and faced with the fact that innovation rather than stasis seems to have been the essence of mbari, the latter's architecture has been considered extraordinary by its scholars and commentators who had otherwise shown little interest in other 'indigenous' buildings of the region. Rather than confirm the inadequacy of the paradigm Tradition as currently constituted, the discovery that mbari does not conform to tradition's markers, seems to have lead only to the supposition that it is exceptional.

In scholarly writing on mbari, it is furthermore not surprising to discover the avoidance of a sustained engagement with this particular building (the earliest recorded examples of it), and with a concentration instead on the transformations which occur in mbari artistic practice in the

670 Achebe's positing mbari as a central icon of Igbo traditionality of course goes against this grain, though interestingly his own claim is less likely to be true. That is, unless one is prepared to claim that every laterite-clay building with sculpted figures utilized in religious settings must be counted as mbari, his particular claim must be understood more for its politics, than for its basis in historical knowledge. Most Igbo sub-groups in fact do not appear ever to have practiced mbari.

671 George T. Basden's 1938 Niger Ibos for example devotes a chapter to the subject, but shows no comparable aesthetic interest in other architectural artifacts, save for the building's relevance to a functionalist description of society. Similarly, Amaury Talbot's 1927 work Some Nigerian Fertility Cults, devotes three chapters to mbari, but does not engage any other form of architectural expression. Of the writer more accurately thought of as a commentator, reference is made to Rev. Fr Sporndli's brief theoretical essay on mbari (Sporndli, J.I. [1942-45:891-893]).

672 Of course mbari is exceptional in terms of its actual raison d'être, and in terms of the density of the relationships it inheres between sculpture and architecture. However, the exceptionality referred to here is the one that recognizes the fact that mbari encouraged architectural innovation, and the constant introduction of new ideas and elements.
1930s and subsequently. Clearly, this is in part driven by the availability of substantially larger sources of information for this later period, and by the easily recognized modernizing aspects of the mbari structures of that moment. Here, the focus is centered instead on the mbari gallery photographed by A.A. Whitehouse dating from 1903 and 1904, because it was important to indicate that a custom which prioritized its own changeability and its own nature as architecture, already existed from the very earliest days of contact between Uratta (Oratta)- or Owerri-Igbos and Europeans. That is, given that the Uratta are not coastal inhabitants, the representations should indicate these structures’ semantic universe in as close to the vernacular as they have been observed thence up to the 1960s when the custom of building (and performing) mbari then appears to have died out as a social practice. It should be noted, moreover, that the Mbari described above is the earliest of any of the buildings represented visually in this dissertation.

Admittedly, because the subliminal role of mbari as a meaningful structure was to represent the Uratta Igbo person’s relationship to the world at any particular moment, it might be easy then to suggest that one need not be surprised by the building’s experimental agenda, when it is considered that the relationship with this world was in flux at precisely this moment. Nevertheless, given the tradition’s subsequent

673 It ought to be noted in this regard that a number of European writers could not conceive of the tradition’s formation in the absence of the influence of European coastal culture (see for example Basden op. cit., p.98, and Jones [1984].)

674 Think for example that this is the period following fast on the heels of the Aro Expedition and of the expansion therefore of British Imperialism. It also is the moment when Christian missionary projects from Bonny and Onitsha were beginning to make significant inroads in Igbo land. Finally, this is the period in which commercial activity reached a feverish pitch, driven it seems by the demand on (continued...)
development, mbari structures represent this reflection of the changing world of which it was part, not just through the narrativity of the figures by which it is peopled, but by the very style in which the building itself was fashioned. This in itself suggests that a search for the will and the desire for invention within building which might at first appear customary, may yield unexpected insights. It might therefore suggest the possibility that Igbo architecture itself, speaking much more broadly, may have been formed within a transformational culture that would contest any serious intention to lend it traditionality.

Moreover, were such insights to be derived, it might indicate that the picture of the uniqueness of mbari in this regard, is likely to be fictional, as the boundary between what is supposedly stable and traditional, and what is dynamic and a product of Europeans in Africa, is difficult to define perceptually, and probably was non-existent in reality. For this reason, there may be other kinds of buildings in Igbo architectural culture, apart from mbari, that do offer similar challenges to architectural studies, and these, as will be seen, vary from those that were technologically closely related to the mbari houses (and therefore pose the exact same challenge), to those whose appearance might seem more European than African, and which for the same reason is assumed both to be the very opposite of the traditional and (as such) totally disconnected from it.

"(...continued)"

the coast, for the palm produce of the more inland peoples. The Uratta were of course players in this historical scenario.
An Obi (or Lineage Temple House) in Awkunanaw (Okunano).

Other traditionist buildings do in fact offer similar challenges, and these, as will be seen, vary from those that were closely related to the mbari houses (technologically speaking) and which therefore pose the exact same challenge, to those structures whose appearance might seem non-customary. It is surprising in a sense that Achebe chose mbari, and not obi as the object in which the idea of Igbo-ness was inscribed with greatest density, given the ubiquity which can be defined for the latter (as will be here subsequently). That is, while mbari has little resonance as a word in the Owerri-Igbo language, obi on the other hand has a multiplicity of meanings (and is recalled in daily ritual enactments) only one of which in fact refers to an architectural typology. Still, as a building type, it offers at least as much physicality as mbari does, and could have served the same purpose more persuasively.

Obi Nwanachi (fig. 134), in Umuotogbona, Awkunanaw, and obi Osieme (fig. 135), in Awka (Ebenebe) belong (both being obis) to a class of buildings whose typology is perhaps more entrenched in the reproduction of everyday culture than were mbari houses. They would therefore once have been the most common and widespread building type, and represent, for many reasons, a typology that has been resistant to erasure. They therefore also offers a wider range of examples from which to select a case for study.

675 Indeed, Ogbechie’s hypothesis suggests that mbari’s ultimate origin is the Edo Kingdom of Benin, or that even if it is not, undoubtable linguistic commonalities connect its practices (and the language of its ritual) to that of Benin, or of western Igbo migrants who once came under Benin’s suzerainty (Sylvester Ogbechie [1994, unpublished]).

676 This particular obi is known to the present writer only through dorochowski’s photographs.
It is fortunate that clay and thatch buildings that ceased to exist over forty years ago perhaps, can be named in the precise manner in which the ones above have just been. This certainly allows it to be insisted that despite their apparent simplicity, each such building indeed had its own individual character, one that would be easily distinguished by members of the community. In a sense however, any obi of the same period could stand in for these ones, at least for the purposes aimed at in this chapter. That is, whatever the layout of a Northern Igbo compound is, within it is normally located a structure placed in the middle of the compound known as the obi (Aniakor [1983], Basden [1938]:153, Dmochowski [1990]) and Onwuejeogwu[1981]). It has been understood as a male space, though women are not excluded from entry, and though they occasionally (when circumstances dictate) even take charge of its functioning (see next case below). Essentially, it would be more accurate to think of the obi simply as the space in which the head of a household, whether male of female, eats his or her meals, but most importantly, in which he or she receives visitors. Here also is the shrine located over which offerings are made to one’s ancestors, as well as to the Igbo almighty God, Chukwu (Arinze [1970]). The obu (or obi, depending on dialect) therefore is the most important symbolic element in the Igbo compound house of

677 In the era of Christian consolidation, the obi appears to have been erased from the architectural landscape (but not apparently from the oral discursive one). In recent times however, a building of the same name and general function has returned to the architect designed houses that are located today throughout the rural landscape. This new structure functions in ways that bare a similarity to the pre-modern forms of its namesake, with the most significant absence being the iru anya mau or backdrop to the sacrificial altar, which functions as the surface separating the corporeal world from the realm of the spirits.

678 Women may inherit Obu’s under special circumstances, though this usually engenders conflict within the kin-group.
certain localities⁶⁷⁹, signifying the presence of history, rootedness in a place, legitimate authority et cetera. Its absence in a household in such a locality, customarily implies the death of family and even of lineage, and such an absence therefore ushers in the possibility of an existence in a state of meaninglessness.

The Obi's architecture
It is important to describe a particular example of the obi as architecture, and to attempt an understanding of it in terms of the language, narrative and oral text by which it is understood conceptually. Both obi Osieme and obi Nwanachi are rectangular buildings, though the former had been remodelled⁶⁸⁰. Both structures would consist of a public area, and a private apartment containing sleeping room, and store. The public area is usually open, surrounded only by a low wall and plinth (as is obi Nwanachi).

Only obi Osieme's interior view is recorded. Just off-center of the middle of its inner (longer) wall, are a set of elaborately carved panels, perforated with triangles, in front of which is located an altar. This is the iru anya mmmuo in front of which offerings are made to ancestors throughout the day, as visitors come and go in the course of normal daily social interaction.

⁶⁷⁹ This is not necessarily true for all of Igboland. Most tellingly, the Igbo areas that practice Mbari, and the areas that surround it, do not appear to make much of the idea when it is present at all.

⁶⁸⁰ The clay walls of this obi have been redone, apparently plastered over in cement plaster, but seeming to retain much of the layout of an older obi, and certainly utilizing all its interior decor, and shrine paraphernalia.
Externally, this obi Nwanachi is more typical (it had not been remodelled by the time the photograph was taken), seeing as it is an airy shelter, with minimal interference to its transparency. When such an interference occurs as it does in obi Osieme, it is in the form of a screen or set of screens, on which various symbols and ornamentation is lavished. However, strict rules governed the acquisition and incorporation of such screens in an obi. Each screen was an emblem of the conferment of a Title. To understand the role of these screens in the obi’s architecture; to comprehend the emblematic significance of the obi, a momentary digression is demanded here, on which a focus on Naming, that is on the reproduction (and social representation) of identity in Igbo culture is addressed.

Literature exists on the importance of names in African society (Wieschoff [1941]), but rarely does it communicate adequately what gravity and pervasive significance the acts of Naming have for African peoples. One way of grasping this significance in Igbo society in particular, is to indicate that several levels of naming existed in Igbo society and indeed continue so to be maintained in the contemporary period. Each level seems to be about how one is to be recognized socially, and as an individual. For children the name usually relates in some way with the history of one’s particular parents, with important events in their lives, or more commonly, with an existential and philosophical interpretation of the world.

As soon as one reaches adulthood, an adult name, which shall from this point onwards be called a Praise Name is usually
taken up, sometimes informally, but usually by way of a ceremony, in which the name is publicly declared. As one continues to mature, other levels of praise name may be sought, each one involving significant expenditure in its declaration, and each granted only by higher and higher individuals of authority in the structure of social power, which, running parallel to the government of the Nigerian state, is still largely based on a real or mythological kinship.

For men, the bestowing of a further praise name may move beyond the legitimacy and sanction granted by one of the various men’s association or of the village group, to that granted only by the various levels of Titled Men’s clubs. At the highest rung, we find (in some but not all Igbo speaking areas) the Ozo society, a club whose membership includes the Obi or Igwe of the town, in which he is its

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A woman would, typically, start with the name given to her soon after she was born (of course), but move later in life, usually after successfully starting a family of her own, to accepting a given title; the first title in a series to which she may add, and which increasingly are granted for other recognitions beyond child rearing, such as success in her own trade or business. These are usually granted by a women’s club or association of which she would already be an active member, and from whom she would only receive the name in recognition of her contributions to the larger society. Beyond the first associational title, she may be granted higher ones (praise names and /or titles), if she (and sometimes her husband) decides to afford the expensive ceremonies involved.

These positions represent the highest authority of the town, and may be thought of as the King or Chief of the town. The Obi in this case must be distinguished from the obi temple-house. In this text, the first letter of the former (the office) is always capitalized, while the word itself is italicized (or underlined) when the building is referred to.
final authority, and from which is drawn the individuals who hold political office in his governing council. At this level of naming, the individual may also be given a title, which usually implies the holding of political office within the court based traditional government of the town.∗∗

It should be noted perhaps that, at the higher and more prestigious levels of name taking, the name may come without a political title. This class of titles was taken by men of considerable means, and did not necessarily result from a generally recognized contribution to community well being. It usually involved a marking of the body, especially the face, with a deep set of parallel cuttings, which heal to raised furrows, which also served as an instant marker of status and importance, especially useful to individuals who might have had occasion to travel beyond the areas in which they were known personally. Bearers of this scarification are generally known as an Ichie or Mgburichi.∗∗

Similarly, one may obtain a political title, so-called chieftaincy title, without necessarily choosing, usually because of the costs that would be involved, to be also bestowed with a higher level praise name. Important chieftaincy titles in Northern Igboland include Oba, Owelle, Whum, and Ide.... these form the inner cabinet of the Igwe or Obi’s council, and are drawn from members of the Ozo society whose members are known as Ichie...or the titled ones, men


∗∗∗ It is interesting to note in passing that during the trans Atlantic Slave trade, part of the reluctance of some ship’s captains towards loading Igbo slaves, derives from an experience in which an enslaved Mgburichi man remained indignant of his fate to the extent that his penchant for fomenting rebellion, put the ship’s security at constant risk.
supposedly of great moral authority, who are generally highly respected.

But, this level of naming must be left here, in order to return momentarily to the ordinary at-birth-given name. Obiefuna is a fairly common first name amongst Igbos of the contemporary states of Anambra and Enugu. The -efuna ending infers a prayer that something of value not be lost, in this case the 'obi': that is the name Obiefuna may be translated as 'may the obi not be lost', an expression which perhaps more than any other, captures the central understanding of existential purpose that Igbo gnostics arrived at.

If it is already understood by the reader from our previous description what the obi itself is as an architectural type, it may not be exactly clear why (or what it means to ask within the context of Igbo personal philosophy that) the obi not be lost. Is it possible that a culture be concerned with the loss of a building type to the extent that this implies?..or is it directing us at something other than the building itself? What else in other words might the obi be said also to represent?

One tonal rendition of the word obi, would be understood as the heart or mind; and would come with many of the connotations that the word also has in English. The other tonal rendition, and the one referred to in Obiefuna, means hearth; the center of family. But the hearth seems to have had a greater significance for the Igbo than it did for the pre-Christian Anglo-Saxon. It is a symbol of the continuity of a lineage, conceived as consisting of long departed and remembered ancestor, with whom the living are in constant daily ritual communication. This continuity is signified by
the ofo, a staff of authority, handed down through multiplication, from the family head in one generation to that in the following generations, and accompanied by such elaborate structures of signification, as to make it seem at times, as if the most important loss that could befall a person, is for the connection to be broken, either through not having children before one dies, through never having married before death, or through migration or family dispersal under circumstances which would mean that at least a periodic return to the ancestral hearth is precluded; Once, such circumstances would typically include unresolved disputes, banishment due to the violation of taboo, war, or enslavement, but today encompasses emigrating to America, marrying a non-Igbo, or imprisonment for a major crime.

The importance of this concept to Igbos may be further understood, when it is realized that obi is materialized in space. The Igbo house, outside the modern urban context, is usually characterized by a walled compound, an entrance gate, a number of single story structures dispersed around the edges of the compound and containing store rooms, kitchens and the wife or wives and children’s rooms.

From the elaborations above, it is not as difficult to imagine therefore that the more titles a family head acquires, the more screens an obi may have, and it may therefore be inferred that the less transparent to the world outside become the activities that go on within it. An untitled man may not commission, let alone install, a screen in the family obi. Upon entry to any family compound therefore, the status and achievement of the family, kin-group or lineage is easily read and understood by the visitor. The external view is also characterized by an array of support, sometimes distinguished
as piers and pillars, but often only as pillars, which may then be grouped together or arranged such as to emphasize the entrance or the location of a shrine.

The internal arrangement of support systems is also noteworthy. In the middle of the obi, one typically finds three columns, necessary to keep the roof up, in the absence of a tie, which in say an American truss, would stop the tendency for the two sloping sides of the triangle to just fall flat. Not everything about its structure, however, makes sense from the point of view of statics, and therefore begs another interpretation. There are never more than four columns in the middle, which implies (considering the constraints of working within commonly available timbers and adobe) a limit to the size of an acceptable obi. Of these central columns, one of them is always emphasized, either by being oversized or by resting on an unusually large base. The columns each have a particular name, oketele, otogbolu, osiyi and otunte. In the architecture of the Nri town of Enugu Ukwu, the large column, which is emphasized in one form or another all over Igbo speaking Nigeria, is called the Ide.

The more important titles of Igbo nze na ozo has been detailed previously. One of them was Ide, the same title attached to the large column. It is therefore clear that an analogy is made between the Ide, as stable and important carrier of social responsibility, and the column which is made more of than structure demands, in the carrying of the obi. It may also be that the names of the other columns have significance, possibly as titles that have long since ceased to be current, or remembered, but this could not be verified. Nor could I have explained satisfactorily, the reason behind four’s being the limit, save for being offered proverbs which implied that
the number three and the number four had a mystical significance in Igbo religion. Certainly, the four day week, each day named after one of the four market deities may be a source, since it is around these four days that the stability and economic viability of Igbo life has been built.

The obu or obi it is then seen is not just important for all the reasons we had mentioned previously, but is further, a physical model of the Igbo idea of the ideal society. The king, or Igwe as sky (the word igwe is also the word for sky, and in this usage does not change its intonation), or roof protects the family. He is supported in this task by the pillars of society[686], titled men and women, in the center of whom are the four advisors of the king, themselves led by their most important member, the Ide. The ideal organization of society is here memorialized in the form and vocabulary of the physical obu.[687] And, though from the examples we have in this period it appears that save forty those instances rare though they are when the obi is under the charge of a woman, to be the one building type that eschewed innovation at the time, there ought to be no doubt whatsoever regarding its architecturality. It seems obvious that on the basis of its typology, its symbolism, its textuality and self-conscious aesthetic, the obi indicates the recognition of architecture, as opposed to building, within a once-customary Igbo universe.

[686] The phraseology of this English expression would suggest that Western architectural vocabulary may be allegorized in the language in which society itself is apprehended.

[687] Like all ideals, this is rarely achieved. The political reality of any village or town will often involve disputations of the Ezeship, on the one hand, and struggles over the occupancy of Chieftaincy titles. Occasionally, one also hears of attempts by powerful women to inherit the Obu itself. This architecture is therefore a precariously balanced one.
In other words, that the attempt to read buildings for specific meaning, especially when as in the Church at Enugu Ukwu such inscription is supertextual, is preempted in tradition. Moreover, this indicates that the discussion of these buildings within the analytical framework normally reserved for buildings whose architecturality the scholar is used to recognizing, has a validity that the locality shores up in precise ways within its own ‘traditional’ culture of building.

Moreover, in relation to the mbari buildings described just previously, it may be admitted, at least for the moment, that the architecture, if not necessarily the contents) of the domestic (i.e. northern Igbo) obi building appears to take on an opposite view of the modern world, remaining as far as the evidence that seems to be available might suggest, the one space from which suggestions of the transformed world around it, was excluded.

**A Woman’s Meeting House at Nnokwa.**

It was indicated earlier that a woman may, under certain (and special) circumstances occupy the headship of family. Acting therefore as guardian to an absent male’s family, she may that is possess and operate from such a location. An important woman of the community who still functioned nevertheless as a spouse to an important male personage may have her own meeting house, or alternatively, she may erect an obi (the community only sees this as being held in trust) for her late husband’s family if she is temporarily occupying its
headship. Though more typically the obi is all of a residence, meeting house, shrine or temple house for the male head of a family, it seems that Igbo women may also be its temporary occupiers.

Known to have been erected by a female patron, the meeting house at Nnokwa (see fig. 1) might serve as an example of this kind of occupancy. Like the other buildings to which we compare it, this meeting house is known to us only from photographs, since like the others, it is no longer extant. Of this group, the meeting house at Nnokwa is however the one photographed last, in this case by Chike Aniakor, as recently as 1966. The other buildings were recorded variously by A.A. Whitehouse in 1904, by the British Resident and Government anthropologist Amaury Talbot in 1910s and 1920s, and by G.I. Jones in the 1930s.

The color photograph of the meeting house indicates that it is a small, red-laterite clay structure, roofed in thatch. It has two entries only, defined by non-barriered gaps in a dwarf wall, both gaps of which are located at the front of the building. The space into which one enters, also appears to be rectangular. The building seems to have no rear windows or doors. Judging by the clues at the edge of the photograph, the house is located within a walled enclosure, which in all

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688 One may imagine for example a woman past child bearing age, whose husband has died before she has any male offspring, or if she is widowed while the male children are still very young. In the former circumstance, she may rightfully and legally act as husband, marry other women, and have them produce children for her late husband's own line. Acting to all intents and purposes as male, she may also erect an obi were it agreed (for what ever reason) that her family now merited such independence (Amadiume op. cit.).

689 Reference will be made to the old entrance gate to the Igwe's palace at Nnobi. This was in fact photographed by the writer in 1977, and thus after the women's meeting house at Nnokwa. It is however not central to the discussion here.
likelihood indicates that it is located within an individual’s house compound, rather than outside in a public space. As such (and since Igbo women do not normally occupy meeting houses within compounds), the owner may well be a titled woman of some kind, or as has been implied previously may simply be the head of a household who has therefore become empowered to herself marry other women as wives\textsuperscript{690}.

Initially, there appears to be nothing striking about the building. However, on a closer inspection, one may observe elements of it that beg a question or two. Most particularly, the front elevation and its decorative scheme, which clearly captured the photographer’s attention, calls for comment. The structure’s two side walls are clearly separated from the front wall by a small gap, and by the extension of the leading ends of the former beyond the plane defined by the surface of the front wall. Moreover, the two side walls, are further distinguished from the front wall by the former’s darkened patina (compared to the brighter reddish-brown color of the front wall). The color difference appears to be due to a difference in age, suggesting that the front elevation has been remodelled.

Herbert Cole and Chike Aniakor who photographed and wrote about the building, indicate it was built in 1923. However, the evidence of this photograph, though it does not necessarily dispute such a dating, suggests that that date refers to the patined areas (three quarters or more of the

\textsuperscript{690} Ifeyinwa Amadiume, happily provides detailed accounts of this for the small town of Nnobi, only a five or so kilometers from Nnokwa itself in which the photograph by Aniakor was taken. See Amadiume (1983): ‘Male Daughters’ and ‘Female Husbands’: A different gender reality in an Igbo society. London, University of London. Unpublished doctoral dissertation.
structures perimeter), and not to the front itself. This is further confirmed by the difference in their decorative schemes. The orthodoxy of the patined wall’s ornamentation is confirmed in the record of another building; a photograph taken some fifty years earlier of an entrance gate (fig. 136) built perhaps only ten years or so before the meeting house. The similarity between the ornamental scheme of the side walls of the Women’s Meeting House when this is compared to the ornamentation of the piers defining the entrance gate is striking.

In the women’s house, we note that the decorative effect is created by a series of interlocking horizontal and vertical I-shaped forms impressed into the surface of the wall’s ending. This is exactly the same as the decoration (admittedly mixed in this case with other motifs), on part of the entrance gate (fig. 137) at the Igwe Ezeokoli’s Palace at Nnobi (demolished in 1989) photographed by the writer in 1978, but which itself dates back to the 1930s (some of the palace buildings form part of the original research work presented in a later chapter). Such stylistic longevity might indicate that this motif, at least for the areas around Nnobi, may be customary, and may have origins as far in the first decade of the century or most probably even earlier.

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691 To say for example that it may indicate only a difference of eight years or so, between the original building, and the remodelling of the front (thus that the whole thing may represent an early and a late twenties project) seems unconvincing, as the difference in the colors would probably have been indistinguishable forty-something odd years later.

692 Nnobi is a small town not far from Nnokwa, the place in which the woman’s house is located, and both houses of which are located in the Idemili Local Government Area of the Nigerian state of Anambra. The photograph was taken a decade or so after Aniakor’s photograph of the Women’s meeting house at Nnokwa.
Without doubt, some particular aspects of the composition are observed in the tradition for which we have credible evidence of its establishment by the first decade of the century. First, the vertical, skipping, semi-circular clay-formed element that constitutes the edge of the doorless door-jamb, are similar in form to the wooden mullions that separate the carved doors and screens that surround the Igbo obi⁶⁹³ or temple-house (see example illustrated earlier on in this chapter). It is probable that its significance in both situations is related. A second notable characteristic is found at the lower portions of the two end dwarf-walls of the meeting house. Though each of the panels is different, they are formed in the same reversed-relief manner that, in terms of a language of form, arrests the development of the embedded shapes and forms at the plane of the containing wall, once this surface is encountered. That is, the sculpturality of the elements seems intended to suggest a plasticity that is expressible only behind the outer surface of the wall. This stylistic quality is exactly the one we observe of an entrance gateway photographed by Based in 1919, but of which (judging by the extent to which the unprotected sacrificial mounds in front of it are weathered and eroded) it is reasonable to assume a construction date that occurred two years previously (at the very least). Both the geometric and floral motifs of the structure photographed in 1919, are formed behind the walls surface, making them perceptible as fully formed three dimensional shapes, that have been left as sheared-off sections, by the intervention of the walls surface.

Nothing in either gate-house however resembles the elements that are found in the central, and more recently installed

⁶⁹³ Depending on dialect, this also enunciated as Obi, and as Ovu.
section of the meeting house. Of course, the scarcity of examples of house decoration this early in the century does mean that we cannot be overly conclusive about what follows, but, it seems clear that many of the elements in this composition may not be discovered in the customary.

To illustrate this point, one may note a determined difference in the ornamental compositions placed both on the top of these end dwarf walls, as well as over the totality of the wider, centralized section of the wall. Here, the forms, clearly three dimensional, are allowed to break out of, or into the volume of the rectanguloid walls that support them.

On studying the forms of this relief sculpture more closely, they are found to resemble the mechanical parts of a machine, more specifically the moving parts and mounting of an engine. The central sculpture for example seems to model the wheel axle (or the cam-shaft) of a motor-car engine or similar machine such as say a locomotive’s steam-engine. It may perhaps even be derived from a smaller mechanical unit such as the moving parts of palm kernel oil-extracting machines. There are ways of also seeing the sculpted figure in question as being a form of an early machine-gun, the figure’s disc-like element representing such a weapon’s circular magazine. Finally, it may also represent the upper part of a foot-operated mechanical sewing-machine. The disc-like part of the sculpture may refer for example to the rotating upper spindle of such a machine. This last seems the least likely however, simply for the fact that the relief lacks the inter-penetration of space and solid which is typical of the sewing machine’s overall form; unless the suggestion is made that the more filigree structure entailed by such an accurate
representation might have been deemed too fragile for the trafficked location of the entrance.

The significance of this conversion of a foreign object into a local icon for the building's female commissioner is necessarily of importance. Indeed either one of the three objects would have been meaningful at this moment for the lives of Igbo women.

What is ultimately significant about the relief sculptures, if one assumes that this indeed is an element taken from the European universe, is that forms from an Other's non-architectural universe, are here appropriated into the local universe of architectural composition. Later on in this chapter, in the context of the other 'customary' buildings explored below, a more conclusive assessment will be made of the extent to which its appropriative practices are shared with, and representative of similar processes indicated in certain other 'customary' and 'non-customary' buildings of the early twentieth century.

An Ikwerre Domestic Altar.
Given the importance attached to coastal communities in the early chapters, it might be fair here to include buildings that existed in the same period in those communities that had a much closer contact with the European universe, for one surely would expect to observe an even more judicious use of the things of its world in local architecture. To enable this, three architectural scenes from communities in which such a contact existed in various degrees are introduced. The first

694 Some like Hugh Clapperton's might prefer the term 'misappropriation'.
scenario is located in Ikwerre-Igboland, the second in Bende, and the third at Nike.

Ikwerre peoples, who speak a dialect of Igbo, inhabit much of the non-Izhon areas north of Okrika, and form the group to whom the first missionary projects beyond Izhonland would have been directed. The altar presented here would therefore have been produced in this context, and in a sense would have offered the point at which resistance to the idea of Christianity might be expected to occur. This is because in the Ikwerre region the altar, normal as a domestic element in customary Igbo society at the time (typically in the obi building), is obviously installed in the household of a non-convert (in this case therefore one is restricted to an interior). It was photographed in 1924 by Amaury Talbot. Normally dedicated to chi\(^{695}\) and to ones lineage ancestors, it would have functioned as a sort of personal altar at which the usually male but permittedly female head of a family\(^{696}\) would normally minister regularly, in order to ensure the person’s chi 's continued well being (or goodwill). That we have only a photograph of the interior testifies to the tendency, which continued to exist at the time, for the European traveller’s mind and attention to be easily arrested.

\(^{695}\) The idea of chi is not easy to translate. It might be thought of as the god whom Igbos characterize as a sort of personal and personifying guardian. Many scholars have applied themselves to the analysis of the concepts underlying the idea of ones Chi. They suggest that it effectively consists both the idea of God as one’s own destiny and god as personification of power. According to Aniakor and Cole, "Chi does not translate well into English, although the words god, spirit and spiritual essence are often used. Every person has a Chi, often symbolized by one or more sticks in a small private shrine. An individual acquires his (or her) chi at birth (or reincarnation) through a pact which establishes his character or longevity." This space thus represents the locus of the Igbo person’s attempts to demand supernatural intercession in the affairs of the world.

\(^{696}\) See Amadiume (1984), and Oyeronke Oyewole (1992, unpublished) for the status enjoyed by women as leaders of society in southern Nigeria. The family referred to here is normally non-nuclear, and is often referred to in English as ‘extended’.  

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by cultural products displaying what to its alien observer, was clearly perceived as a grotesque and primitive misappropriation of the Western.

It may however be assumed that the exterior of the particular building which housed the shrine was probably no different from the other domestic buildings which may have existed in its rural context. The uniqueness of the interior clearly lies in the wall against which the raised ritual platform is placed, and in the setting within it of European ceramic bowls. These are positioned according to a roughly rectilinear pattern, surrounded by swirls of pebble-dash like cowrie-shell inlays.

Three kinds of china have been used in the installation. Running horizontally, and at the bottom of the shrine, are a set of plates whose circumference is marked by what appears to be a ring of foliated ornamentation, and in the center of which is a single flower stalk. A second kind of plate is the one whose pattern consists of a set of concentric circles, focused on a centralized and darkened disc. A third set of plates are of a design whose distinguishing feature is the representation of a leafy crop or of a bunch of flowers.

The choice of plates for this particular row favors designs which consist of swirling curves, and given the orientation of the dishes images, the representations of foliage which form the plates subject were either not initially perceived as such, or were not in themselves valued. Its attraction probably lay instead in its resemblance to the existing ornamental traditions such as Uli, which emphasizes line in its composition, and whose aesthetic appears to be based on the free flow of the curvilinear.
Though therefore not in itself invested with some magical power, it is probable that this ‘misappropriation’ of the European in the service of ‘enticing’ or ‘praising’ one’s god employs a strategy of attributing monetary value and luxuriousness to anything European while perhaps not completely decontextualizing the object: this space being after all the place to which one’s personal god comes to be nourished.

An additional indication of the value placed on these ceramic plates, are seen in several views of mbari houses, photographed by Talbot, and published in 1927. These show the same kinds of plate inserted into the centers of a checkerboard-style, diagonally-oriented decoration applied to the structure’s more visible surfaces.

It is interesting to note that both the application of cowrie shells, and separately, the insertion of china into wall surfaces, are forms of ornamentation in Ikwerreland and in most of southeastern Nigeria for which record exists some seven years prior to the photographing of the domestic-interior altar. The indication then is that chinaware was applicable to both interior and exterior surfaces in the period, and that at the time, in fact, little religious value is thought to inhere in the object itself. It simply seems to be a marker of status (Talbot [1916]. See also fig 138).

697 Think for example of the Igbo names Kenechi (thank your chi) and Lotechi (Remember to implore [...or to thank] your chi).

Ovu Bende

Unlike the case for other Igbo-speaking and even Izhon speaking places, a visibly distinctive aspect of the institution of obi in Bende and its region, is that in Bende the community erects men’s meeting houses, obu or ovu, dedicated to serving much larger groups of kin than do the obi buildings previewed above. In some villages, ovu serve the political, ceremonial or ritual gathering of all the adult males of the village. Bende is a substantially important Igbo-speaking town close to Arochukwu, and culturally related both to Arochukwu, to Abriba, to Ohafia, and to Item; all of which belong to a distinctive sub-group within Igbo speaking southern Nigeria. Certain historical links connect them, especially the early contact that they all had (non-coastal peoples though they are) with coastal communities, and therefore with representations of the European world in the form of that world’s commodities. Save for Arochukwu moreover, this region is distinctive for operating a social structure that is based, untypically for most of the rest of south eastern Nigeria, on matriline. It is likely moreover, that it is from an associational function constituted around matriline that the communal ovu (obi) becomes generated.

Though the exterior of the meeting house does not appear imposing to the contemporary viewer, and though it reveals little of its contact with the non-Igbo world, the meeting house’s interior, unfortunately only partially illustrated by Talbot’s ca. 1925 photograph, is elaborately conceived and ornamented (fig. 139). Apparently formed from clay, the building seems to have consisted of a rectangular space

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99 Most typically this contact appears to have been late 18th century and early 19th, and revolved around Okrika, Bonny, and Calabar.
enclosed by high walls, and bordered by built-in rows of benches, probably two parallel rows facing each other, and enclosing a shrine to the village’s real founders or mythical ancestors. Similar buildings were in fact photographed several decades later, and they maintain a similar layout (Dmochowski [1990]:197,200).

The interior surfaces of the obu’s enclosing walls are decorated with a rectilinear schema articulated by a series of vertical grooves sometimes abutting each other checkerboard style. These are contrasted to a diagonal-based series of shallow curved segments which combine to form groups which recall foliage, of which they may be an abstraction. Both of these ornamental characteristics are familiar, at least in terms of their aesthetics of form (granted in a denser manifestation), in the carved screen doors of North- western Igbo buildings, as they are in Izhon sculpture, most easily recognized for example in the nduen Fogbara of the Kalabari Izhon (Horton [1965]: figures 6,7,14, and Barley [1990 ] (See figs. 112 & 113 earlier).

Abutted to these walls, and thus rendering them interpretable as high backs to seats, are the obu’s clay benches, whose form is not as familiar in the context. The seating sags slightly along its extended span. The line of this sag is continued to the benches extremity, where it culminates in two scrolls. And though the spiral as such is not alien to Igbo, Izhon or Efik art (sometimes found to be a stylization of a serpent for example), it is rather unexpected to find the spiral associated in the way this one is to the sagging line of the bench’s form. What it does in fact recall most strikingly are items of European furniture which consist both of a sag and a culmination in a spiral, not untypical of the chaise lounge,
stools and even chairs located in English interiors from about the mid 18th century, up until the late Victorian era. Typically, these would be found in the Smoking Room, the Music Room, the Library, and particularly in the Drawing Room (fig. 140), all spaces which in many ways played a similar role in European society to the men’s house in African society, even if for the last one of the series, the space was considered a preserve of women. The European Drawing Room or some similar room, may have been the source of the bench’s style, and in particular those pieces of furniture within it, which like the c 1770 window stool from Harewood House by the renowned firm of Chippendale (fig. 141), may be compared legitimately with the benches at Bende. This possibility is not as far fetched an idea as it might seem. The merchants of Bende have been involved in trading imported goods from the earliest part of the present century, an activity which would put at least some of its indigenes in direct contact with aspects of European living in the down river coastal town of Calabar. In Calabar itself, even in the context of trade with fellow Africans, opportunities appear to have existed for a person of Bende to take in European furniture and its setting first hand. In an 1862 description of the interior of King Eyo Honesty IV’s palace, Captain Luce who was being shown the town by Honesty tells of the interior of the late King’s house (a building which though he does not describe, seems to have been the high point of Luce’s experience of the town):

The chief point of interest was the palace of the late King. The principal room was filled with European nic-nacks—clocks books pictures furniture & a handsome female statue in bronze. 700

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In addition, Crowther visited Duke Town Calabar in 1872, and writes of a visit to Big Adam Duke's (a chief of Calabar) house that:

[...] his house is a most comfortable one, and lacks not European articles in furnitures [sic] ie of a high order[...].

Bende traders would be likely to have enter such interiors regularly, in the process of conducting their businesses in the town.

Whatever the facts were, it is important, moreover, that it is in the context of male communion with the supernatural (a prime function of the obu), and particularly in the expression of sitting, that the appropriation of the European is inserted. Its significance is perhaps best gauged by the importance of sitting stools in West Africa, varying from the intricately sculpted south-eastern Nigerian and Asante examples where the status of its owner seems to be inscribed in formal complexity, all the way to Fon (the ethnic group which consisted the kingdom of Dahomey examples were, though relatively simple in formal terms, the convergence of ancestral being is believed to be lodged.

Extending therefore the strategy described earlier on for the altar in the Ikwerre village, whereby the wealth and the luxury deserved by God is expressed at the altar, in this building has been created a whole interior which seems to be expressive of the separateness of the ancestral from the contemporary or current, through analogy with the European perceived as equally powerful and other.

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701 CA3, page 2 of 1873 report by Dandeson Crowther of trip from the Niger Mission headquarters (Bonny) to an all missionaries conference held in Gabon.
A Temple and Meeting House at Nike.

Nike is an old inland Igbo market town in the general vicinity of the town of Eke, the latter being the location of the Onyeama mansions which were visited earlier in this work. Being this far inland, it may seem not to belong to the category of near coastal towns and villages on which the section is focused. However, because Nike was reduced following the British conquest to no more than a satellite town of the regional capital of Enugu where the mining of coal deposits commenced in 1911, its own experience of modernity, and its citizens perception of the European world parallels in many respects that of the more southerly placed communities with which this chapter has been involved. Moreover, the building which forms the locus of interest here shares much with the Bende obu, in the sense that it appears to have been a temple-clubhouse, at which a larger group of adult males than is generally the case for Anambra and Awka area Igbos, were expected to attend. Again, no exterior photograph appears to exist for it (fig. 142), probably indicating that the structure’s exterior envelope lacks any abnormal qualities which the photographer would have considered worth recording. The building appears to be both a temple house and perhaps also a meeting house, dedicated to a deity whose identity is unfortunately not noted by the photographer G.I. Jones. Built around 1935, it features a composition whose centerpiece appears to be railway engine and its passenger car, which has been placed on a raised platform. In front of this, and descending from the platform, is a sculptural installation; a representation of electric or telephone transmission lines, in front of which sits (on a director style collapsible chair) a man at a table facing two bottles placed upon it. The figure, in this case (judging by his attire and by the
colonial sun hat which has long since become a symbolic marker), is apparently that of a white colonial officer.

The photograph reveals enough to allow a reconstruction of the larger space into which the building is inserted, and to judge the importance the building may have had for its commissioners. Of first import is the fact that it is roofed in corrugated iron. Corrugated iron was a relatively costly material, of which, the colony apart, only particularly prosperous individuals would afford their own residences such a roof. Roofed in this way, it is clear that the community of owners thought it significant enough to expend the amount that would be involved in its incorporation within the building. The walls surrounding the composition appear to be clay walls, the whole surface of which is covered completely in geometric designs of many kinds. Many of the motifs (such for example as the triangulated grid pattern that one observes in the central upper section of the end of the space), are recognizable in one form or another in the ornamentation of buildings in other parts of south eastern Nigeria, and specifically from the painted decorations of the mbari house from this period and earlier.

Many significant markers appear to surround the conception of the building. Some of these are architectural in nature, but, for the central issues raised by the focus of this inquiry, the critical meanings contained in the space relate to the question of traditionality and of the abhorrence or not of change within the culture of architecture and of building. Judging by the roof-line at the rear gable-end, the window near its apex, and the symmetry of the decoration around this window, the photograph represents the termination of a rectangular enclosure, very close in scale to the obu already
described for the town of Bende. Instead however of the figures that we expect in the Ohaffia obu, or of the sculpted poles of the Bende obu: instead of the iru anya mmuo and its collection of ikenga, ofo and sacrificial instruments by which the functional equivalent in the Igbo world of the altar is marked, one finds an uno alusi (or perhaps it is an obi) altar apparently consisting of the seated figure and bottles behind which stands a pilon inscribed with the quite legible word DANGER. Objects perceived therefore to be symbols of European power appear to have been substituted for traditional intercessionary objects through which one would previously be empowered to manipulate the unfolding of the future. This, even down to the powerful use of the word ‘danger’ in a charged religious interior, in place of the equally mysterious semi-secret Igbo and Efik and Ejagham script known as Nsibidi (Talbot [1926]).

This tendency, if one may call it that, to admit major innovations into a realm that one might otherwise consider the backbone of the idea of tradition, was observed of the Ikwerre altar, the difference (apart from the fact that the photograph of the Nike shrine provides more information from which a contextualization has been attempted) being the significant sculpturality of this interior when compared with the one ornamented with in-situ Staffordshire china. The three-dimensional representation of a railway engine and carriage does, one may argue, make it more comparable to say the Ohaffia Omo Ukwu temple (Nzekwu [1972]), in which sculpted figures of ancestors are located. Such ancestral prescience is intended, in part at least, as a source of power. This

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702 A formal elements of the Northern Igbo obi architecture, which consists of a perforated screen. The term translates literally as the front of the spirits' eye. This is believed to be the plane through which the prayers are transmitted to the ancestral world.
connects the Nike temple house more to such an example, than it does to the Ikwerre altar.

The examples explored above show clearly that one may identify a whole range of supposedly 'traditional' buildings in south eastern Nigeria, which are characterized by the installation within very different architectural typologies and use-types of elements poached from other cultures, and often so from non-architectural realms of the originating culture. How then may these 'traditional' buildings be related to one another? What might they inhere about the other non customary, more obviously Progressivist architecture that forms the bulk of the buildings in the earlier chapters? How then may one characterize these latter buildings here? Are they pre-figured in and related to the customary architecture as it too was already in transformation?

There is a necessity to understand the buildings presented above in such a way as to enable an extraction of meaning, or an interpretation, which might link the buildings described in this section in a coherent manner, while such a linkage also takes cognisance of a history of culture and of thought. Such an understanding is especially important because the briefness of time (approximately thirty years) which separates the earlier from the later of the buildings and interiors presented here, renders it inappropriate to assume that a chronology has any historical consequence (were an arrangement of that kind to be attempted), unless a basis is established for assuming concrete connections between them. While conscious of the possibility of such a history, the interpretation here cannot overly emphasize historicity. Rather, the interpretation in this section is forced to proceed analytically in order to reach useful positions for
a valid overall comprehension of the new Progressivist architecture about which the dissertation is largely focused.

To begin such an interpretation, the present writer will claim the Ikwerre ancestral altar as an appropriate interpretative point of entry, both because it occurs fairly early in the period of focus, and because it forces a limitation due to the interiority and the close-up sense that the photograph communicates.

It was noted earlier that in Ikwerre architecture of the period cowrie shells are used to form a swirling ground out from which emerge the linearly organized rows of china. It was observed moreover that cowrie shells were also one of the customary forms of money in this period. It is perhaps therefore not unreasonable to suggest that the Ikwerre shrine was created in a manner meant to communicate the same sense of heightened value that a north European Christian shrine communicated to devotees when it was covered in gold leaf. It is also in this context that the china inserts need to be understood; that is as rare and expensive items gracing the place of spiritual communion.

The challenge is however to also understand the intention behind the particular selection of the chinaware, and the possible meaning of the specific manner of their arrangement. This concern is important as it seems imperative that it encodes a relation to the more customary forms of the sacrificial altar and surrounding ancestral shrine more commonly known in turn of the century Igboland and Izhonland.

Earlier, mention was made of the relevance of, and attraction for china decorated with floral patterning in this context.
Then, it was brought to the readers attention that some observers have commented that ‘floral patterns’ have been locally as containing ‘ju-ju’, though in quoting that excerpt (see footnote no. 493) it was made clear by the present writer that one had reason to doubt the accuracy of the sense communicated in such a statement. Moreover, in Ikwerri-Igbo communities (which group most closely borders Izhon speakers), Talbot’s 1916 photographs show their domestic non-religious buildings incorporating these plates in their sometimes dizzyingly detailed ornamental schemes. This must mean that its value is more a reflection of the patron’s ability to afford china as building material, than it is a strict signifier of ‘juju’. Nevertheless, in the interior altar nevertheless, this floral row easily draws attention, since it is the one row of several that appears to be different; that appears therefore to carry particular significance. However, it may also be erroneous to assume that the apparently more simple, more numerous inserts (the china consisting of concentric circular patterning) is nothing more than a backdrop against which to display the special. Of this larger group of china insets, clues apart from the context of their insertion which identifies them as of considered high value, appear forthcoming. In the first place, one of the formal elements of the Northern Igbo obi altar consists of a screen, parts of which are provided with perforations in the form of a zig-zag. This is known as the *iru anya mnuuo* or as the *azuanya mnuuo*, literally the front (or the rare) of the spirits’ eye. This is believed to be the plane through which the sight line to the spiritual realm passes. It is also perceived as the gap through which the words said in libation pass to the other side of the obi’s rear wall, on its journey

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703 Talbot (1916), op. cit.
through ancestral realms to the abode of gods. It seems consistent then to locate plates which resemble the pupil of the human eye in this location, as an even more literal expression of the idea of a heavenly gaze.

It seems important that it is in the context largely of male communion with the supernatural, that the appropriation of the European is inserted. For, the observations made above of the Ikwerre altar seems equally applicable to all the other buildings reviewed in this section. Certainly, both the obi at Nnokwa, and the mbari at Uratta conform to this. So also does the obu at Bende. As was evident however, the lavishment seems directed more specifically at the seat in the latter instance.

Extending therefore the strategy whereby the wealth and the luxury deserved by God is expressed at the altar, the Bende obu creates a whole interior expressive of the separateness of the ancestral from the contemporary or current through analogy with the European object perceived as equally powerful and other. 704

In the above examples however, if the power of the European object is initially only incorporated analogically, and then appropriatively, no suggestion is made in either instance that the two realms actually intersect in any way which could be

704 As a definite style we may point for example to the fact that here, we do not find the admixtures noted of the Nnokwa meeting house, or of the Nkike shrine and its representation of oloko. Like the women's meeting house at Nnokwa therefore, elements in the building are manipulated to communicate certain messages. The difference between the category here, and the women's house, is that while the meeting house building was concerned with a message that is beyond architecture as such, this one is strictly of architectural interest alone, and for that reason then, much more muted.
interpreted as magically interventionist. The object itself is not, in other words thought to hold power, in spite of the comment about 'juju' mentioned earlier. Such a separation of cultural and instrumental realms does not seem to be maintained in at least one building, the uno alusi at Nike, recorded in 1935, over a decade after the others in this sample. By this time the violence and the might of European power had not only traumatized communities which would once have considered themselves aggressively independent, but had also begun to mark its conquered landscape with what then would have been the strange architectural symbols of its power. In the context of this restricted access, ritualized interior in which the train and carriage sculpture is found however, it is reasonable to suggest that the installation indicates not submission to the visible domination by Europe, but a desire to gain control of the same, seemingly magical forces which enabled the European rulers to be so successful.

At the time the shrine was erected, Enugu's coal mining operations probably had become well established, together not only with the building of a coal-powered electricity generating station but also the construction of a railway line which ran from the mines at Enugu to the coast. Further, both mine-work and construction work were often achieved by the

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705 This refers to the erection of colonial architecture in Enugu and its environs.

706 In this light, the apparently Owerri-Igbo saying 'oyibo bu agbara' (whites must be gods...or more literally whites are the deity agbara) seems instructive. Its age and context of invention is unknown. Today, the statement is often repeated tongue-in-cheek in the context of new technological marvels such for example as a portable pocket television set. Agbara was the occupying deity of a widely consulted oracle of Igboland.
imposition of forced labor on the populace. It therefore seems that such policies were not only disruptive to traditional institutions, but were traumatic for the individual faced with such powerlessness. Incorporating the symbols of the new power in the context of offerings to one's own god was clearly the only viable means of attempting to regain control over one's apparently disintegrating universe.

The contrast between the mbari's externality and the Nike shrine's introvertedness may index more than the local cultural differences which may exist between various Igbo speaking peoples, one traditionally according women participation in sacred rituals, the other having historically excluded women from such participation. It seems that in addition, the Nike uno alusi registers a situation in which the dominant male sections of society were under threat of having their authority completely subverted and overthrown by Colonial might. The difference between this uno alusi and the mbari therefore represents a superimposition of the difference between relatively more open and comparatively more closed Igbo societies, upon the difference not often clearly delineated between Igbo areas subject mainly to what Annie Coombes has termed the more humanitarian and philanthropic face of colonialism i.e. the missionary presence and those subjected primarily to Colonial brutality.

Whatever the case may in fact have been, the externalization of the European must be considered a powerful departure, for in accepting the reality of the European presence, it appears to suggest a move on the part of indigenous society to enter

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707 Either directly or indirectly through the imposition of a poll-tax designed to coerce adults into wage employment with the colonial administration.
into a material appropriation of the European object in the service of an attempt not to lose control of social destiny. In other words, by dissociating the tools of European domination from any European essentialism it may once have been invested, technology, Christianity and formal education is acknowledged to be opened up for a complete take over by the African.

This progressivism hinted at in the repeated appearance of the non-traditional in traditional contexts is central to the ideological revolution which both resulted in the intra-communal strife over Christianity and the increasing self-conversion to it, and to the permanent transformation of traditional architecture.

This possibility seems confirmed by the mbari's own evolution. For a comparison of the Uratta mbari described above (which recall is dated to ca.1904), with mbari's which are contemporary with many of the Progressivist buildings in previous chapters (and/or with the uno alusi at Nike, all erected in or just preceding 1935), seems to interrogate the same issue.

By 1935 that is, though the distinct and separate presence of the European has largely disappeared in mbari, elements of the European universe have infiltrated and become incorporated into the Igbo world. Again therefore, by the time the European has become a physical threat to the cultural harmony of society (Missionaries did after all go around destroying these kinds of structures supposed to have been evidence of the Devil's unholy paganism) the society itself attempts to

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708 Such infiltration ranges all the way from the person of the nurse to the person of the child, simultaneously a schoolboy and the Christ, but identifiably African.
control its own destiny by desiring and identifying with the symbols perceived to be the source of European power. Yet, in spite of the multiplication of instances of the use of terror by the occupying European forces, including the atrocious massacre of women during the Women’s war at the nearby town of Aba, the once wrathful postures by the God Ala brandishing her magically empowered ofo and seemingly about to strike are replaced with less vengeful and more hopeful images. In other words, the seemingly schizophrenic strategy of appropriating the European in order to resist the European, does not lead Ala, now increasingly unable to identify the European in a clear figure of an adult white male, to resort as one might expect to an unleashing of unearthly power as a form of admonition. Furthermore (and since Achebe was mentioned at the outset), it may suggest that the supposed breakdown in a known social order and therefore the need for psychic restoration much vaunted by Chinua Achebe amongst others, does not going by the evidence of these images appear accurate.

A distinction can be made in addition, between the shrines illustrated previously and mbari’s mode of manipulation of the supernatural. Simply put, not only were women involved with the building and the decoration of the mbari offering to Ala, ritually protected though they are (Cole [1982:75-94]), but the appropriated elements are not subject once the structure is complete, to the secrecy in which the previous structures appear to have been shrouded. Instead, the desire for and identification with the futurism of European technology and religion is completely externalized in its role as public spectacle. Perhaps significantly, amongst the Igbos who do not practice mbari, it is in a structure erected for use by women (though it may have been built using male labor)
in 1928 that again the externalization of the symbols of European power appropriated into the architectonic, makes an appearance. Though evidence is scant, it is tempting to read into both strategies a distinct cleavage between the female and the male response to the European presence. Respectively, the spectacular and less fearful reaction, and, the secretive and confounded reply. One response (that of women) seems inclined to meet the European 'man to man', the other (that of men) tending instead to displace European supremacy into the realm of the magical.

Moreover, the evidence of this analysis suggests that the ways in which 'traditional' buildings have been understood does them great violence; that the idea of a mode of traditionality that is distinctly theirs is false. Furthermore, it has been indicated that the distinction between what is traditional and vernacular and what is not, actually remains unconvincing. Certainly, such interpretations do not encounter the reality of the buildings so theorized. Here, it has been suggested that a closer attention to the physicality of these buildings seems to subvert the disciplinary places to which they are consigned. Neither the Bende obu house, nor the Nnokwa reception house represses a hungry for transformation. They are as possessed of the dynamic of style as is any other architecture. This is so inspite of all its apparent traditionality and despite the cultural import the obu (for example) as type holds for the assumedly traditional Igbo person of southeast Nigeria. Certainly the Nike obu house makes this desire for innovation unequivocal.

It would be difficult to claim or produce clear evidence that the non-customary houses, mansions and churches explored in earlier chapters are aesthetically pre-figured in the temple
houses, meeting structures and domestic architecture that consists the small sample explored in this present chapter. No one-to-one tracking of the transfer of specific ornamental motifs, architectural forms, or spatial genotypes from one group of buildings to the other group seems possible or even desirable in the pursuit of interpretation. In a manner of speaking, it would be surprising were this to have been discovered in the process of the investigation. It does seem possible however to claim that a historical continuity exists between these forms of architecture, and that it is the reconstruction of this process of change, and the relations which bind them in their transformation that allows them to be grounded in the architectural and aesthetic culture of the locality.

In the following chapter, such an overall review, and the tactic for a meaningful assembly of these buildings, will be the focus of the next, and final chapter.
CHAPTER 10

Mime and Masquerade:  
Legality, Coloniality and Architectural Consciousness.

We ko ko ko ko...Onye mnye egwu mo  
Nnanwu Uguta... meshio  
Ndio oma!

[Exclamation]... the one who gives me my music [my dance]  
The Oguta masquerade, I shudder  
the beautiful ones [to see such Beautiful maskers]

Oguta masquerade song refrain.

It should have become apparent from the previous chapter, that in 'traditional' architecture, the architecture of the period which just precedes the one explored in the larger part of this dissertation (an architecture with which it is moreover also contemporary), an uninhibited freedom seems to have existed towards the changing world of objects by which its context was increasingly infiltrated. Furthermore, this 'traditional' architecture's own production took inspiration from this very changing universe of objects. Indeed, the indications (much as they were) of a questioning of this unrestrained attitude to invention in terms such as is evident in the issue of the appropriateness of the categories amongst which objects may be classified, only seems to occur by about 1895. Shortly, it will be seen that it is at this moment, through the record of a violent dispute which erupted into warfare between the coastal towns of the Nembe-Izhon and the British, that clear evidence is had of the changing consciousness of the bounds of the appropriate. Of course, the recorded descriptions of the violence of war is an unusual source for any architectural history. Nevertheless, it is in
a letter from the English commanding officer to his consular head, narrating the success of the sacking of towns whose citizens had, just previously, attacked a Royal Niger Company factory that is found evidence that houses owned by some Africans (mainly the ruling chiefs) have apparently become closely enough modelled on the European house to be so labelled. The attack by Nembe was mounted in protest at the Royal Niger Company’s disregard for local territorial ‘spheres of influence’. It is interesting then that its chiefs’ houses, the very houses which for the Englishman is modelled on the European house, are the ones more often than not, that invite (more than the customary house), the vengeance of European wrath:

..upon this house [Chief Opuenes house] a very brisk fire was opened.....the shot striking the iron roof of his house and also the church and the mission...In Nembe the King’s House, and the houses belonging to the Chiefs had been totally demolished with gun cotton and the native house burnt down...

[Following the taking of Nembe and the easy progress thence to Okpoma and Twon] ‘...the houses and plantations of the poor people were left standing. Only two houses, both "two storied European built structures.....[belonging to Chiefs Okiye and Opune]" were burned’.

As has been shown already, we may no longer trust the accuracy of the statement that such houses were by this time non-native, or that they were European built.

Nevertheless, the stylistic distinction that marks them off from the more easily customary ‘native house’, might indicate that after perhaps about the late 1870s (when we might assume they were first erected in this place), a dramatic change occurred around the issue of appropriateness in architecture, most especially so in the towns of the coastline itself. This appropriateness was moreover not the discourse of the Colonial
person as it had been presented earlier; but rather is one that seems entered into within the local African community.

It is interesting though that the issue of appropriateness, as consciousness of it erupts in any locality, occurs later and later (generally speaking) as one departs from the space of the coast proper and moves further and further north. That is to say that propriety appears to travel in the companionship of (or parallel to) the traversal of south eastern Nigerian space by the early precursors of Colony. Thus if 1870 is a reasonable date by which to mark this disjuncture on the coast, it seems to occur later, between 1904 and 1914, in Igbo speaking territory itself; and this, only as judged by the evidence of photographs. As already presented, between those years, both A.A Whitehouse, and Amaury Talbot, had recorded (separately) some of the buildings described in the previous chapter. In one of them bone china dishes were incorporated into the house’s fabric as ornamentation, applied to the external surface of a building which in most other aspects seems a fairly customary one. Certainly, for the Staffordshire English community in which such dishes would have been made, the category Crockery is quite distinct from the category Architecture, and in their own British context one would rarely incorporate the former type of object into the physical body of the latter.

Another example of this mode was illustrated by a meeting enclosure in the village of Nnokwa, said to date from the 1920s (fig. 1). In that instance an even more unexpected mixture of categories of object appeared to operate; German ‘machine’ admixed with Igbo architectonic elements. When this building was first introduced, it was suggested that the conversion of a foreign object into a local icon for the
building's female commissioner is necessarily significant. Of course given the date of this enclosure's construction, the indication is that its appropriative tactic continues to survive well after the 1910s as was suggested at the outset. One may note in that regard though that Nnokwa was more removed from contact with the outside world than were the other towns mentioned here, and that it therefore was most likely lagging behind architectural fashion in the more near coastal zones inhabited by Ikwerre speakers.

The years immediately surrounding 1895 are therefore, and as indicated in chapter 1, crucial ones for establishing the intellectual background against which architectural change was possible. They saw for example the Aro Expedition to eradicate a local cult that had 'too much influence', they saw the exiling of Chief Ezeoba from Onitsha for assuming a 'wrong posture’ towards a European (Ukpabi[1987]) and, to cast the net even wider, they ushered in the Berlin Conference’s demarcation of European title to Africa’s coast709. These years not surprisingly then had architectural consequences also. For after them, local architecture seems more cautious about what is considered proper to incorporate into the aesthetic composition of a building. After this date moreover was observed the first of a group of buildings (the 'European built structures' or the 'European type') that would occur with increasing regularity as the 'native' type described above seems to recede, and which is marked not by a lack of inventiveness per se, but by a propriety in which only objects that in the European world belong as it were to the category Architecture, are incorporated (even if in unexpected ways) into the fabric of a building.

709 Of course the conference had much larger pan African consequences, but here the concern is with its effects in the areas of coast and near coast bordering south eastern Nigeria.
All the buildings in the earlier chapters might be thought to illustrate this latter approach. Here, two houses which have previously been explored in some detail, the Uzoka House (fig. 8) at Awka, and the Onwudinjo House (fig. 4) also at Awka might serve as markers for the present summary. Of the former, it was noticed of its pinnacles, that despite the incongruity which one’s own aesthetic preference might project on the building (because it mixes aspects of church architecture with aspects of domestic architecture), whatever is incorporated into its body is taken only from a range of fragments which in the place of its origin nevertheless belong to the same category ‘Architecture’. In short, at this moment the Clappertonian problem of being unnerved by the ‘misapprope’ seems in fact addressed. For in the excerpt quoted previously from Clapperton’s journal, it was noted that his own use (and understanding) of an object, which clearly may serve other purposes, is claimed by him as necessarily the only legitimate one. These latter houses seem, in other words, to have acceded to a new universe of legitimacy.

Of course to the Yoruba persons gathered at that ca.1827 meeting, even a reading of the text by Clapperton, would not be very meaningful, immersed as such a reader would probably be in the legitimacy and validity of his or her own interpretations of objects encountered in the world. This Yoruba cultural location seems imaginable as the place of consciousness at which south eastern Nigerian architectural thinking was situated in the early 1890s.

A transformation therefore seems implicated in architecture when ‘misappropriation’ ceases to occur to the same extent, and a local architectural culture emerges which is well
mannered in European\textsuperscript{710}; not only imbibing into its own architecture things borrowed from other places, but doing so in terms that the culture of these places of origin would be wont to recognize as architectural. This reorientation suggests a new mental (and intellectual) attitude in which the Clappertonian view of the appropriate is recognized beyond the European context in which it is uttered. Or, in other words, architecture becomes subject to a non-local definition of appropriateness. In effect it becomes \textit{civilized}, and seems to indicate that a realignment in the interpretation of objects has occurred.

A clearer index of the mental disjunction (and new consciousness) which makes such a realignment possible, is however best observed elsewhere, and interestingly not in the realm of architecture itself\textsuperscript{711}, but by a marker which even if it implicates the architectural, occurs well outside the universe of building practice.

\textbf{Law, Architectural Consciousness and Colonality}

The cultural exchange that occurred on the West African coast, between Europeans and Africans is often seen metaphorically in terms of the exchanges involved in the commercial trade with which it occurred simultaneously. Fortunately for the dissertation’s goal, since disputes are bound to (and did) occur in the process of such commercial trade, and since mechanisms for resolving them were critical to the continued...

\textsuperscript{710} Thinking in this instance of ‘European’ as a particular language.

\textsuperscript{711} This term, is derived from an analogy suggested by a reading across both Adewoye’s \textit{The Judicial System in Southern Nigeria}, and William Hubbard’s \textit{Complicity and Convention}. The former traces changes in legal practice in southern Nigeria, one section of it dealing with the negotiated abandonment of precedent on the coast (pre-dating the establishment of the proto-colonial Niger Coast Protectorate), while the latter seemed to offer the possibility of juxtaposing, at least for the sake of analysis, the legal notion of precedent with the architectural idea of convention.
existence of trading relationships, it is likely that understanding the history of such mechanisms might in turn indicate ways in which 'disputes' over cultural 'purchases' might be usefully theorized. The perusal of commerce-related judicial historiography for clues to finalizing the architectural historiography attempted so far may thus not be as far fetched as it might seem. Furthermore, it was clear in many instances (and based on the previous contexts in which many of the buildings in this study were explored) that amongst the prime motivators of architectural change would be included those individuals who were linked to the changing legal system712. It may thus not surprise to discover that this transformative legal system itself appears to provide appropriate markers for other cultural changes, and that one may, in tracking the latter, effectively link the changes in the legal system with transformations in architecture713.

This is confirmed by the importance that the years around 1895 seems also to have had for the history of the legal system in south eastern Nigeria. Up to the particular historical moment of the 1890s, all commercial disputes, including those between Europeans and their African trading associates, appear to have been

712 The reader might recall for example that Ojiakor Ezene, was a Warrant Chief, and therefore an active player in the judgement of cases. The reader may also recall that it was the Court Clerk, moreover, who recruited the builder 'George' from Asaba, to build the former's 1913-14 house. Finally, it was suggested earlier moreover that it was as a result of Omudinjo's Native Court experience that he moved from Asaba to Port Harcourt. This court system therefore may be regarded as a veritable conduit for the transmission of modernity, no matter how corrupting one may also want to think it.

713 In fact, a direct link does exist for linking architecture and law quite specifically. A consideration of the history of the building contract in this period would appear to offer such an opportunity. However, such a digression does not seem justified in this dissertation, since it would move the analysis into theoretical areas not addressable here. However, it is worth noting that the changes in judicial matters occurred around trading disputes. Since many of the architectural patrons were themselves also traders, some (like Chief Adinembo) in direct and regular contact with Europeans, the changing legal system offers two points of contact then, with the changing culture of architecture.
been settled under the aegis of local customary law, and by the legal procedures of each local community. In practice, this usually meant judgement by the local Chiefs-in-council, whose authority is normally constituted by tradition. It is not known that it ever involved Europeans in such local juridical practices as trial by ordeal, but record apparently exists that in the Efik town of Calabar "...an appeal to the King of Duke Town as head of Egbo could also mobilize the agents of this secret society for the collection of a [European] trader's debt." [emphasis is mine]

The beginnings of the transformation of such African judicial systems may be identified with the invention, in 1854, of the institution known as the Court of Equity. The court appears to have been reserved primarily for commerce related disputes, especially when such disputes occurred between Europeans and their African trading associates. Sitting on the court, most typically, would be representatives of both the European and the African communities. Despite its English name, the Court of Equity seems to have functioned largely in order to ensure that the activities of the European traders conformed to local customary law and procedure, especially on issues related to commercial activity. In a sense then, one may conceive of the Court of Equity in terms which still lend it a local and indigenous logic.

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714 Such councils or associations have gone by different names in different places, but would include the Yoruba Ogboni, the Ejaham Ngbe, and the Efik Ekpe amongst others.

715 Adewoye (1977) op. cit. p8, for example describes one such trial amongst the Kalabari in which contesting parties are made to swim through a river inhabited by crocodiles. Any of the party who emerges on the other side unharmed is then presumed to be the innocent party.


717 (Alagoa [1964]: 64)
Nevertheless, the overthrow of a ‘normal’ legal system which is vested in the locality by one in which disputes between a local defendant and a European plaintiff (or between a local plaintiff and a European defendant) become triable under a system which effectively granted foreigners jural rights (and which system moreover appears to have become increasingly Europeanized), is a transformation which must be seen as striking for its implication of a volunteered surrender of sovereignty\textsuperscript{718}, if for no other reason.

The boundaries which might be thought to define the historical possibility of this transformation are instructive. For one, the adoption of a non-African legal system in the situation might be thought of as a kind of precursor for what became a comparable set of developments in myriad other areas of culture\textsuperscript{719}. Clearly however, though tending in the same direction, these changes are not parallel for different aspects of the cultural complex, and do not pass through comparable stages at the same moment. It seems likely for example that before the decision to shift completely from the customary Izhon and Efik legal systems which would have governed trade on the coast up to the Court’s inception; and before the adoption of a legal culture that was more reminiscent of England (roughly speaking), there probably were periods of a shift in judicial practice, such that the law governing commercial activity, was something of a mixture of

\textsuperscript{718} Particularly because its early history pre-dates the foundation of the colony, and therefore did not come imposed by force of arms as such.

\textsuperscript{719} It would be difficult to think of them as parallel. Though the ‘adoption’ of European legal practice would have involved procedures and judgments that compared to actual European practice might have contained elements that are depart substantially from the expectations of European trader, there remains a sense in which it is a more complete abandonment of local culture than the buildings investigated here show evidence of.
two systems. Indeed, the following real example indicates the degree to which this supposition might hold true.

A documented early example of such a dispute, especially one in which the Court of Equity played a role, is observed in an 1872 land transaction involving the Court of Equity at the coastal town of (Nembe?) or Bonny. The court was at that moment chaired by Mr. Cotteral, an Englishman who seems to have been a believing Christian and who showed strong sympathy for the missionary work at the time in progress at Bonny. At that very same time, the then Archdeacon of the Niger diocese, Samuel Ajai Crowther, took the opportunity (obviously because he would have been aware of Cotteral’s sympathies) to petition this court for the granting of land to the Church Missionary Society, on which land the CMS intended to erect a permanent church building. Though the detail of the land grant has not been discovered, its effect was that ‘...a site was given free of cost by the Consul, Captain Hopkins, by a Deed of Transfer. On Archdeacon Crowther’s representations to the Court of Equity the site was secured perpetually.’

No record exists of which members of the court were Bonny natives, which information may grant the court’s decision a different meaning from the interpretation offered here. That is, given that the land surrounding the town of Bonny in Izhon and Igbo law, would have been land ‘owned’ in common by its larger community, it would seem outside the juridical power of the court as constituted to grant the church the land in the manner it seems to have. For even without contesting for

Certainly it is known that as late as 1936 this was still occasionally the case in Igboland. Thus Adewoye details a court decision in which a defendant was required to produce ‘juju’ for the plaintiff to swear upon. He also adds that failure to produce ‘juju’ ‘...was taken as an admission of guilt resulting in judgement for the defendant.' (Adewoye op cit, p183).
the moment the legal status of the treaties signed between the British and the various chiefs who formed the territory of the Protectorate\textsuperscript{721}, it is the case that even with an assumption of the legality of such treatises, ownership rights over such a piece of land could not have been understood by the treatises African signatories, as implying that they (as representatives of their communities) had relinquished ownership of communal lands, let alone that such ownership is assumed ‘...in perpetuity’.

It then appears from this example that the Court of Equity’s mode of action hardly consisted of an attempt to merge local legal norms with norms that might be considered more typical of European law. Rather it seems more accurate to describe its actions as implicating a usurpation of customary law\textsuperscript{722}. No subsequent history representing the development of this land has been discovered. This might have indicated whether (as seems possible) other disputes occurred subsequently over the land on which Bonny’s church had been erected. It may also have suggested the degree to which the usurpation of title to local land by Europeans was challenged in the circumstance. This in turn might have held some analogical parallels for understanding the apparent ‘usurpation’ of architectural culture by European manners.

\textsuperscript{721} Which seems to be the basis of Captain Hopkins’ being able to institute a Deed of Transfer.

\textsuperscript{722} Yet, the change over to the Court of Equity apparently occurs before the actual invasion of south east Nigerian territory by the proto-colonial state), altered, that is, in the absence of physical force (it may to an extent therefore be regarded as voluntary or negotiated). In other words, the voluntary yielding to the idea of a Court of Equity, before the establishment of the colony in 1885, and the institution of the Native Court system, implies that local African communities were already in an unequal relationship that they may not have been specifically aware of creating, but that grows from the mechanisms of credit in which coastal trade was conducted.
Nevertheless, it has been established here that the moment in which architectural practice shifts its own appropriative strategy to the extent that it takes from Europe only what is framed as architectonic in European terms, occurs only well after such a shift seems established in the realm of law. Thus, architectural transformation seems to be constituted in part by a prior change in mentality, expressed with more immediacy and much more easily (and transparently), in juridical practice.

It is not meant here to imply any causal relationship between the history of the judicial system and that of architectural convention. Rather, drawing such a parallel makes significant the fact, no matter how unlikely it may seem, that a relationship of exchange at an African site became conductible, and acceptably so, in the context of the adoption of the legal practices of the 'visitor' alien group. This may be seen as an index of the challenge to local cultural authority which ensuing struggle is henceforth bound to become reflected in other forms of cultural interaction.

Certainly, for this south eastern Nigerian locality, it seems to be the case generally that it is only with the European progress, marked by the increasing adoption of the idea of the Court of Equity (and subsequently of the Native Court) that the first African owned and/or commissioned buildings become recorded that appear to want to use foreign elements in a way for example which recognizes the boundaries of the architectural as it is prescribed and inscribed by European culture. Such a court was established in Bonny by 1854, and soon after at Brass and Okrika. By 1903 (by this date all
Native Courts\textsuperscript{73}) one also finds alien courts at Aboh, Onitsha, Aguleri, and Obosi to name a few. Before these dated presences of the Equity or Native court in each town, it seems to be the case that appropriation into Izhon, Ikwerre and Igbo architecture from European things, signals no respect for the dividing up of the world of objects in European terms. Emptied gin bottles may be assembled together in a clay mound in creating a sacrificial altar (Thomas 1913 [plate V, and pp27-29]) to a god; European plates and dishes, may be embedded in the earthen fabric of a domestic enclosure.

Following the years listed above, the first buildings that seem more intent on not breaching European categories, and which belong to non-European patrons, make an initial appearance. These have seemed more difficulty to interpret. Nevertheless, even with this class of building and with its surrounding architectural culture, it has been possible to show that in this period an uneasiness exists towards European stylistic and spatial norms at the very moment when the desire to avoid 'misappropriation' may be thought strongest. And, in one case at least, this was discovered to have occurred even under the occasional supervisory eye of an able but amateur builder of European origin. One may, that is, continue to identify a tension between the adoption (consciously so) of manners proper to the European, and discomfort for such stricture. Consistently in fact, a reaction against the repressive pressure to conform to European appropriateness appears to have broken through, allowing (for the local masons) a release of the cultural imagination, which often

\textsuperscript{73} The so called Native Court was of course far from 'native', and the law it administered often equally distant from pre-colonial custom. Perhaps the most telling illustration of this fact, is the centrality of the Court Clerk, the scribe who recorded all the daily goings-on in the court, and whose influence derived in part from the tendency to view writing (anything the Clerk recorded) as somehow more true that other forms of memorizing.
resulted in strikingly original new architecture. This originality is sometimes recognized at the level of new kinds of architectural space organization, and at others times at the level of an architectonic, formal or ornamental approach to architectural composition and to the use of material.

In attempting to understand such processes, focus has been trained both on the builders and on their commissioning patrons, both groups of whom in their own particular ways, may be perceptible as local players who enabled the transmission of new architectural ideas and cultural 'purchases' across the various kinds of communal juncture. This is not simply a metaphorical statement. For, a builder like James Onwudinjo who was operating in the context of Kalabari and Okirike culture, would most certainly have been faced with the reality of a juncture between his original community of Asaba in western Igboland, and that of a very different, and linguistically distinct Izhon community, outside of which Onwudinjo would presumably have normally existed. He would therefore have had to have been skilled at negotiating such junctures to have become as successful as he was, judged by his becoming the mason of choice in the delta communities for whom he built several houses and church buildings. Clearly also, the same may be said of his patron Chief Adinembo, skilled as the latter seems to have been at gaining acceptance amongst the Igbo communities amongst whom he lived for good parts of the year, and with whom therefore spent a significant proportion of his life. It needs be recalled of course that on the Igbo's behalf he was forced to mediate when Igbo builders were resident on his building site during a period of inter-ethnic strife in Okrika.
The individuals and groups who commissioned the erection of buildings have also then been important, and in many instances as critically so to the processes described in this work as have been the builders themselves. In the inland locations of the interface, it was discovered that many of these individuals had personal histories that had meant they had travelled widely (in comparison to their fellow townsmen and townswomen) and on occasion had been subject to periods of extended residence away from home. In addition, such sojourns abroad were often lived out in communities like Arochukwu for example, that historically have had closer ties to the coast. Clearly then, the idea of cultural purchase and of the notion of cultural carriers of new ideas, applies equally to the patron, as it has seemed to apply to the builder.\textsuperscript{724}

\textsuperscript{724} Interestingly, it is in such a scenario that one may choose to understand the 'strange' decision by Adinembo and Onwudinjo, who actually are known to have become good friends, to enter into a formal, written contract around the production of the unusual house.

Customarily speaking, contracts were not entered into in the erection of a house in south eastern Nigeria. Every house would, in general, have been built by its eventual occupier, along with other young men of the community with whom a network of obligations already existed, and in the building of whose own houses the particular individual would himself have once been involved. A contract to build (if one insists on identifying one), would really only have existed at the level of a kind of social contract; an obligation that is expected to be fulfilled, but for which breach there is no legal sanction. The idea of the building contractor therefore would have been unknown traditional community.

It is interesting however that along with the Europeanizing re-legalization of the culture, in the terms previously outlined, the first example discovered so far of a building contract between two Nigerian individuals, is dated to 1922 or 1923, and is contracted between Chief Adinembo and Mazi James Onwudinjo. It is also interesting that this building is the earliest example of a building which is both stylistically inventive, but restricts such inventiveness within the universe of architectonics that a European would feel comfortable with.

In its way then, it is appropriate that a building like this one comes supplied as detailed in an earlier chapter, with the idea of a building contract. Typically, building contracts (speaking universally) come with two types of document; the first is the contract itself (which generally addresses obligations of the builder towards the building owner, and vice-versa). The second consists of a description of the building and its components and are typically consist two groups of document: written descriptions of the material constitution of the building (the Specifications), and a second document, a representational description (the blue print or 'Plans').
As regards patronage the focus here has, with the exception of Joshua Adinembo, been the patron in the more ‘interior’ location. It is hoped however that it is clear that as an individual Joshua Adinembo was hardly unique at the coastal location itself. Indeed many such individuals appear to populate the legendary world of story-telling about this period on the coast. Many subjects of these tales are coastal peoples. Occasionally they include even unexpected individuals from the interior some who themselves set up base on the coast after having migrated there from Ibibio territory and also from Igboland. There is for example the case of the Igbo trader whose own residence seems directed at the Efik community amongst whom he lived in Calabar, and which was somewhat insultingly (to Efiks) known as ‘Calabar shut-up’725. This unofficial name gives the impression that the building was erected to awe the Calabar community into speechlessness. More usual however would have been patrons like Joshua Adinembo and Asitonka Coco of Okrika, and perhaps also others such as King Jaja of Opobo726 and James Ephraim Adam of Archibong, Calabar727 whose personal histories have ensured them a certain long-lived notoriety.

It is seen from those patrons whose lives have been presented here in some detail, and from numerous others not included in this study but investigated as part of the research project itself, that these buildings were erected [and not untypically] the least because of an actual functional need, and more as exhibitions of the image the owner wished to project to both his own African community, and on occasion to

727 See Latham (1973):164
the community of Europeans and European visitors in their midst, in this sense replicating to a surprising degree the intentions of the Asantehene's own 18th century building, with which the dissertation had opened. Thus it is not particularly surprising to discover that Chief Joshua Adinembo in fact found his grand mansion incommodious, and rarely spent his time in the building, preferring instead to remain in the reception room of an earth-built bungalow structure, which was set up directly opposite the entrance to the mansion. It is in this fairly humble space that Chief Adinembo is remembered to have preferred to receive most of his guests. Detailed knowledge at this level of habitation is not currently available for the other buildings in the study, but it would not be surprising to discover that some of the other buildings would have been equally unimportant to the actual daily lives of its first owners, though with the passing of time (and generational change) this might become less and less the case. Certainly, by the 1940s, this architecture had become quite common, and was adopted in a simplified bungalow form by quite ordinary individuals in quite ordinary rural contexts. In other words, this new architecture itself ultimately became customary, and even 'traditional'.

Obiefuna ideology in the mind of architectural miming

Whether one speaks then of the building explored in this work whose creators seem to have been conscious in some manner of the architecture of Europe, or of those that depart significantly from such an aesthetic, the enthusiasm with which possession of these kinds of building were entered into by south eastern Nigerians in the period under study, and the pace at which these buildings seem to have become accepted as normal and non-alien, must lead to a questioning of the assumption that customary architecture has an uncommon
stability. Certainly in the realm of architectural culture, much investigated in this study would lead one to doubt that the so called traditional architecture of many West African locations has had the longevity of form that is often suggested and implied in their non-local and scholarly discourse. Of course, in the cases considered here, the transformation is made more noticeable because it comes with a departure in the use of material. Nevertheless, since these cultures seem always to have been in contact with one another, it is not inconceivable that for any particular ethnic community identified with a particular architectural form, such a form may in the past have been subject to quite considerable change. Such change would have been based simply on the adoption of the stylistic properties of the architecture of other communities with whom they may have come (for any number of reasons) in contact. This for example seems to have been the moral of the Ejiofor story (chapter 9, pp532-534), in which the introduction of clay-on-wattle-frame architecture to the Izhon of the eastern delta (who living in the delta previously built only in palm-rib frame on stilts) is attributed to the arrival of a northern (and Igbo) community represented by the person of Ejiofor.

With respect to a redefinition of the notion of tradition, one notes that there is of course something untypical about the particular scenario of intercultural borrowing and exchange in which the architectural transformations scrutinized in this dissertation is located. It is a context in which one of the parties to the exchange is politically dominant politically, and by the use of a military and

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For example, as long ago as the 9th-11th century, evidence suggests an itinerant culture of blacksmiths (certainly) and of sculptors (possibly), circulating in the Niger Delta and Cross River areas.
moralistic force which soon acquired a posture that was natural. For that reason the object of borrowing and of changing that was present here may be untypical when compared to the intention behind borrowing in these same places in an earlier period, in the sense that the instrumental purpose of the act of borrowing may have become greatly magnified. In other words, these particular transformations which have occurred under (and in response to) colonialism, are only an extreme version of what in all likelihood was the normal propensity for architectural change that occurs within 'tradition'. Once this is granted, it is not difficult to understand the native logic underlying the location of power in European things, as has been implied in all the buildings explored here. What is more critical to understand is that this interpretation by south eastern Nigerian communities, is itself strategic and powerful. For, by imagining power as inherent in an object, and not as resulting from a relationship between humans; by imagining power as almost graspable in a physical sense; by dissociating power from the European possessor of it, a very different conclusion might then result from their performances of mimicry. That is, such a relocation of power as is inherent in the architectural innovations of the period allows the mimicry of Europe to operate as a means of attempting to restore something previously usurped.

An important distinction seems implied by this reality: One that demands clarity in the use of theoretical terms. The idea

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729 Except uniquely the Igbo structure known as the obi when it remains a domestic building and not as was seen for the town of at Bende when it was a public and semi-institutional one. This exception is based of course only on the evidence that survives.

730 It should be noted that this is not untypical in the context of nineteenth and early twentieth century West and Central African sculpture.
of mimicry must be contrasted with the idea of mimesis, both of which in turn must be distinguished from the idea of mime. Mimesis is a notion whose usefulness in the discourse of art and architecture, and of their separate historiographies is well explored, most remarkably in Michel Foucault’s (1963) theoretics, in Auerbach’s work, and more recently by Michael Taussig (1994). Mimesis as it is more typically understood is a difficult notion to separate from mimicry (both terms imply imitation), except that mimicry often involves a sense of burlesque and/or derision at the object of imitation. Or, more broadly, as Bhabha (1994:ch4) seems to indicate, is imitation for the achievement of some purpose (usually political) beyond the sphere of the medium in which the mimicry is enacted.

Mime is however quite distinct from both notions, since it supposes two sets of conditions. Firstly, the enactment must be theatrical. Its strategies must be performative. Secondly, it must be enacted in the absence of a ‘voice’, a constraint which requires, if communication is to be maintained, a mastery of gesture, form and the expressiveness of the facade, face or mask.

It would appear then that of all three possibilities, the one that most closely analogizes the unfolding of the buildings explored, is the notion of mime. Certainly, the architecture has, in time, remained ‘voiceless’ to the extent that no discourse was projected from it in a manner that has enabled it to be audible to either its own native context, or to the community of Europeans who would have seen it71. Thus, the erroneousness of notions of its history amongst Izhon people,

71 Here, audibility and truth are elided. The point is to recognize that for the British or German person, historical audibility is attendant on the written text; and one produced specifically for their own reading. It is clear that nothing of this ilk was likely to have been construed.
as amongst Igbo people, as amongst Britons. Secondly, the gestural emphasis of many of the buildings has been emphasized, as have been the buildings’ focus on the external surface. This was typically achieved by a certain ornamental exuberance, applied to the major facades. Like the mime performer moreover, it has been indicated that whatever the buildings might appear to project gesturally, they always belied an inside quite distinct (and different) from the character they appeared to portray. Furthermore, the presence of theatricality, whether as observed in the building itself, or in the history of its own production, can hardly be gainsaid. Notwithstanding the theorizing of mimicry in recent discourse around the issue of post-coloniality therefore, it is argued here that mime (a term which manages moreover to capture both the performance and the performer) is a closer analogue of south eastern Nigerian architectural reconstitutions of its peculiarly colonial-contexted modern culture.

In the absence of such an allowance, it would be that much more difficult to be certain whether or not for the Adinembo House at Okrika for example, the architecture (imagined momentarily as the performer of a mime act) has not become taken over by the spirit of that which it mimes, or would mimic. In which scenario the conclusion reached by G.I. Jones⁷³ that these buildings are really copies of the European originals from which a number of culturally unsuitable aspects have been subtracted, seems quite natural, even if a more critical reading would instead demand its questioning. Most especially because Jones’ interpretation by its disinterest in the making of such an allowance went further to claim that

⁷³See G.I. Jones op.cit.
even the mbari temple houses of the early twentieth century which were mentioned at the outset (and which many Igbos and Africanist scholars have come to see as traditional par excellence"33, as closer observers have recognized only its exceptionality) are "....really conventionalized versions of the Victorian prefabricated bungalow."34 One may now meet such a statement with some degree of incredulity. Most things about the buildings just reviewed are not despite their mimetic quality easily attributed to a lightly mediated European practice. Thus for example, the fact of a double-story should not necessarily be assumed to indicate the presence of a non-‘traditional’ architectural attitude. Certainly in the town of Awka itself (in which the Onwudinjo and Uzoka houses were located), the two-storeyed tower, used both to survey the surroundings of a ‘traditional’ homestead, and to ensure its security, appears to have been in existence for at least as long as these other less-easily-called-African buildings have been35. Moreover, it has been shown that a detailed historicization of the conditions under which such buildings as the Uzoka house, or as Uratta’s mbari structure, were made possible (and thinkable) resists the analogy to a mime who permanently looses his or her own subjectivity (and identity) in the persona of his or her object. The integrity of the locality does not appear to have been erased in the act of the miming a powerful colonial object, even though the latter was inserted into the context via colonialism. Or, in the terms

733 See for example Chinua Achebe’s introductory essay in Herbert Cole and Chike Aniakor’s Igbo Arts; Community and Cosmos.

734 See G.I. Jones, op. cit p101

employed in a previous chapter, the obi seems never to have been lost.\footnote{One of the interesting observations that one might make of the architecture of Northern Igboland after the first decade of the century, precisely during the moment of European incursions into Igboland, is the gradual disappearance of the obi as an architectural type. Certainly by the 1960s, even in rural contexts, houses and compounds of lineage heads no longer generally included the obi. One can offer a number of explanations for this phenomenon, not the least of which includes both the undermining of customary religious practice in the advent of Christian evangelism, as well as the uncompromising subversion of the order of the Igbo world that military subjugation brought. Generally speaking, the early evangelists found unacceptable both the signifying sculpture and other art forms of African paganism or pantheism, and could not tolerate the ritual practices which the obu, as temple was obliged to maintain. But, if the softer persuasion of the missionary was not a sufficient prod for the abandonment of their faith in ancestrally mediated African religion, the humiliating might of European technological warfare, left many with no basis on which to claim a truthfulness for their gods. Leaving aside the perhaps institutionally logical necessity for 'Punitive Expeditions' in the subjugation of a very resistant nation, it would seem that the arbitrary and personalized audacity of the individual Colonial Officer, which could only be challenged at the risk of an uncorrespondingly weighted response, did provide the opportunity for indigenous peoples to seek alternative strategies for resistance. Perhaps it is too much to expect that it could be otherwise, when as indicated a few pages earlier, it was possible in 1898 for Chief Ezeoba of Onitsa, to find himself exiled for a brief period in Lokoja, simply because as the Colonial administrator was perceiving it, the Chief 'assumed...a most impudent bearing' (Ukpabi [1987]). Even one's posture had to be guarded against. The nature of an erring must have seemed erratic. Our knowledge of this history might tempt a too easy assumption that the erasure of the Obu from the logic of Igbo spatial representation, indicates a collapse of the Igbo world view; the ultimate loss of the temple of society's identity. No more negation seems possible than the efufu obi...the unanswered prayer that [ka] obiefuna.\footnote{Were the question answered beyond an architectural framing, it would indicate easily that apart from the daily ritual of sacrifice to the ancestors and to Chukwu, generally absent after the late 1930's from the lives of a majority of south eastern Nigerians for whom Christianity had become a preferred form of worship, many of the functions of the obu were not abandoned. Most significantly, the institution of title-taking, a very significant aspect of the obu's functional web which also included the holding on to, and the handing down of the family ofo, was never abandoned. The owners of the new buildings of the late 1910's, the 1920's and the 1930's which progressively sprouted instead of the obu, might have appeared, no matter how absurdly, to aspire to the lifestyle of the European aristocrat. The social and economic basis of this tendency was often rooted in a collaboration with the Colonial administration's usurpation of traditional authority. For, many of these patrons of the new architecture were appointees of the Colonial state. Nevertheless, they appear still to have sought power and influence within customary structures of status, and desired the opportunity to direct the affairs of their lineages or towns, through the mechanisms of age old authority. Chief Wwegu of...}
mimicry, consists the contingent knowledge gained in the chapters that precede the present one; because they explored several buildings, houses included, in which a sophisticated and always only partial mimesis becomes well developed. Still, in order to answer the question directly (that is as it is framed in terms of the loss of obi), it is the case that for an observation that the obi indeed reemerges as obi, within the culture of architecture the reader would have to be taken well beyond the boundaries of the dissertation, and would in fact be asked to enter the contemporary period.

If, however, the question is how to interpret the transformation in the culture of architecture, which saw the momentary erasure of the obi, and in the introduction of the un’enu\(^{28}\) (or multi-storied house) and of un’uka (or church building), then it seems answerable by claiming that the former was not in fact lost; but that instead it was simply reconfigured. And, not solely in the form of the new non-customary villas and churches, but by a complex in which these very buildings, their representation of a new titular structure, and their owner’s annexation/production of new historical texts, contrived to reinscribe the necessary space

\(^{27}\)(...continued)

Onitsha, for example, even if he was one of the earliest men to occupy a position in the colonial government usually reserved for Europeans, spent a good part of his middle adult years in a determined struggle to gain the Obi -ship of the prosperous town of Onitsha.

\(^{28}\) Again this word is literally translated as ‘high house’ but in Igbo Pidgin english is rendered as ‘upstair’, a proper noun.
of the obi with something the meaning of whose appearance, seems to have been lost on the colonial observer.

And perhaps to others besides. For, it has been shown that even in the contemporary period, both African scholars, and local African peoples often now fail to identify these buildings as anything but European and post-1945. This was true in part of local knowledge concerning the Adinembo House, and perhaps to cite a more public example, was recently true of the Nwandu House at Enugu Ukwu (fig. 143). Of the latter, it was apparently not only reported by some local people as a product of the 1970s, but more importantly has been erroneously attributed by an American scholar to Italian ancestry born out of the unexpected encounters of 1970s oil-boom Nigeria (Cosentino [1991]). Furthermore, it was shown of the church builders of 1920s and 1930s, that as confirmed by the Emmanuel Church at Enugu Ukwu, and by the St. Peter’s Church at Abagana, the new religious structure was thought of in the very same terms as was the lineage obi house which it was seen to be replacing. This is, the reader recalls, one face put by the interpretation here on the traditional symbols seen to cover the surface of the building’s mortar-joints at the higher levels of its masonry. This latter point is in addition more likely to be persuasive when it is realized that religious conversion was often a phenomenon that occurred at the level of the clan (rather than at the level of an

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739 Strictly speaking of course this metaphor is only applicable in the Awka-Nri and Bende-Arochukwu areas of Igboland. It certainly cannot function if one speaks of Izhonland and of its related communities. However, the sense of this idea, in terms of the prevalence of culture is still useful in thinking of this latter place as well.

740 In including this example as an illustration of how even in the local context the origin of the architecture is today erroneously attributed to Europe, the present writer is presuming that this information was given to that researcher by a person of the locality, during a period of his own filed research at Enugu Ukwu.
individual), as were of course defections from Christianity back to traditional religions, or, from one denomination to another. This still explains some of those situations in which denominational maps of a village group (were one to imagine such a map being produced) would seem almost correspondent with umunna maps of the same village. In which case the church building in many such communities functioned quite literally as the lineage obi; and perhaps thus (as mentioned earlier) the invention of the term un'uka as the Igbo word for church building.

It was also indicated that for the houses themselves, many might be well described by the term 'architectural folly'\(^\text{741}\); in the sense that despite their large size, many of these houses were never consistently lived in. The owners often lived in its shadow; in more simple and more comfortable accommodation, indicating that the building, sharing at least this quality with the lineage reception house (or obi), was intended primarily as symbolic of the stature of its possessing 'lineage'; through and in which symbol the lineage represented itself to the world other than itself.

Ethnicity, Architecture and Ruse.
Another assessment of the efficacy of mime in this context might lie in a return once again to the question of architectural form and ethnicity, which relationship is

\(^{741}\) All of which confirms, ultimately, pace Achebe's fictional character, that things never really quite fell apart, even if they seemed so to threaten. In fact, quite the reverse may have been the purpose; a cultural fragmentation conjured as a ruse; distracting the attention of the gaze of the Colony, in order to poach from its reserves of power. Though this is definitely not its source, the notion of folly referred to is the one once popular among the English aristocracy erecting an architectural structure (often a kind of miniature) in the landscape of a large mansion, the former of whose existence was solely aimed at providing an object of interest or contemplation in the landscape. Such follies included objects as varied as bridges, pavilions, and small architectural structures with no accessible interiors.
usually assumed to be of particular concern to studies of traditional architecture. The exploration here indicates that this issue spills over into the comprehension of these non-customary or progressivist buildings, for the logic governing the Jonesian refusal of the mbari house as anything but Victorian, must be understood to govern the likelihood that the Onwudinjo house at Awka might have been seen as a 'European type'.

One now understands the difficulty faced by writers and observers the likes of G.I Jones, when faced with a building, no matter how untypical of Europe, which nevertheless possess a cornice. This, the reader may recall, was a difficulty which confronts the viewer of the Ojiakor (Ezenne) house at Adazi-Nnukwu (fig. 36). Once again however, these difficulties seem to point in fact to a formulation which proposes that the form of the building is not necessarily what counts to identifying its 'nationality'. Instead, what appears to be important to such a definition is how what is being produced is understood by those organized to build, without whose own particular understanding, the production would not be possible. In a similar manner, the way in which the object is used is likely to be as telling of the meaning the object carries as are the clues of resemblance that may be derived from its form. Thus, what makes (or might make) a building European or not ought not be left simply to the adjudication of form, but also to the form’s placement within a local world of signification. Certainly, several characteristics of the houses described above, are not the staple of discourses that purport to be concerned with the properties of traditional architecture and of traditional building practice in sub-Saharan Africa. Fixed stair flights, corrugated iron roofs, multi-story structures,
windows, and verandas, would normally disqualify a building from being so included.

The exclusion of such buildings from reviews of structures considered traditional (or 'primitive' architecture) in circumstances when buildings such as the Bende obu meeting house become included, seems to result from the fact that, as intimated in the first chapter, both scholars and general writers had found it easy to naturalize the break between traditional building practice and that practice whose essence was thought only in terms of the partiality of its European-imported elements. Viewed thus however, one is certain that these kinds of buildings will (and have) presented problems of interpretation since the social history that accounts for their existence, and the nativity of its actual builders resist the temptation to see them as more European than anything else. In fact, the all too easy tendency (which might be understood also as a difficulty) to assume that they are simply European buildings in Africa stems from the absence in the scholarly milieu of the types of information which would provide the historical and cultural context of their production; which information would also, of course, trace a degree of continuity between the buildings which form the bulk of the chapters prior to the present one, and those more customary seeming ones explored in chapter 9. This epistemological difficulty would, moreover, not have been resolved by an analysis that relies on the more obvious methodological currents presently available.\footnote{These would include within Africanist studies, the interest around the idea of a \textit{Popular Culture}, under whose aegis the study of contemporary culture in Africa is increasingly attracted. Apart however from the fact that these buildings pre-date the recognition of the phenomenon of the popular by over fifty years in some cases, it is, in addition difficult, given the social positions of some of the individuals who built such houses, to think them in terms of the popular. Furthermore, it might just (continued...)}
This is perhaps what finally explains the fact, to which attention was called in the introductory chapter, that these south eastern Nigerian buildings (and other buildings of the same productional contexts in related other places) have received little attention to date, and that when such buildings have been paid attention, they have tended to become subsumed under the label of an extended family of architecture that is basically European or American.

One might make the assumption in countering this view, that to a greater extent than was previously possible, textual witness is by 1890 available for the construction of a documentary history that may offer challenges to the Europeanizing frame. As was suggested in the Introduction however, in spite of this availability, both south east Nigerian architecture and its culture of production since about the turn of the century continue, nevertheless, to be marked by a tendency to maintain the pre-existent interpretative structures by which the customary architecture of West Africa before about 1889 (the architecture that therefore precedes the period of the particular change ushered in by increased news of, and knowledge of European ways), has been characterized by western historiography and ethnographic writing, and in the specific ways claimed above.

The claim here instead asserted that southeast Nigeria in this period (and by extension in previous eras) had a culture of architecture that is characterized by more than a generalized correspondence of space and social form, or of style and

\[74^2\text{(...continued)}\]

be that the permanence of buildings, in comparison say with posters, or with video-tape, precludes the usefulness of such cultural-studies methods for the study of the objects herein contained.
technological reflexivity; constructs by which both the 'vernacular' has been understood in architectural studies (Lebeuf [1961], Hasselberger [1964], Rapoport [1969], Guidoni [1977]). Instead this southeast Nigerian architecture was produced in a milieu which possessed relationality (that each building is aware in its composition of the existence of others not wholly unlike itself), and an aesthetic politics (that style had particular signification, and that patrons were not only aware of this, but that they manipulated this fact for the purpose of influencing the way in which they were perceived by society). In this milieu, one discovered an acute sense of stylistic competitiveness, and a distinctive set of recognized and named architectural creators.

The inquiry here has revealed moreover, that amongst the locality's architectural creators, there existed a mutual recognition of each other's practice, and that this recognized landscape of practice, extended beyond the locality of the small village-town. Finally, it became clear that both practitioners and their patrons recognized the former's boundedness as a non-exclusive group of individuals who functioned (and had to function) within the constraints of a certain degree of institutionality, historical knowledge and collegiality. In one form or another this architecture is possessed of all the specifics of individual recognition that is assumed in speaking of architecture in the west. Much, if not all of West Africa was therefore no field of the anonymous creator oppressed by the weight of tradition, and liberated from this by the European/American presence and its forcible compulsion of West Africans into history. Perhaps then this knowledge of the historicity of this location might indicate

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They were not formed as an association of any sort which might have approximated the idea of a guild and the strict rules of membership and conduct which this might entail.
that vernacular architecture cannot ultimately be justified as an analytical category, especially not in the terms and by conditions (such as the degree and rate of stylistic change) by which the nature of the histories of particularly privileged buildings of the West are used to hold the architecture of other places custody behind indigenizing bars.

In this writing, an attempt to move historiography across such prohibited boundaries has, not surprisingly, involved a traversal across disciplinary boundaries, no matter how momentarily. Interestingly, such liberation seemed confirmed in its validity when succor was sought in juridical (judicial?) history. At that moment in the text, it was seen that the adoption of a different judicial world-view and of aspects of the culture accompanying the former, implied that all the modes of changeability outlined above also occur in realms different from architecture. Moreover, all such changes seem well motivated by a sense of the advantage offered individuals in the community (if not always the community at large) by the adoption of new elements into the status quo. However, though tending in the same direction, these changes are not parallel for different aspects of the cultural complex and, as was indicated, do not pass through comparable stages at the same moment. Moreover, the change is rarely sudden and disconnected completely from the past. So for example that although from the present it may never be known in detail what the circumstances were in which the coastal Nigerian trading Houses shifted their practice by the adoption of elements of European law, and for what exact purpose, it is obvious that by the time the transitions in legal practice might be thought to have been consolidated, one observes a coincidence with the early moments of appropriation of European elements into coastal ‘traditional’ architecture. When legal practice was
converted completely to European norms (under the force of colonization), the evidence suggests that much of the architecture continued the practice of mixing the two (African and European) worlds. The moment in which architectural practice shifts its own appropriative strategy to the extent that such strategy might be thought of as a form of mime, is a moment that seems to have occurred only much later. Essentially local and indigenous, the newer universe of mime is, significantly, one which is nevertheless caught up in the experience of colonialism, and of the ridicule of traditional forms of understanding which such an experience wrought. To use the chamber-pot narrative illustratively again, it is as if by this new mimetic period the Yoruba chief of the small village town of Ile Agbo were no longer secure in the ‘right’ his own culture had to make a chamber pot over into a highly luxurious drinking vessel. The progressivist mimetic buildings then mark the moment in which this Chief were to accept the chamber pot as a chamber pot, being then too embarrassed to utilize it in any other manner. Similarly, in Igbo and Izhon architecture, the interruption of a new consciousness is also indicated, and culminates in a building like the Adinembo house.

It was shown nevertheless that the Adinembo house is remarkable for its own innovativeness. Spatially, both its structure and the layout of its rooms though identified by European labels, are organized in a way that no European could easily live with...or in. Physically speaking, the skin of the building is highly textured and ornamented (figs. 18 and 19), and is reminiscent of the status-granting ornamental cicatrization of the human skin that would have been normal practice through much of the equatorial West African region at the time (fig. 144). And yet, all this is managed without
an apparent breach of the categories that are recognized as architectural within the discourse of Europe.

Care was also taken in this dissertation to differentiate the nature of the changes in architectural culture as this was traced from one place, community or ethnicity to another". Thus, the intellectual transformations indicated above for the coastal communities did occur inland as well, but via a somewhat different process. Perhaps the earliest indications of what these inland processes were are illustrated by the accounts of how the earliest Christian conversions were achieved in Igboland. Isolated from the cultural exchanges at the coast, the arrival of Christianity, and thus of many subsequent new ideas, actually seems to have occurred through the agency of Igbo 'slaves', captive workers who were attached to particular coastal masters as traders. In the period much earlier than the one in which Chief Adinembo would hit upon the idea of himself becoming resident in Igboland, these workers would (having achieved the trust of their masters) become the buyers for the latter's trade, returning to their former villages to buy the palm oil and/or palm kernels that were in demand on the coast. It was apparently at such markets for example that evangelical meetings were first convened, and it was apparently in such a context that many Igbos first heard detailed narratives of the African (and European) worlds beyond their borders. Interestingly then, the carriers of new cultural ideas to the Igbo heartland, were often Igbos themselves, albeit ones who had become assimilated into

"It was even suggested, though much more rarely, that such changes might even have been differentiated across gender lines."
coastal society. It is interesting that some fifty or so years later in which Joshua Adinembo erected his house the transmitters of the alien culture would have then included significant numbers of Igbos also. By this time however, such Igbos would not have been the indentured workers of the coast, but instead the well-educated, well-travelled Igbo clergy man (or colonial administration clerk) now hailing from the country of Sierra Leone.

It is the specific nature of this inland interface that seems to account for the more playful and inventive attitude to be discovered towards appropriating elements of European architecture to its own more inland location. For, not only was this culture 'okrika', arriving second hand as it were, and already mediated by a narrator, but, in addition, the narrator may have been perceived as less obviously foreign since many of them were for a brief moment black, even if a few of them no longer spoke their ancestral tongues. The 'site of production' of the new architecture after about 1910 in these more inland areas as well as the relationships of signification in which it was inserted here, may thus be understood as an integral part of this local self-missionizing dynamic.

It is thus important to emphasize that the particular patrons investigated in the dissertation must be understood, as was suggested just earlier, in the context of a much wider practice. For, in addition to these individuals (or

745 This is the only explanation for example for why such 'slaves' chose to return to their masters, when it seems possible that had they chosen not to return, their masters had no resources at their disposal to effect a recapture.

746 As was indicated in chapter__ of the missionary John Christopher Taylor, these individuals are often of Igbo ancestry.
commissioning groups), it is now apparent that the particular buildings explored earlier, along with the related histories of the individual builders involved in these projects, need also to be understood as a small and representative part of a larger and more generalized picture of an architectural culture.

In this regard, the trend which the exploration here seems to establish for this architectural culture, posits the existence of two specific kinds of formative relationship. One is a relationship which is played out amongst the coastal communities themselves, involving an exchange between the European communities of the coast, and the Africans amongst whom the former were dispersed, and with whom they cohabited. The second relationship involved the more distant but equally transformed cultures of the communities of the inland regions, and involved a cultural interaction between two different groups of Africans, one group of whom had direct contact with the European world, the other group of which had such contact either only indirectly, or much more intermittently. At least two major kinds of interface are therefore identifiable and represented in the range explored in this work, at each one of whose junctures the governing dynamic of the interrelationship is distinct and specific to its location.

⁴⁷ So vibrant was this culture, that it was indeed difficult to decide which buildings, patrons and builders would be included in this dissertation from the information gathered.
Post Face: 'Mixed-Marriage Architecture' and the Cultural Politics of Identity. Though the nature of the coastal and of the inland interface has not been the focus of this investigation to the same extent (the focus has been on the second one of the two kinds of relation), it can be taken for granted that both relationships have been subject to a historical process and have changed over time. The dissertation has focused on a moment that has particular consequences for architecture, but this is immersed in the context of other aspects of culture which have also been subject to change, some at more or less of a quick pace than is evident in the culture of building alone.

One of the issues that the dissertation has addressed is the claim that is often extended to many of these kinds of buildings by European culture and scholarship; a claim that asserts European cultural ownership of these south eastern Nigerian buildings. The other issue, located around the definitional structure of architectural studies, is the latter’s confinement of certain kinds of architectural culture to a sphere of difference labelled (amongst other things) as vernacular. Earlier the idea of the vernacular was debated, and it was suggested that such nomenclature often results in

748 Which in theory might include all of, law and justice, music, graphic representation, clothing, as well as architecture for example.

749 It might be noted here, that the kinds of study with which one is involved in North America primarily within programs that are titled History Theory and Criticism, or Theory and Criticism, are most typically found in Europe under the umbrella of Architectural studies. This indicates that the serious discourse on architecture in Europe is constituted in the same manner that Women’s Studies, or African American studies is constituted in North America. In this sense, one might also comprehend the dubiousness with which it is beheld by the dominant thinking in the academy, no comment of course on the quality of work produced in such places, nor on the validity of the constitution of such multi-disciplinary spaces.
the marginalization of the architecture of the other, and with the occupation of the center by the kinds of building (and culture in which they are produced) that is more typically the focus of study in west European and North American architectural education. The concept of a cultural center, and of a periphery is of course not a neutral geographic space. This conception recognizes the structure’s centripetal nature. The cultural center being the location to which marginal cultures are forced by their own desire to tend toward, even as that culture emanates a centrifugal force which prevents the marginal culture itself from occupying the center. In a sense then, there is conflict governing the dynamic, and its relative stability is only ensured, as indicated earlier, by the offices of cultural and political power and of domination.

A critical history cannot however fall prey to the self fulfilling model of a centrifugal/centripetal structure. Much that has been presented in the dissertation would appear to contest such a model. Significantly, some of the buildings explored, and the contexts of their production offer alternative conceptions that disperse the notions of possession in which non customary architecture in West Africa has been embroiled. In the Adinembo House, it was observed that the organization of its spaces reversed the structure that might be expected of it in a European or European-American location. Topologically speaking, the house’s plan relocates the marginal to the center, and disperses the center


751 It might also be recalled that this power is real and that the abhorence of marginal culture’s approach to the center is resisted, as was illustrated by the glee with which the British forces directed their Nembe catastrophes on buildings of a ‘European type’.
to the margin. It was seen moreover, that in occupying the middle, this new center was not reconstituted as a single, powerful, controlling space, but was fragmented, non-interconnected and unimpressive.

The potential that this might offer as a model for relationships between cultures is obvious. Essentially, it implies a dispersal over a territory without the dual characteristics of a powerful center and an unprivileged margin. Instead, each room, each Other, is itself a center, and a degree of equality exists between each such space. This equality is of course not a perfect or stable one. The constraint of sequence (where one moving through its spaces) or of form (one cannot be at more than one level of the building at a time) indicate that hierarchy and control might still be plotted in the buildings spatial structure. Or, in other words, the logic of formal topology and of geographic spatial structure rarely coincide. Yet, in traversing any sequence in the building, the individual creates a set of spatial relationships and of hierarchies which differs according to route. What is central and powerful, therefore becomes the result of a subject’s interest, goal, experience, and much less a result of an in-built and inescapable ‘structure’.

The same house also offers other models. Earlier on, the house’s posture was characterized as resembling the theatrics of mime. It was indicated that thus conceived, the surface of the house, relentlessly covered over in a low-relief ornamentation as it was, functioned in a manner akin to the mask, make-up, and costume of the mime artist. From a

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7 For detailed studies of the nature of this difference see Hillier and Hanson (1987).
distance, thus, it appeared as a rusticated European, but it revealed something entirely Other (even at the surface alone) if one failed to keep one’s distance. It was argued that its strategy was therefore dual, depending for effect on where one chose to locate oneself in viewing.

Europeans apparently mistook its act of mime for reality, a result that might appear contradictory to the American reader, more rehearsed in interrogating such notions under the paradigmatic umbrella of Orientalism [Said (1978), Inden (1990)], in which context the Arab and Ottoman worlds might be more accurately conceived of a resistance to European representations of them; as not (even as a ruse), interested in mirroring Orientalist representations. Nevertheless it is possible at least to glimpse the sources, and differences which account for the early 20th century British writers observational blind-spotting in the view of the cultures of the African continent.

For the European world of the 18th and 19th centuries, the invented sub-Saharan Africa seems to have been spiced with some of the exoticism that defined Ottoman Turkey, Arabia, China and Japan. However, a major distinguishing feature of the invented Africa, is that it was seen as lacking the ‘civility’, different or not, that marked the tension of Europe’s relation with the middle and far easts. This supposed lack of ‘civility’ was often constructed around the naked African body"53, typically that of a woman, and thus shares something with European representations of the Orient.

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53 This in itself is of considerable pedigree. Hans Burgmair’s 1543 series of prints depicting the races of the world is significant in this regard. One of the primary signs that locate the African, next to the rest of humanity, is their being represented without clothing.
What perhaps distinguishes the two projects seems well indicated by a comparison of Emile Torday’s representation of a Kuba woman of the Congo, with Ingres Odalisque with Slave of 1839 (fig 145 and 146)\(^7\), and by juxtaposing Michel Leiris’s photograph of a ‘tattooed Kuba woman’ with Ingres Turkish bath (fig. 147 and 148). Leaving aside the implication of the fact that one is forced to compare a real, exposed woman with an imagined one (it is clear that Ingres was not directly from a real scene of such a bath), it is possible to note the presence of desire in one image, and the construction of its inverse, whatever that may be, in the other. This difference seems somewhat reflected in where the female body is located relative to a supportive architecture.

Where the Arab and Turkic female body is multiplied orgasmically\(^5\) within the barely-lit, classicized and sensualized interior of the imaginary harem, the African woman is isolated and externalized by sometimes being placed in front of a definitive ‘traditional’ building, in which little if any allure seems on offer\(^6\). Certainly, neither of the skins of the two African women is depicted so as to create the site of the delight of caress ...at least not in this instance; it is there, for that moment, only of interest as an object of pseudo-scientific knowledge.

\(^7\) This comparison is necessarily short-handed. It could nevertheless be repeated for any number of cultural spheres. Conrad’s Heart of Darkness vs Gautier’s Constantinople, or Hastings’s bureaucratic policy in India versus Lugard’s in Nigeria.

\(^5\) As it would well have been for its contemporary male audience.

\(^6\) The reader might also recall a similar construction, seen earlier for Talbot’s Awa Ita, ‘Snake Woman of Oban’.
This did not remain the boundary of Europe’s interest. Femininity was recognized as existing behind the ‘uncivil’ surface of skin color and of skin incised relief-ornament. If the Arab woman’s veil invited an unveiling, then for a contemporary of Torday’s like Leo Frobenius, the African woman’s skin and appearance, in order to render her desireable and therefore target for a conquest, demanded a smoothening. Leo Frobenius’s Yoruba woman (fig. 149) is delineated in a manner (accentuated by the choice of profile over frontality) that renders her nearly Caucasian. An analogue it seems, for the ‘pacification’ that would be visited on these women’s societies. Thus perhaps the paradox of both the insistence on mission, and also the school uniform angst; the desire for the African in ‘Mohammedan’ dress. When Africans, taking the cue that White was right, conducted themselves in such a manner as to be mistaken for European, the Europeans themselves run scared, and desire that their subjects remain visibly other.

It was therefore the initial construction; that of the unalluring African woman, who required as support a corresponding and confirming architecture, that accounts for the congealing of what is allowed to be seen as African architecture, around the mud hut: the sign of a culturally and technically unsophisticated architecture. If, in other words, all the facets of the invention of this view of sub-Saharan architecture were to persuade, it was clear that other kinds of architecture could not be admitted. Chief Adinembo’s wife Warigbani, who would have been equally simply-clothed, could hardly be posed in front of the Adinembo House, if the tale was to remain non-contradictory.

The absence of buildings like the Adinembo House from descriptions in the manner of the one of early twentieth
century Okrika results then from what becomes an assumption that these kinds of buildings were at best inauthentic African, or at worst European. They could not for example, be of import to the ethnographer's understanding of the part Igbo, part Izhon, culture that by then had become distinctively the culture of the delta island of Okrika.

It was mentioned earlier that two interfaces might be imagined for the production of twentieth century culture in south eastern Nigeria, Okrika itself (or Asaba-Onitsha) clearly belonging to the coastal interface, while Nimo belongs to the hinterland conjunction. As the nomenclature 'part-Igbo and part-Izhon' indicates, the apportionment of cultural ownership need not arise only in the context of the presence of non-Africans. Intra-Nigerian debates over cultural ownership are far from unknown in the present. There are even indications that such posturing around forms of culture may well have pre-dated their peculiar forcing to the surface, as was engendered by the declaration of Colony and of Protectorate.

One of the important factors in both relationships (in the two forms of cultural interface, and of the claims of cultural ownership implied in each instance) has been suggested but not located specifically. This factor may be defined as cultural power. It may be thought of as the degree to which any individual or culture, borrowing ideas from an alien culture of whom some knowledge is had, is in control of the dynamic and meaning of conversion. Cultural power may therefore refer to the sense in which an individual has confidence that his or her way of understanding another culture, and specifically in order to borrow from that culture, is subject only to judgments that are makeable from within the culture operating the conversion. If one returns for a final time to the
Clappertonian statement about the ‘chamber pot’, the idea of cultural power might be introduced in that regard with the aid of the following imagined scenario.

Let it be supposed that the Yoruba inhabitants of Ile Agbo were able to have overheard the conversation between Hugh Clapperton and his colleague, in which they suggested that the Ile Agbo chief had made what for the visiting Englishmen was a grotesque misappropriation, by offering them a drink (and thus forcing them to drink) from an object intended for the most opposite of functions. In this context, cultural power might refer to the extent to which the Yoruba listeners would have felt that such a judgment was de jure for their circumstance; the extent, that is, to which the Yoruba listener might be able to feel confoundment at such a discovery, or the extent on the other hand to which though such a discovery is hilarious, hilarity could occur without at the same time any sustained recognition of, response to, or shame at the discovery that English culture supposes other uses for the object. Cultural power refers to a power relation which underlies such apportionings of use, and to the likelihood that appropriate use for an object only arises in any culturally significant way when there is a major difference in the degree to which one locale feels confident in its own aesthetics, especially when such an aesthetic practice and understanding is placed adjacent to that of a different community.

In these terms, the culture of architecture in south eastern Nigeria up to the late 1930s was a very powerful one, which still indicates no apologetics for its preferred aesthetic practices. It is paradoxical, given this, that as the second World War came to a close, and as the clamor for political
independence gathered momentum, that the kind of architecture explored here begins to lose its social power, replaced increasingly by a professionally controlled building production which, in its earliest phases (between 1959 and 1965), seems to indicate the very opposite of the idea of independence both in terms of its aesthetic, and in terms of the economic structure it implies.\textsuperscript{757}

One may suggest that for the former buildings (the buildings that were explored here) the question of what national label is appropriate to them persists nevertheless; the question that is of which of the cultures by which each building is surrounded actually has a right of ownership may refuse departure when they enter the gaze of the academy (whether western, or in Africa itself). It may, surely, be regarded as a non-question, to be rebuffed for the suspicion that it seeks to essentialise the object. Claims have been lodged over houses and chamber-pots in West Africa. Such claims often compare them with buildings of the colonial administration itself, and with their manner of occupation. Given some of the superficial resemblances that have been noted for many of the houses adjacent to models that were erected by Colonial government officials, such a strategy has served such an essentializing project well. Based on the information in this dissertation, a counter claim may be imagined, one that would be based both on the new architecture's confluences with customary architecture as much as by the reason of its history, physical ownership and location. Ultimately nevertheless the lodging of such a counter-claim is not the raison d'être of this dissertation.

\textsuperscript{757} For a preliminary exploration of this issue see Ikem Okoye (1994): 'Good News for Modern Man?: Architecture as Evangelical Project in Southern Nigeria' in \textit{Passages}, Fall 1993, vol 4, no. 1
Finally, though, Okrika had offered, the reader is reminded, a most interesting response to the still undiluted desire some readers might harbor to classify these buildings more strictly. In order to comprehend the relevance of Okrika marriage systems to the issues explored here, it is necessary to think of the non-customary building as the architectural offspring of the relationship between Europe and North America on the one hand, and Africa on the other. Product of a mixed-marriage the question is bound to arise regarding what identity to bestow on the child, or if one wants to think of Independence\textsuperscript{758} as a form of divorce, of who might have custody of the child. In this allegorical scenario, the care/custody of the child, refers to the text by which the discipline of art history and of architectural history seems prepared to surround such objects, and by which they are brought into the maturity of our disciplines uncontested.

As was indicated in chapter 8, Okrika culture recognizes many forms or types of marriage, in each form of which comes a particular understanding of the ownership of children\textsuperscript{759}. These forms of marriage are known as the \textit{Ya} and the \textit{Igwa} forms of marriages. As the reader may recall from chapter 8, the \textit{iya} marriage is contracted only between members of the same House\textsuperscript{760}. It is the most formal, and the most prestigious, requiring a significant financial outlay (in bride-price as in the financing of the marriage event and the entertainment of guests). Under this particular form of marriage, divorce is not recognized (or possible), and the filial relation which

\textsuperscript{758} That is the political independence that resulted in the 1960s from agitation (and guerilla struggles) against the maintenance of European colonies in Africa.

\textsuperscript{759} See Chief E.D.W. Opuogulaya (1975) op. cit.

\textsuperscript{760} See footnote number ___htm
it mandates is one in which the offspring of such a union are the legal possession of the *iya*-marrying husband.

On the other hand, a second form of marriage known as *igwa* may be contracted by a man and a woman, which may include members of other 'Houses'. The marriage may even occur between members of different Houses who may already be married under *ya*. Though it is a legally constituted, publicly declared union, it often displays aspects of a liaison, or of a more romantic union, or of a more casual, sexual-attraction based relationship; perhaps even of an extra-marital affair that in this context is allowed legal and public sanction. In *igwa* however, the offspring of the union do not belong to the husband, but to either the wife’s *Ya* husband (if previously married under *ya*), or to the *igwa* wife’s own father or her oldest brother.

Moreover, *Opuogulaya* has stated of the historical transformations that these systems have undergone more recently, that "...the hitherto tight customary rope around the possession of children born under the Igwa system of marriage, is also slackening under the pressure of modern times [and that]... A majority of grown men and young people [now] engage in Igwa marriage...". A third form of marriage union was also mentioned earlier, said to be a response to the problem of ownership of one’s offspring. In this third, and (rather interestingly) unnamed form⁷⁶¹, the marriage is contracted with the foreigner [that is with a non-Okrika and non-Izhon person], who seem in the, early twentieth century,

⁷⁶¹ Interesting for the fact that like the buildings in the study about which the present author commenced with the problem of naming (an architecture that has been provisionally prefixed by 'New', 'non-customary', 'modern'), Okrika culture itself often has not formed a consensus about determining new cultural constellations.
to have been mainly Igbo: "The non-possession of one’s own children, combined with the difficulty in marrying a girl of one’s choice from a different family, urged people to save up money to marry wives from Ibo-land whereby they could possess their own children."

The naming of the architecture represented by the Uzoka house, the Emmanuel Church, the Nguko gate-houses, and by Adinembo House amongst others, may therefore be viewed as one which has involved a struggle over the ownership of offspring of a liaison, and which dispute in Okrikan terms, results from unclarity as to which kind of marriage was entered into at the outset, not to mention who is to be regarded as having been the husband and who as having been the wife.

The determination of who’s culture was husband in the historical situation is not without difficulty. As a total system, it inhabits the world of the husband, and not necessarily that of the wife. It might therefore seem appropriate to regard Okrikan culture as husband. Moreover, since marriage was patrilocal here, and since these are buildings erected in a specific place, one has a second reason to presume that Okrika was husband. It is not unreasonable however to suggest that the interpretation being attempted here allow that the European culture was nevertheless husband, simply because of its dominant position in the relationship.\footnote{Of course, one has to assert that the fact that such marriage systems are not conceivable in reality for Europe, does not automatically consign Europe to the female role; to the role that is of the imported, typically Igbo, woman whose own culture would also not have thought such arrangements possible. Rather, in order for the analogy to be useful, the forms of marriage practiced by Kirikeni must be stood in for the very idea of marriage per se, an idea which all human society appears to recognize, if not always practice.}
The marriage could not have been ya, based simply on the fact that Britain and Izhonland can hardly be understood as belonging to the same cultural 'house'. It is possible to construe the relationship as an igwa marriage for the reason of its contractor’s difference. The architecture would then be justifiably possessable by Izhon culture (Okrika’s ya husband in a manner of speaking, and in fact), or by south eastern Nigeria more generally (as her father, or brother).

In treating similar offspring, whether found in Cameroon, in western Nigeria, or in the Ivory Coast, architectural historians and writers have tended to assume that Europe (and North America), entered into a conjugal contract which gives Europe, and the Americas, rights to the cultural ownership of the buildings. They, it seems, insist on determining the child’s upbringing, and what sort of identity is to be lent it.

However evidence has been presented to contest this particular interpretation of the liaison that was entered into, and to challenge the idea that its products lack the historical ‘authenticity’ expected of things African. It is this perceived lack that of course explains the ease with which these kinds of object are assimilated, albeit as marginalia, into the Western family. It has been indicated here instead that there was a vibrant and independent indigenous southeastern Nigerian discourse around (and even on) these buildings, and that such inscriptions recognize them (even more than contemporary writers, scholars, and philosophers of the post-colonial condition seem at times to) as belonging to this locale. This local knowledge recognizes, moreover, that colonial discourse challenged the locality (as much as it challenges us in the academy) to take on not merely colonial
discourse's own textuality, but also both its 'complicated extra textual and non-discursive implications and consequences' (Breckenridge and van de Beer [1993]), as well as its difficult and complex construction of the contradictory and simultaneously resisting colonial subject. This was brilliantly illustrated by the plaque of St. Peter's Church in Okrika, which seemed to recognize the interplay between text and the extra-textual, in that instance, apparently, between Colonial representations and the physical and objected world in which it is enacted.

It is convincing to state then that a cultural naming as such can only be granted this architecture at the risk of doing buildings great violence. This clearly holds a critique for the practices of cultural naming of architecture in other places.

More importantly, it must be concluded that the interpretation here of the evidence of southeastern Nigerian architecture in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, calls for a paradigmatic reorientation. Earlier observational and interpretative practices which have tended to reserve a romantic 'authenticity' for African cultural products cease to be persuasive. In this regard, the significant impact of the colonial period on African architecture need no longer be considered abberant. Its specialness lies in the analytical window it provides. Properly understood, African architecture both in this period, and in earlier periods, conforms to a historical logic, inspite of its unfolding within a milieu that is Other than western. Being both dialogical and dialectical, a critical, historical approach which nevertheless maintains the location's cultural specificity, needs to be applied hence to positioning its development.
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