

**DOMESTIC ARCHITECTURE IN BENIN CITY: A STUDY OF CONTINUITY AND
CHANGE**

BY

**UCHENDU IFEBUCHE ERICK
ENV2103377**

**DEPARTMENT OF ARCHITECTURE,
FACULTY OF ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCES,
UNIVERSITY OF BENIN,
BENIN CITY**

MARCH, 2026

**DOMESTIC ARCHITECTURE IN BENIN CITY: A STUDY OF CONTINUITY AND
CHANGE**

BY

**UCHENDU IFEBUCHE ERICK
ENV2103377**

**A PROJECT SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF ARCHITECTURE IN
PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE AWARD OF BACHELOR OF SCIENCE (BSc.) DEGREE
IN ARCHITECTURE,
UNIVERSITY OF BENIN, BENIN CITY**

MARCH, 2026

DECLARATION

I, UCHENDU IFEBUCHE ERICK, hereby declare that this project work titled "**DOMESTIC ARCHITECTURE IN BENIN CITY: A STUDY OF CONTINUITY AND CHANGE**" is a record of an original work done by me, as a result of my research effort carried out in the Department of Architecture, Faculty of Environmental Sciences, University of Benin, under the supervision of ARC. (MRS) G.E.O IFADA. All academic material used in this work and its sources has been duly acknowledged.

Signature

Date

CERTIFICATION

This is to certify that this study titled **DOMESTIC ARCHITECTURE IN BENIN CITY: A STUDY OF CONTINUITY AND CHANGE** was carried out by UCHENDU IFEBUCHE ERICK, with Matric Number **ENV2103377** under my supervision and meets the regulation governing the award of the Bachelor degree in Architecture of the University of Benin, Benin City, Edo State, Nigeria. We certify that it has not been submitted for the Bachelor's degree in this or any other university and is approved for its contribution to knowledge and literary presentation.

ARC. (MRS) G.E.O IFADA
(Project Supervisor)

Date

DR. (ARC.) OKAFOR IWU
(Head of Department)

Date

DEDICATION

This project is dedicated to the Almighty God, the one who has seen me through this academic journey right from the beginning.

Also, I dedicate this project with great love and affection to my parents, friends, and loved ones who have been of great support to me.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my deepest gratitude to God Almighty who led me down this path and enabled me to finish strong.

I would also like to thank my parents Mr. and Mrs. UCHENDU for their unending love and support for me and also to my siblings, thank you so much for your love and support through these years.

I am also grateful to my mentors and colleagues who turned friends and were always willing to share their knowledge and expertise.

Also, I would love to thank my project supervisor for her relentless effort in ensuring that this project was a success.

.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Title page	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	ii
Declaration	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	iii
Certification	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	iv
Dedication	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	v
Acknowledgment	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	vi
Table of Contents	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	vii
List of Figures-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	x
List of Plates-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	xi
List of Tables	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	xii
Abstract	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	xiii

CHAPTER ONE

1.0 INTRODUCTION	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
1.1 Background of the Study	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
1.2 Statement of the Research Problem	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2
1.3 Research Questions	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2
1.4 Aims and Objectives of the Study	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3
1.5 Definition of Terms	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3
1.6 The Scope of Study	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3
1.6.1 Introduction: The History and the People of Benin City	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3
1.6.2 Historical Background	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	4
1.6.3 Benin and its Surrounding Villages-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	8
1.6.4 Residential Zones in Benin City	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	9
1.7 Significance of the Study	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	11
1.8 Limitations of the Study	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	12

CHAPTER TWO

2.0 REVIEW OF LITERATURE	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	14
2.1 Theoretical Framework	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	14
2.2 Conceptual Framework	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	14
2.2.1 Concepts of Culture	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	14

2.2.2 House Form and Culture -	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	17
2.2.3 Traditional versus Modern Houses -	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	19
2.2.4 Classification of House-types -	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	21
2.2.5 Organization, Use and Meaning of Space -	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	23
2.2.6 Household -	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	25
2.3 Literature Review -	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	30
2.3.1 Domestic Architecture and Culture -	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	31
2.3.2 Social and Cultural Change -	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	33
2.3.3 Theoretical Perspectives on Socio-Cultural Change -	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	34
2.3.4 Continuity and Identity -	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	34
2.3.5 Cultural Change and Adaptation -	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	34
2.3.6 Factors Driving Socio-Cultural Change in Domestic Architecture	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	35
2.3.7 Implications for Domestic Architecture	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	36
2.3.8 Urbanization and Urban Change	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	36

CHAPTER THREE

3.0 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY -	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	42
3.1 Introduction -	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	42
3.2 Research Design -	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	42
3.3 Research Population -	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	43
3.4 Sampling Methods and Procedure	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	43
3.5 Research Sample Size -	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	44
3.6 Research Data Collection Method -	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	44
3.6.1 Design of Questionnaire -	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	44
3.6.2 Design of Interview Schedules -	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	45
3.7 Method of Data Analysis -	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	46

CHAPTER FOUR

4.0 ANALYSIS, FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION -	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	47
4.1 Introduction -	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	47
4.2 Social Demographic Characteristics of Respondents	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	47
4.3 Interpretation of Opinion-Based Survey Responses -	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	48

4.3.1 Research Question One: What are the housing characteristics of the buildings?	-	49
4.3.2 Research Question Two: What are the perceptions of change?	- - -	50
4.4 Case Studies	- - - - -	51
4.4.1 Core Residential Zone	- - - - -	51
4.4.2 Intermediate Residential Zone	- - - - -	57
4.4.3 Suburban Residential Zone Modified Courtyard House-Type	- - -	56
 CHAPTER FIVE		
5.0 SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS	- - -	68
5.1 Summary of Findings	- - - - -	68
5.2 Conclusion-	- - - - -	69
5.3 Recommendations	- - - - -	70
REFERENCES	- - - - -	73
APPENDIX	- - - - -	62

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1.1: Map of the Kingdom of Benin in the Nineteenth Century	- - - 4
Figure 1.2: Reconstructed Kingdom Benin Flag, now in the British National Maritime Museum	- - - - - 4
Figure 1.3: Present day Nigeria, showing the Position of Benin City	- - - 5
Figure 1.4: Engraving Showing Warriors with Spears and Shields, Drummers and Dancers, during a Ceremony in the Oba Palace	- - - - 6
Figure 1.5: Pre-colonial drawing of Benin City, before the British occupation	- - 7
Figure 1.6: Map of Benin and its surrounding villages	- - - 9
Figure 1.7: Map showing residential zone in Benin City	- - - 10
Figure 1.8: Plan of Benin City showing the core area and intermediate area-	- - 11
Figure 4.1a: Photo showing private courtyard (harem for women and children) Ikun n’derie	- - - - - 52
Figure 4.1b: Photo showing private courtyard (harem for women and children) Ikun n’derie	- - - - - 53
Figure 4.1c: Photo showing private courtyard (harem for women and children) Ikun n’derie	- - - - - 53
Figure 4.2: Outer courtyard for shrines and idols (Ikun n’arhuera)	- - - 54

LIST OF PLATES

Plate 4.1a: Floor Plan of a Typical Palace-Compound Benin House	-	-	-	55
Plate 4.1b: Floor Plan of a Typical Palace-Compound Benin House	-	-	-	55
Plate 4.1c: Floor Plan of a Typical Palace-Compound Benin House	-	-	-	56
Plate 4.2: Floor Plan of a Typical Family-Compound Benin House	-	-	-	57
Plate 4.3: Floor Plan of a Typical Modified Family-Compound Benin House	-	-	-	58
Plate 4.4a: Floor Plan of a Typical Family-Compound Benin House	-	-	-	59
Plate 4.4b: Floor Plan of a Typical Family-Compound Benin House	-	-	-	60
Plate 4.5: Floor plan of a typical adapted family-compound Benin house	-	-	-	61
Plate 4.6: Floor plan of a typical hybrid family-compound Benin house	-	-	-	62
Plate 4.7a: Floor plan of a typical corridor house-type (“face me i face you”)	-	-	-	63
Plate 4.7b: Floor plan of a typical corridor house-type (“face me i face you”)	-	-	-	63
Plate 4.8: Floor plan of a typical semi-detached flats (single and double floor)	-	-	-	64
Plate 4.9: Floor plan of a typical detached bungalow house-type	-	-	-	65
Plate 4.10: Floor Plan of a typical detached duplex and villa house-types	-	-	-	66
Plate 4.11a: Floor Plan of a typical detached flat in planned estates	-	-	-	66
Plate 4.11b: Floor Plan of a typical detached flat in planned estates	-	-	-	66

LIST OF TABLES

Table 4.1: Gender Distribution -	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	47
Table 4.2: Age Distribution -	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	47
Table 4.3: Various house types studied, their locations and numbers studied	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	48
Table 4.4: Type of House -	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	49
Table 4.5: Main Building Materials -	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	49
Table 4.6: Presence of Courtyard -	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	49
Table 4.7: Presence of Family Shrine -	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	50
Table 4.8: Urbanization Has Changed Domestic Architecture -	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	50
Table 4.9: Cultural Identity Is Important in Housing -	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	50
Table 4.10: Preference for Hybrid Architecture	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	50

ABSTRACT

Architectural facades play a vital role in shaping the identity, functionality, and aesthetic appeal of buildings, particularly in urban environments. This research investigates the incorporation of architectural facades in buildings within Benin City, Edo State, focusing on their social, cultural, and environmental impacts. The study explores how façade design contributes to the character of the built environment, enhances user experience, promotes climate responsiveness, and reflects local identity. Despite their significance, many buildings in Benin City lack thoughtful façade integration due to limited awareness, economic constraints, and insufficient design regulation. Through field observations, case studies, and stakeholder interviews, this research examines existing façade applications and identifies best practices for context-appropriate designs. The findings reveal that well-designed facades improve urban aesthetics, increase building efficiency, and foster a stronger sense of place. The study concludes that a deliberate approach to façade integration considering climate, culture, and functionality are essential for sustainable urban development. Key recommendations include promoting design education, enforcing architectural standards, and encouraging innovation to support meaningful façade design in Benin City. This research offers practical insights for architects, developers, and policymakers committed to enhancing the urban fabric through facade-conscious architecture.

CHAPTER ONE

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Architecture is one of the most expressive reflections of a people's culture, beliefs, and social evolution. Domestic architecture, in particular, serves as a physical manifestation of how societies adapt their building traditions to respond to environmental, cultural, and technological changes. In Benin City, the capital of Edo State, Nigeria, domestic architecture has undergone significant transformation, reflecting a blend of continuity and change rooted in indigenous traditions and influenced by modern trends. Historically, the traditional Benin house typology was closely tied to the socio-cultural life of the people. The houses, often constructed with mud walls, timber, and thatch roofs, were arranged around courtyards that symbolized unity and served communal purposes (Ogbebor & Osemwegie, 2016). However, with the advent of modernization, urbanization, and globalization, Benin City has witnessed a transition toward contemporary building forms that incorporate cement blocks, corrugated roofing sheets, and imported finishes (Eze, 2018). This evolution in domestic architecture reveals a dual narrative — the persistence of cultural symbols and the adoption of modern aesthetics. As observed by Ilesanmi (2020), architecture in Nigerian cities is no longer just a product of climatic or cultural factors, but also of social aspirations, economic conditions, and exposure to global design trends. Yet, despite this shift, traces of traditional Benin cultural values such as hierarchy, privacy, and communal interaction continue to influence domestic spatial organization (Okonofua, 2022).

The growing interest in preserving cultural identity within modern design has prompted renewed scholarly attention toward understanding how traditional architectural principles can coexist with modern technologies (Adebayo & Osasona, 2019). In this context, studying the domestic architecture of Benin City provides valuable insights into how local builders and residents navigate the tension between heritage preservation and modernization. This study investigates how socio-cultural factors in domestic architecture have changed or continued within the domestic built environment of the Edo people of Benin. It examines the forces driving these transformations, as well as their implications for the use and organisation of space. The study further seeks to understand residents' attitudes toward architectural change and continuity, how they utilize domestic spaces, and the house types that now exist in Benin City as a result of these evolving socio-cultural dynamics.

In the traditional Edo domestic environment, architectural changes are largely resident driven, with people modifying their houses according to cultural values, practical needs, and emerging aspirations. Because the major themes of this study—domestic architecture, people, indoor and outdoor space, and the interaction between them—are strongly human centred, a design that involves direct engagement with residents is essential. This aligns with contemporary methodological perspectives that emphasise understanding people’s lived experiences, cultural practices, meanings, and spatial behaviours (Flick, 2014; Silverman, 2016; Denzin & Lincoln, 2018).

1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The domestic architecture of Benin City today faces a complex set of challenges. Rapid urbanization and modernization have led to the decline of traditional building techniques and the loss of indigenous aesthetics. Many modern buildings, while functionally efficient, often lack the symbolic and cultural depth that characterized traditional Benin homes (Oghogho & Imuetinyan, 2021). Additionally, there is a growing disconnection between contemporary housing forms and the socio-cultural needs of the residents. The drive for Western-style architecture has overshadowed indigenous design wisdom, resulting in buildings that are sometimes unstable for their climatic conditions and culturally alien (Ebhota, 2019). This raises concerns about identity loss and architectural homogenization. Furthermore, government housing policies and urban planning frameworks rarely incorporate cultural continuity as a design criterion. As a result, there is an urgent need to investigate how the domestic architecture in Benin City can evolve sustainably — retaining its traditional essence while adapting to modern requirements.

1.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The formulation of research questions is crucial in guiding this study on the domestic architecture in Benin City. Given the challenges identified in the statement of the research problem, the following questions have been developed to explore the study of continuity and change.

1. What are the defining features of traditional domestic architecture in Benin City?
2. What factors have contributed to the transformation of domestic architecture in the area?
3. How do modern domestic structures reflect or diverge from traditional Benin cultural values?
4. In what ways can modern architectural design promote the continuity of indigenous identity?

1.4 AIM AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The aim of this study is to examine the continuity and change in domestic architecture within Benin City, identifying the factors that influence transformation while assessing the extent of cultural persistence. The specific objectives are to:

1. examine the traditional characteristics of domestic architecture in Benin City.
2. identify the factors responsible for changes in the city's domestic architectural forms.
3. assess how cultural, environmental, and technological influences shape modern housing patterns.
4. evaluate the degree to which traditional design principles are reflected in contemporary residential buildings.
5. evaluate strategies for integrating cultural continuity into modern domestic architecture.

1.5 DEFINITION OF TERMS

- **Domestic Architecture:** Refers to buildings designed primarily for residential purposes, reflecting the lifestyle, values, and traditions of their inhabitants.
- **Continuity:** The preservation or persistence of traditional architectural forms, materials, or spatial patterns over time.
- **Change:** The modification or transformation of architectural features due to external influences such as modernization, technology, or globalization.
- **Cultural Identity:** The collective sense of belonging and shared values expressed through art, architecture, and daily life practices.

1.6 THE SCOPE OF STUDY

1.6.1 INTRODUCTION: The History and the People of Benin City

Benin City is the study area, and it is the capital of Edo State, Nigeria. It is located between Latitudes 6 17' and 6 26' North, and longitudes 5 35' and 5 41' East (Fig 1.1). Benin City is unique because it is a nodal town that links the Northern, Southern, and Western parts of the country. It is found on the equatorial climatic belt, precisely on the A/W Koppen's zonal classification scheme with summer rains and winter dryness. Although there is hardly any month without rainfall, the concentration is between the months of April and October (wet season), and the dry season is prevalent between the months of November and March. The mean annual rainfall is well above 2000mm, with relative humidity that is above 70%. The temperature is high throughout the year, with a mean of 28 °C.

1.6.2 Historical Background

Benin City, with an estimated population of 1,147,188 in 2006, the city is the capital of Edo State, southern Nigeria and is a port on the Benue River. It is situated 200 miles by road east of Lagos. Benin is the centre of Nigeria's rubber industry, but processing palm nuts for oil is still an important traditional industry.

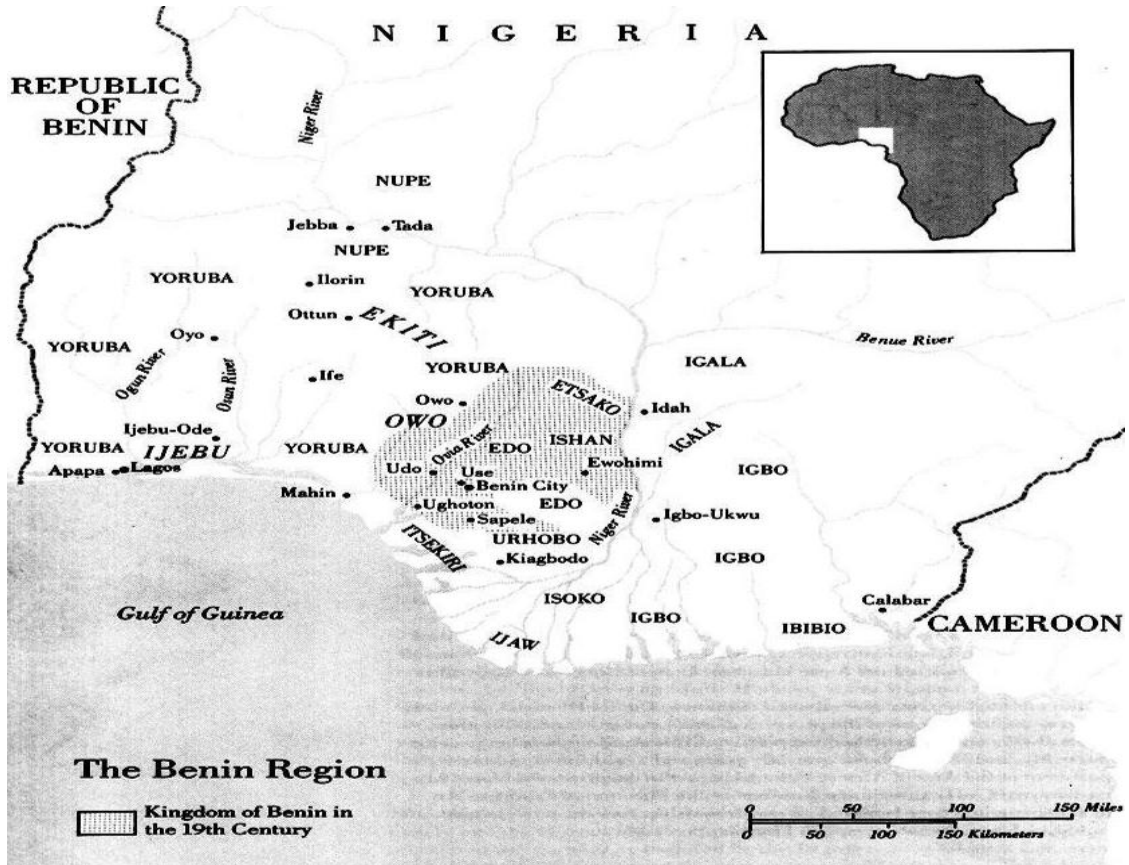


Figure 1.1: Map of the Kingdom of Benin in the Nineteenth Century
Source: Harry, (1992: p.12)



Figure 1.2: Reconstructed Kingdom Benin Flag, now in the British National Maritime Museum.
Source: Wikipedia, Encyclopaedia 2007.

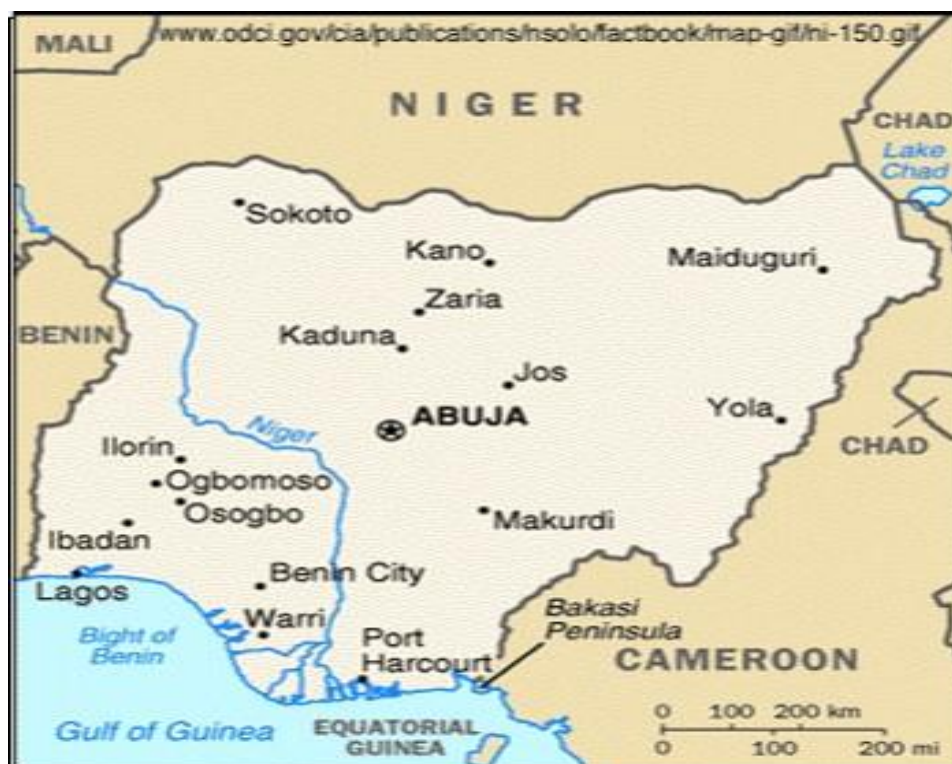


Figure 1.3: Present day Nigeria, showing the Position of Benin City
 Source: the CIA World Fact Book

The Benin Kingdom (different from the modern-day Republic of Benin, formerly known as Dahomey) is located in the tropical rainforest belt of Southern Nigeria, to the west of the River Niger. The Benin kingdom was founded in the 10th century (1180 AD) (*Columbia Encyclopaedia*, 2007). The original founders of the Benin Empire, the Edos, were initially ruled by the Ogisos (Kings of the Sky). About 31 known *Ogisos* ruled the empire. But the reign of Oba as the paramount power and ruler within the region came after a long period of interregnum. The Empire was a large pre-colonial African state of modern Nigeria. In 1440, the city-state became an empire and was renamed the Edo Empire. From the 14th to the 17th centuries, the empire extended from Onitsha in the east, through the forested south-western region of Nigeria and into the present-day nation of Ghana. The Ga of Ghana trace their ancestry to the ancient Kingdom of Benin (Lang, 2003).

The City spreads over 25,000 square kilometres, and about 100,000 people live there. Some of the streets in the City were 37 metres wide with well-planned rows of houses. The King of Benin lived in a huge and very beautiful palace which had wide courtyards and pillars and was decorated with ivory and bronze sculptures, wall plaques and doors for which Benin is so famous. Roofs were shingled and numerous high towers topped with bronze birds. 2,000 servants and men-at-arms lived in the palace with the Oba. When Europeans (Portuguese) first

arrived in the area in the late 15th century, a magnificent domestic architecture already existed in Benin. Some idea of its splendour was documented by Olfert Dapper in *Description de l'Afrique*, published in 1686, in the following way (translated into English) —the palace area was as large as the Dutch town of Haarlem. The palace area was divided into many magnificent palaces, houses, and apartments for the courtiers, and comprised beautiful and long square galleries about as large as the Exchange in Amsterdam, but one larger than another, resting on wooden pillars, from top to bottom covered with cast copper, on which are engraved the pictures of their war exploits and battles.



Figure 1.4: Engraving Showing Warriors with Spears and Shields, Drummers and Dancers, during a Ceremony in the Oba Palace. Source: CIA World Fact-book, 2006.

Also, moats and walls of huge mounds of earth (The walls were 1,200 kilometres long in total and reached a height of up to 20 metres) were built around the City to protect it from invaders. Today, it is declared a world heritage site and is being conserved; thus, the planning of Benin City followed the grid-iron pattern of the Renaissance city, with the core being the ring road (King Square). The King Square area accommodates the Oba's palace, museum, the Oba's market and the traditional shrine. The next sets of outlines are the houses of the chiefs and others as they radiate centrifugally to the periphery. Hence, as the houses move from the core to the periphery, the ages reduce successively from 300 years to 200 years, 100 years to 10 years and so on. Below is the hierarchy of houses, respectively:

1. The Oba's Palace: Under the Oba, there is an Advisory Council composed of three groups of
2. chiefs, namely the *Uzamas*, *Ekhaevben n'owa* and *Ekhaevben N'ore*
3. Houses of the Uzamas, their families and relatives, are next to the Oba's palace
4. Palace Chiefs' houses (*Ekhaevben N'owa*) are next to the Uzamas'.
5. Houses of the commoners: the ordinary free Edo people's houses then follow.
6. *Eviens' houses*: at the peripheries are the family houses of slaves (poor people).

However, one thing is common to an Edo home: the ancestral shrine. The Edos believe that their ancestors were intermediaries helping them to communicate with god. So they decorate shrines or altars to idolize their ancestors. This explains why for every house in Benin, there is a part specifically designed for the family shrine. Here is a picture of the ancient Benin kingdom before the British punitive expedition.



Figure 1.5: Pre-colonial drawing of Benin City, before the British occupation
 Source; Wikipedia, Encyclopaedia 2007

The 1897 British punitive expedition deeply damaged the cultural and architectural foundation of the City. The architecture was a large complex of homes in coarse mud, with hipped roofs of shingles or palm leaves. The Palace had a sequence of ceremonial rooms and was decorated with brass plaques. After the fall of the Benin Empire, the architectural landscape of the City was altered, and due to colonial influence, the City's architectural landscapes were dotted with foreign / western styles of architecture. This was when places like the Government Reservation

Area (G.R.A), legislative quarters, doctors' quarters, and Nigerian prisons' barracks, among others, were built. Shortly after independence in 1960, the City experienced yet another change in the architectural landscape. In 1967, Benin City was occupied by the secessionist "Republic of Biafra" during the Nigerian Civil War, which lasted from 1967 to 1970. Today, Benin City is the capital of the present-day Edo State of Nigeria. Edo State could be defined as a collection gathering of people of united yet diverse identity, who are mostly located in the mid-western part of Nigeria, West Africa (Omoigui, 2005). Edo State was created in 1991 out of the then Bendel State of Nigeria and subsequently divided into Edo and Delta States (UNDP Human Development Reports – 2003 and 2004). According to USAID reports in 2002, Edo State was estimated to have a population of 2.86 million; (in 1991, it had 2.1million, of which 64.47% live in Benin City, that is about 1,035,995 inhabitants) making it almost similar in size to Jamaica with a population of (2.74million), and bigger than Botswana, (1.6million) and Trinidad and Tobago with a population of (1.1million). Edo State has eighteen (18) Local Government Areas, namely Akoko Edo, Egor, Esan Central, Esan North East, Esan South East, Esan West, Etsako Central, Etsako East, Etsako West, Igueben, Ikpoba Okhan, Owan West, Owan East, Oredo, Orhionmwon, Ovia North East, Ovia South West and Uhumwode.

Many communities in Nigeria trace their ancestry to the ancient Benin Kingdom; hence there is a lot of linguistic and cultural affinity among the communities, which include Akoko Edo, Afenmai, Edo, Esan, Etsako, Ora, Igala, Igbira, Okpameri, Uneme Ososo, Urhobo, Izon, and Yoruba-speaking communities present in the State. The Edos are very traditional in their perspective and approach to life, regardless of the level of education. Therefore, the bonding of the Edo people is their strong belief in their traditions and various forms of worship, which have given a spiritual and temporal authority to the royal leadership in the State. However, the traditions and forms of worship are systematically being diluted by a move towards modern religious faiths with an underlying rejection of the traditional forms of worship. This has greatly influenced the domestic architecture of the Edo people to the point of producing a contemporary architectural style along the peripheries and the new expansions of the City. However, the City and its people are more properly called Edo. The Edo population is found mostly in and around the present day Benin City.

1.6.3 Benin and its Surrounding Villages

The extensive surface investigations which were made of the entire City and its surrounding villages enabled us to make a map (See Fig. 1.4). The map as presented in Fig. 1.4 shows

Benin City and its inner wall which is surrounded by no fewer than thirty-five (35) villages, namely *Iguogie, Iguosodin, Utoka, Ekenwan, Evbotobu, Ogieka, Evbogida, Use, Egor, Uwelu, Siluko, Utekon, Ugbowo, Igwikpe, Ohohugbo, Urumwon, Ova, Iguolo, Iguosa, Ugboikhiko, Oko, Ago-Aghogbi, Ogba, Evboro, Ugbor, Ugbekun, Idumwun-Ivbotor, Evbuo-Riaria, Ekae, Oka-Nahiri, Umelu, Ikpoba, Aduwawa, Ore-Ogbini, Iwogban, Okhoro* and so on. Benin City is under the *Oredo* Local Government Area, but it is bounded by three Local Government Areas – *Ikpoba-Okhan, Egor, and OviaSouth-West*, of which the villages listed above are wards.

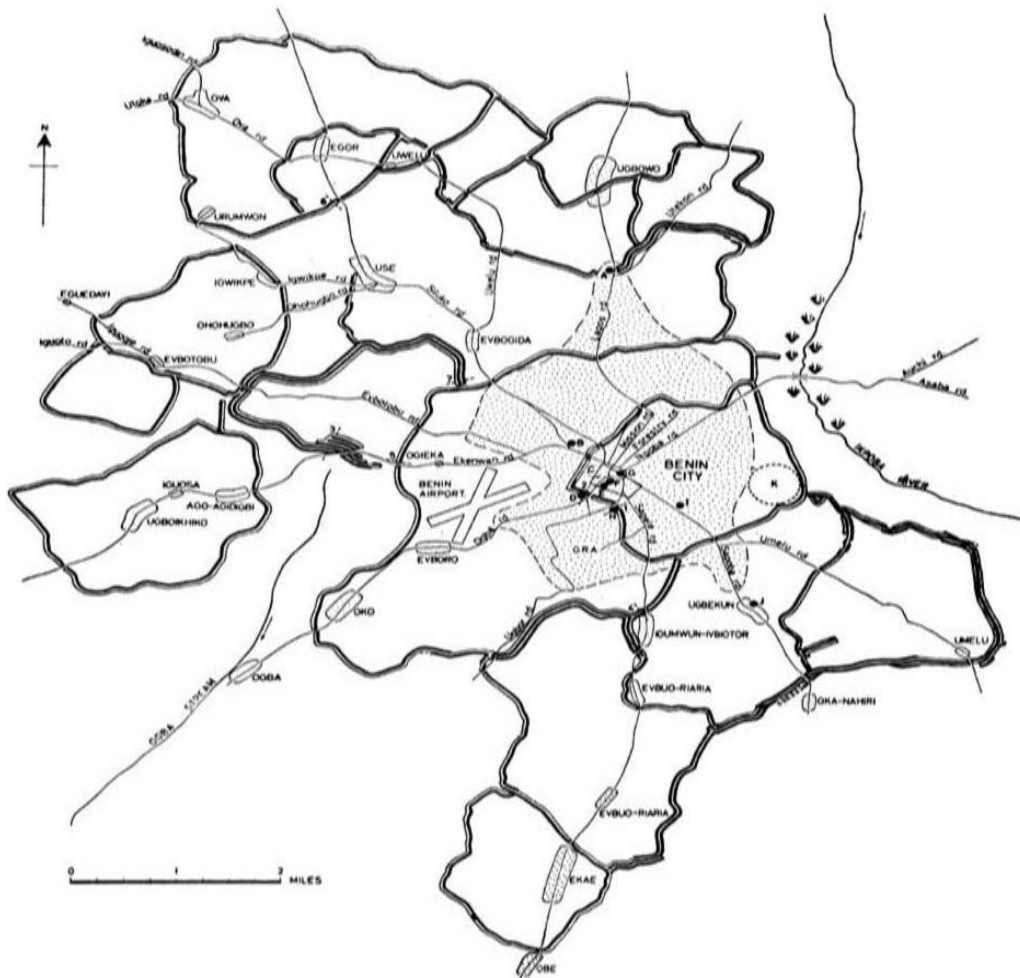


Figure 1.6: Map of Benin and its surrounding villages
Source: Connah (1972)

1.6.4 Residential Zones in Benin City

A study carried out in 1994 - 95 divided Benin City into four residential zones and documented them as Core Area, Intermediate Area, and Suburban Area, and the planned estate Settlement Area. (See Fig. 1.5 below). The core and intermediate residential areas of Benin comprise the oldest part of the City, where one can find the oldest architecture and residential spaces. The core area, by its planning and arrangement, is assigned to the royal families. At the centre of the core residential area are the Palace of the Oba and the *Ogbe* Quarter (Residential Area of

the Palace Chiefs), *Ore Nokhua* (residential area of the Town Chiefs), and the former *Ogiso* Palace located within the inner wall. While the intermediate residential area accommodates six of the Uzama residences (*Oliha, Edohen, Ezomo, Oloton, Ero, and Eholo n'Ere*), which are located outside the inner wall, the Queen Mother and the *Edaiken*, the heir-apparent and seventh member of the Uzama, are outside the outer wall. The inner walls enclose the core residential area, but the outer wall is inside the intermediate residential area (see Fig. 1.6).

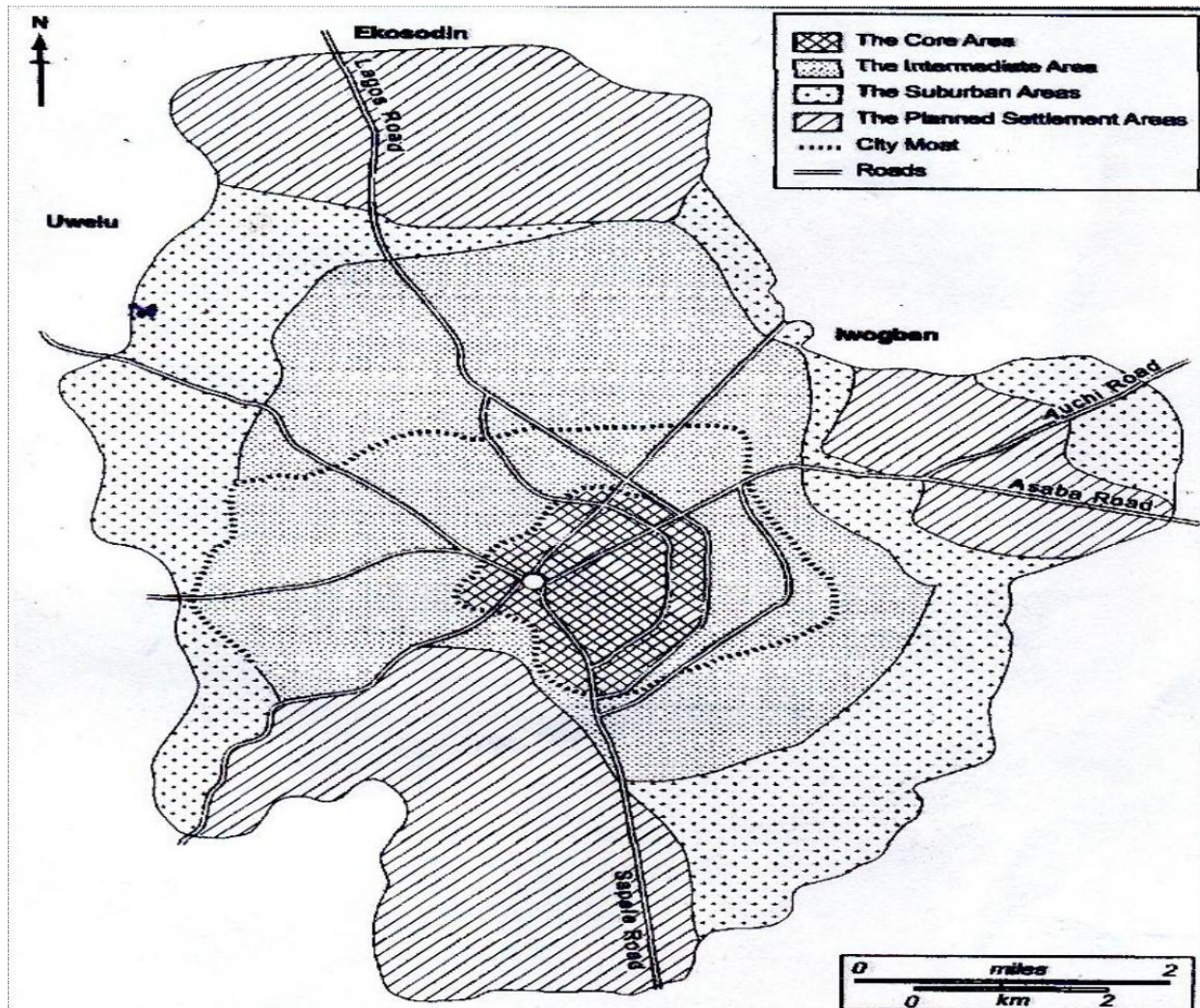


Figure 1.7: Map showing residential zone in Benin City
Source: Ogu (1995)

The suburban area and the unplanned settlement part of the City accommodate the residential areas of other families in Benin City. Therefore, a cross-section through the residential areas of the entire City reveals a chronological growth from the core residential area, which is where the oldest form of architecture can be found. Closely following are the intermediate residential area, the suburban residential area, and the very recent architecture found around the planned settlement area. In other words, a cross-sectional study through the City of Benin reveals an historical development of residential houses and house-types, with the oldest residential house-

types in the core residential area (encompassing the residential palace area of the monarch and the residential areas of the royal families) and the most contemporary house types in the un-planned settlement area of the City, apart from the Oba's family and the other royal family members (i.e. the Ogbe Chiefs and Town Chiefs), every other family in Benin migrated from a village around the City (Ezra, 1992). This further shows that a cross-sectional study will give the necessary historical perspective of the growth of the City.

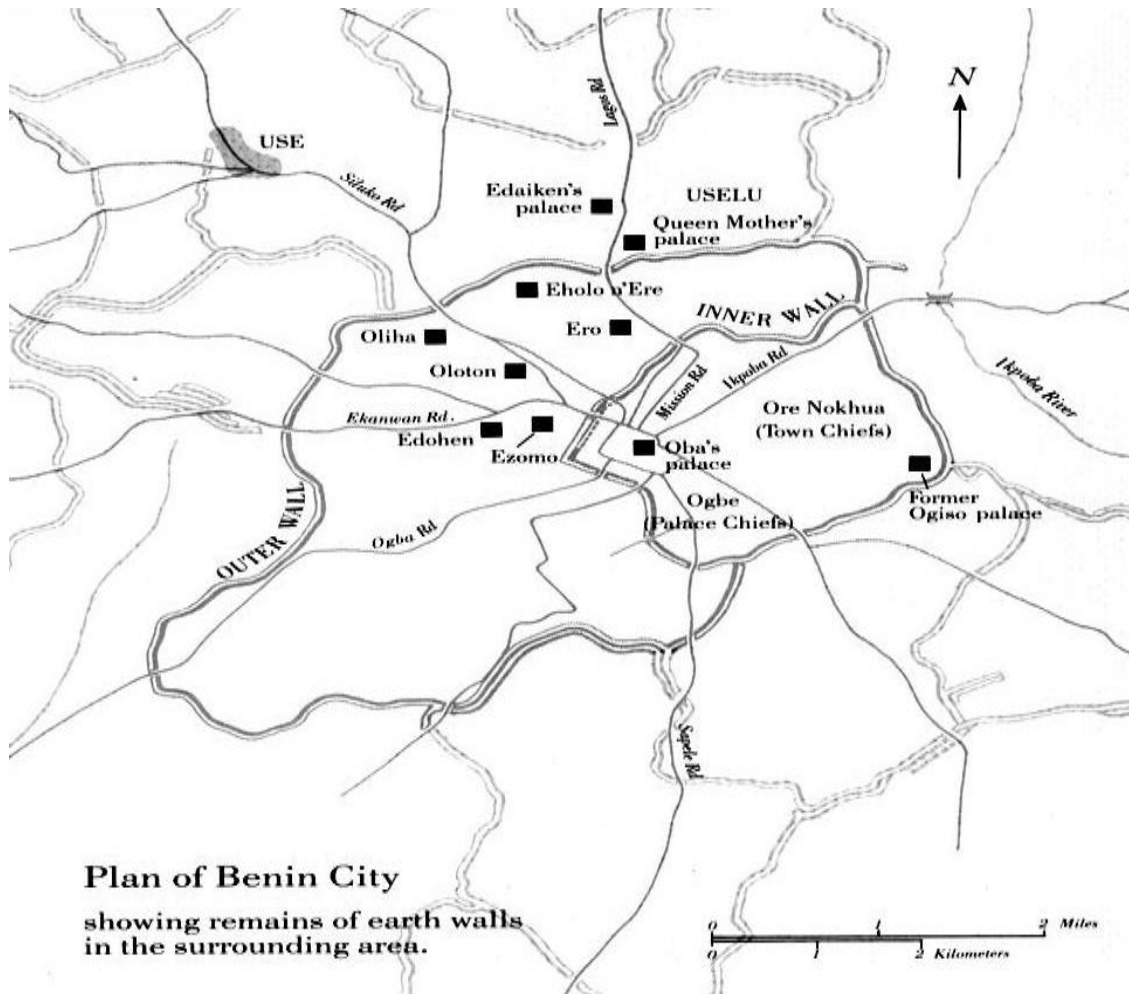


Figure 1.8: Plan of Benin City showing the core area and intermediate area
Source: Ezra (1992).

1.7 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This study is significant for several reasons. First, it contributes to the body of knowledge on vernacular and contemporary Nigerian architecture by providing empirical insights into Benin City's evolving housing patterns. Second, it serves as a reference for architects, planners, and policymakers seeking to design contextually appropriate housing that respects cultural heritage while embracing modernization. It also reinforces the importance of sustainability through the

integration of local materials and design concepts. By examining the fusion of traditional and modern practices, this research highlights pathways toward architecture that is not only functional but also meaningful to its cultural context (Oluwatayo & Abiodun, 2023).

1.8 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

It has been observed that while a lot of research has been carried out on the history, culture, and the people of Benin, less attention has been paid to the domestic architecture in relation to the study of social and physical changes over time. So the study has three major objectives, which define the scope of this research. First, an attempt has been made to analyse from an architectural point of view, the major factors of change and continuity in the domestic architecture in Benin City from the precolonial era to the present day. Obviously, there are many dimensions to the process of development over a long period of time. A number of historical, cultural, social, economic, and political variables must have influenced the process of change in Benin. Therefore, for the purpose of this study, historical, cultural, and social variables require detailed examination. Second, the study analyzed the characteristics of house-types and the use of domestic space as dictated by the socio-cultural element, resulting in change or continuity in Benin. An attempt has been made to examine the major social and physical patterns that have evolved over the years within the contemporary landscape of Benin City as consequences of change. Basically, the study attempts to answer some central questions, like;

- What were the major factors that influenced the growth of Benin as a pre-colonial West African city?
- What were the socio-economic and socio-cultural factors responsible for the transformation of Benin during the colonial era?
- What are the physical and spatial patterns that evolved in Benin as a result of architectural development over the years, and
- Where are we today in terms of domestic architecture and development in Benin City?

Finally, the study attempted to describe the factors of social and cultural change. In other words, it tried to explore the causes, patterns, and results of these changes, whether sociocultural, socio-economic, or physical. It is also possible that the time-line established would help to categorize the various architectural transformations by periods. This process and pattern of transformation in a traditional African city would undoubtedly contribute to the theory of change and continuity. The study is limited by factors such as the availability of historical data, accessibility to older structures, and the subjective interpretation of cultural influence in architectural expression. Nevertheless, the findings aim to provide a balanced understanding of continuity and change within the city's domestic architecture.

CHAPTER TWO

2.0 REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.1 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This section of the study reviews and examines theories and concepts relevant to the study. The intention is to identify a theoretical framework that includes relevant variables for analyzing the process of change in domestic architecture in relation to concepts of socio-cultural change and continuity, house types, and the utilization of domestic spaces. The section also views the on-going domestic architecture in relation to the developmental aspects entrenched in cultural changes and continuity. Specific concepts are also discussed. A brief review of some of the relevant theories will provide a background for the development of a conceptual framework for understanding this process of change and continuity. The theories will be examined alongside built form and culture, technological changes (traditional versus modern houses), classifications of house-types, social and cultural, household, and use of spaces. It is against this background that a theoretical and conceptual framework would be formed to explain the domestic architecture of Benin as an object of material culture. Material culture specifics show that the culture in this study is suggestive. Therefore, it is convenient to examine culture from an anthropological perspective both as a concept and as a definition. From the anthropological perspective, culture will again be narrowed down to the historical, behavioural, functional, and symbolic concepts of cultural anthropology.

2.2 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

2.2.1 Concepts of Culture

Culture, from an anthropological perspective, is the integrated system of socially acquired values, beliefs, norms, and practices that guide human behavior and define what is considered acceptable within a society. Contemporary definitions emphasize that culture is dynamic, contested, and continuously reconstructed in response to social, economic, political, and technological changes (Kuper, 2014; Shweder, 2016). Rather than being a fixed body of tradition, culture is understood as a process, embedded in both daily practices and broader social structures.

➤ Defining Culture in Modern Anthropology

Culture encompasses the totality of what matters to individuals and communities: customs, rituals, family traditions, religion, community events, recreation, leisure, the arts (visual, literary, and performing), language, and architectural forms, lifestyle practices such as diet and dress, and sports. These elements collectively shape how people interact with each other and their environment, creating patterns of social life (Swidler, 2015). In this sense, culture is both lived and learned, a framework for interpreting reality and organizing social action. Culture can be approached as a social order, a set of interrelated practices that define a community's way of life (Duranti, 2015). This relational perspective highlights that culture is not a property of individuals alone, but emerges from interactions among people, institutions, and material environments.

➤ **Contemporary Approaches to Culture**

Modern anthropology recognizes multiple dimensions of culture, reflecting the diversity of human experience and interdisciplinary research. Contemporary frameworks include:

1. **Symbolic and Interpretive Approaches:** Culture is understood as a system of symbols and meanings through which humans interpret their world (Geertz, 2017). Rituals, gestures, and objects all carry layers of socially shared meaning. For example, the design of domestic spaces or public buildings can embody symbolic hierarchies or community values. Symbolic anthropology underscores that meanings are socially constructed and contested over time.
2. **Cognitive Approaches:** Cultural schema theory explains how individuals internalize shared mental frameworks that guide perception, judgment, and behavior (D'Andrade, 2014). These schemas are socially transmitted and evolve through education, social interaction, and exposure to new ideas.
3. **Network and Systems Models:** Culture can be analyzed as a network of interconnected traits, ideas, and practices, emphasizing the interdependence of cultural elements (Krause *et al.*, 2017). Network models are particularly useful for studying the diffusion of innovations, technologies, or ideologies within and across societies.
4. **Biocultural Perspectives:** Dual inheritance theory examines how cultural practices and biological evolution co-develop, shaping human behavior in a feedback loop (Henrich, 2016). Culture interacts with cognitive and biological capacities, influencing how societies adapt over time.
5. **Transmission and Reproduction:** Cultural reproduction theory investigates how social structures, institutions, and family systems perpetuate norms and values across generations (Bourdieu, 2014). This approach highlights both continuity and the reinterpretation of inherited cultural forms by new generations.

6. Multimodal and Media-Driven Perspectives: Modern anthropology increasingly studies culture through digital, visual, and material media, recognizing that cultural meanings circulate and evolve in multiple modes (Ginsburg, 2018). Social media, augmented reality, and virtual environments are reshaping traditional notions of cultural Practice.

➤ **Dimensions of Culture: Modern Elaboration**

Building on contemporary scholarship, culture can be examined along the following dimensions:

- Topical: Culture includes domains such as social organization, religion, economy, media practices, and global interactions.
- Historical: Culture is both inherited and continuously produced; social, political, and technological changes reshape traditions.
- Behavioural: Culture manifests in shared behaviours that are learned and performed in daily life, subject to negotiation and adaptation.
- Normative: Values and norms define ideals for conduct, yet norms are often plural, overlapping, and sometimes conflicting.
- Functional: Culture functions to solve problems of environmental adaptation, social coordination, and conflict resolution, though these solutions vary across contexts.
- Mental: Ideas, beliefs, and shared mental models guide perception and interaction.
- Structural: Cultural traits are patterned and interrelated, forming complex systems that can be mapped using network approaches.
- Symbolic: Culture relies on shared symbols and meanings, which are socially enforced and culturally assigned. Symbols can be material (objects, architecture) or nonmaterial (language, ritual, gesture).

➤ **Implications for Material and Built Forms**

The symbolic and structural aspects of culture are particularly important when considering architecture and domestic forms. Buildings, layouts, and spatial arrangements are not only functional but also convey cultural meanings, reflecting social hierarchies, communal values, and symbolic representations of identity (Ingold, 2015). Contemporary anthropology emphasizes that material culture interacts with symbolic culture, producing forms that are both functional and expressive.

Understanding culture in this integrated way—acknowledging its symbolic, behavioral, structural, and cognitive dimensions—is essential for interpreting human societies and designing spaces that respond meaningfully to social and environmental contexts.

2.2.2 House Form and Culture

The study of house form within anthropology and architecture emphasizes that the physical form of dwellings is shaped by a complex interplay of socio-cultural, environmental, and technological factors. While earlier scholars like Rapoport (1969, 1990) focused on sociocultural determinants, contemporary research since 2014 has reinforced and expanded these ideas, highlighting the fluidity of house form in response to changing social needs, technology, and environmental pressures (Lawrence & Kousoulas, 2016; Watson, 2018).

➤ Socio-Cultural Influences on House Form

Rapoport's theory proposed that house form is not determined by a single factor such as climate, materials, or technology, but by a range of socio-cultural influences that collectively shape design decisions (Rapoport, 1990). Contemporary studies confirm that socio-cultural values, household composition, gender roles, family organization, privacy, and modes of social interaction continue to strongly influence spatial arrangements and dwelling typologies (Lawrence & Kousoulas, 2016). For example, research on contemporary vernacular housing shows that the allocation of spaces within homes—such as private rooms, shared communal areas, and workspaces—reflects cultural ideals of family interaction, hierarchy, and privacy (Watson, 2018; Lechner *et al.*, 2019). Even under constraints of climate, material availability, and technology, people exercise a freedom of choice regarding house form, negotiating between practical limitations and cultural ideals of domestic life (Watson, 2018). This freedom allows socio-cultural priorities to shape the organization, size, and functional zoning of homes, reflecting how communities understand the “ideal life” in their cultural context (Lawrence & Kousoulas, 2016).

➤ Continuity and Change in House Form

House forms often retain validity and functionality long after the culture that produced them has evolved. Some features of dwellings—such as basic spatial layouts, room functions, or construction techniques—persist because they are aligned with enduring human behaviors and perceptual needs (Rapoport, 1990; Watson, 2018). Contemporary research confirms that incremental transformation of dwellings is more common than complete replacement, as households adapt existing forms to accommodate increased household sizes, evolving privacy needs, or changing social roles (Lechner *et al.*, 2019). Socio-cultural forces interact with material and technological constraints, forming a dynamic framework within which house forms are negotiated. For instance, local building materials, climate conditions, and energy efficiency considerations set the boundaries, while cultural values determine

how spaces are allocated and organized (Lawrence & Kousoulas, 2016; Watson, 2018). This interplay underscores that architectural design is as much a social as a physical process, reflecting both collective ideals and individual preferences.

➤ **Comparative Perspectives and Temporal Dynamics**

Rapoport (1990) emphasized the importance of comparing built environments within a given cultural context, noting that some architectural elements change rapidly while others remain stable over long periods. Modern studies reinforce this perspective, showing that the rate of change in spatial patterns or design elements is closely linked to their perceived importance, cultural symbolism, or functional necessity (Lechner *et al.*, 2019; Watson, 2018). Rapidly changing elements, such as decorative features or surface materials, are generally less critical to core dwelling functions than elements that persist, like structural layouts or room hierarchies. Retained features are sometimes modified to respond to economic, political, or technological pressures, illustrating that house forms are continually negotiated and adapted (Lawrence & Kousoulas, 2016). For example, economic incentives may favor the adoption of new forms, even when older structures remain habitable, while political or regulatory decisions can override socio-cultural considerations in determining whether houses are renovated or replaced.

➤ **Critiques and Contemporary Relevance**

Although Rapoport's framework has been influential, critics have pointed out limitations. Early critiques argued that his approach was too general and relied heavily on secondary sources, making it difficult to apply to specific cultural contexts (Lawrence, 2014). Other criticisms note that house form is influenced not only by socio-cultural factors but also by socio-economic, political, and environmental conditions (Watson, 2018). Contemporary research addresses these critiques by integrating multi-scalar analyses, examining how household preferences, community norms, economic conditions, and governance interact to shape dwellings and settlements (Lechner *et al.*, 2019). Despite these criticisms, Rapoport's emphasis on socio-cultural determinants remains relevant. Social values continue to drive transformations in house forms, particularly in relation to functional requirements, household size, and privacy needs. For example, contemporary studies show that even in urbanized contexts, people adapt traditional layouts to reflect evolving notions of family, gender roles, and social interaction, demonstrating the persistent relevance of socio-cultural forces in shaping architecture (Lawrence & Kousoulas, 2016; Watson, 2018).

➤ **Implications for Architectural Analysis**

Understanding house form as an outcome of both socio-cultural and material factors allows architects and researchers to analyze dwelling types within their cultural and environmental contexts. Socio-cultural priorities—such as privacy, domestic hierarchy, or communal interaction—often guide spatial organization, even when economic or technological pressures could suggest alternative designs.

Recognizing this interplay is critical for designing adaptive and culturally sensitive architecture, particularly in regions undergoing rapid social, economic, or environmental change (Lechner *et al.*, 2019; Watson, 2018).

2.2.3 Traditional versus Modern Houses

Traditional houses are typically constructed using locally available materials, often sourced within or near the village. Construction is largely a community effort, involving household members, skilled artisans, and assistance from neighbors or friends. Tools and technology employed are generally simple, and knowledge is transmitted across generations through apprenticeship and practical experience. Specialization among traditional craftsmen enriches the technological knowledge base, as skills and techniques accumulate over time (Lawrence & Kousoulas, 2016; Watson, 2018). The shift from traditional to modern building materials signifies not only technological transformation but also an alignment with the cash economy, as industrially produced materials—such as concrete blocks, corrugated metal sheets, and concrete tiles—require financial resources for acquisition. Studies on urban migration indicate that households relocating from rural areas to urban centers often begin with traditional building methods and later transition to modern materials as their economic status and lifestyle aspirations change (Lechner *et al.*, 2019; Watson, 2018). This transition raises questions about the extent to which dwellings reflect socio-economic and cultural lifestyles, and whether the adoption of modern materials is a response to urban living or a symbol of social status and modernization (Lawrence & Kousoulas, 2016).

➤ Traditional Housing Knowledge and Cultural Context

Traditional housing knowledge is inseparable from the cultural contexts in which it developed. Construction methods, spatial layouts, and material selection are all informed by local customs, climate adaptation strategies, and the daily practices of inhabitants. Understanding these technologies requires situating them within both their cultural frameworks and their functional performance (Lechner *et al.*, 2019; Watson, 2018). Traditional houses demonstrate adaptive expertise, as knowledge accumulated over generations informs problem-solving in construction. For instance, expertise developed in timber structures can be transferred to modern materials while preserving similar functional outcomes. Modern research emphasizes that the study of architectural transformation must account for socio-cultural continuity and change, rather than merely tracing material substitution (Lawrence & Kousoulas, 2016).

➤ Transition to Modern Houses

In urban contexts such as Benin-city, traditional housing techniques are increasingly supplemented or replaced by modern construction methods. Traditional houses are typically simple, relying on subsistence-level skills and locally sourced materials, which may result in less durable structures. However, these houses can also be sophisticated, reflecting intricate knowledge of local environmental

conditions, spatial arrangements, and social requirements (Lechner *et al.*, 2019; Watson, 2018). The adoption of modern materials and techniques is often motivated by several factors: economic capability, urban living requirements, and aspirations for improved durability, aesthetics, and status. This process of transformation illustrates that house form and materials are closely linked to socio-cultural values, economic factors, and technological possibilities (Lawrence & Kousoulas, 2016; Lechner *et al.*, 2019).

➤ **Challenges of Traditional Construction**

Despite their cultural and historical significance, traditional building techniques face multiple challenges in contemporary contexts. Builders often encounter time-intensive processes, hard physical labor, and reliance on local material availability. Increasing depletion of raw materials due to overuse or poor conservation practices compels builders to source materials from distant locations, increasing costs and reducing efficiency (Watson, 2018). Environmental factors, such as unpredictable weather, also limit the reliability and safety of traditional construction (Lechner *et al.*, 2019). Furthermore, urban pressures—such as population growth, increased demand for housing, and shifts in lifestyle expectations—create conditions in which traditional methods may become less viable or unsustainable (Lawrence & Kousoulas, 2016; Watson, 2018). Nonetheless, aspects of traditional techniques remain relevant, particularly when adapted to contemporary construction contexts, highlighting the enduring importance of local knowledge and craftsmanship (Lechner *et al.*, 2019).

➤ **Socio-Cultural Implications**

The comparison between traditional and modern houses illustrates that house form is more than a physical structure; it embodies social values, cultural continuity, and aspirations for modernity. Traditional houses reflect the interplay of cultural identity, environmental adaptation, and accumulated knowledge, while modern houses demonstrate the influence of economic capability, urban lifestyles, and industrialized materials (Lawrence & Kousoulas, 2016; Watson, 2018). Understanding this interplay is essential for studies of architectural transformation, as it shows how socio-cultural factors drive change while retaining continuity in domestic spaces.

2.2.4 Classification of House-types

For the purpose of this study, it is important to establish a systematic approach to classifying house-types within the domestic built environment. House-types can be classified in multiple ways, depending on the focus of analysis—whether it is stylistic, socio-economic, structural, or functional. Contemporary research emphasizes that classification should consider both physical characteristics and the socio-cultural context in which dwellings are situated (Lawrence & Kousoulas, 2016; Lechner *et al.*, 2019).

➤ **Criteria for Classifying House-types**

Earlier frameworks, such as those proposed by Lawrence (2014), suggest that a combination of architectural plan analysis and site visits can be used to identify and classify house types. The following criteria, updated for contemporary contexts, are commonly applied:

➤ **Stylistic Conventions**

House-types can be distinguished based on the composition of building facades and architectural expression (e.g., classical, modern, neo-traditional). These stylistic markers reflect the professional knowledge of architects and builders and are frequently documented in architectural publications, pattern books, or design manuals. Modern studies also emphasize how residents' perceptions of style influence identity and social recognition within communities (Watson, 2018; Lechner *et al.*, 2019).

• **Socio-Economic Variables**

Income levels, professional status, and household composition often correlate with housing types. For example, working-class and middle-class households may exhibit distinctive spatial arrangements, material choices, or levels of amenity. Contemporary housing research shows that socio-economic factors influence both the scale of dwellings and their functional zoning, and are often tied to broader urbanization patterns (Lawrence & Kousoulas, 2016; Watson, 2018).

• **Size, Layout, and Floor Plan**

The number and size of rooms, layout configuration, and vertical organization of dwelling units are key indicators for classification. This criterion remains central to both professional assessments and scholarly analysis, as it directly relates to the functional usability of homes (Lechner *et al.*, 2019). Modern fieldwork emphasizes documenting these spatial characteristics through measured plans, photographs, and GIS-based mapping tools to capture variation and adaptation.

• **Construction Type and Materials**

House-types can also be classified based on construction methods and materials (e.g., timber frame, brick masonry, reinforced concrete). These physical attributes are used by architects and urban planners to interpret structural integrity and durability, but they also convey social and cultural values. Research shows that material choices often reflect local resource availability, economic capability, and cultural preferences, highlighting the interplay between socio-cultural factors and built form (Watson, 2018; Lechner *et al.*, 2019).

• **Spatial Organization Relative to Public and Private Domains**

The configuration of access routes—from public streets to private dwelling spaces—provides another criterion for classification. This includes the presence of private courtyards, shared external spaces, or internal hallways, which mediate the transition from public to private realms. Recent studies indicate

that this criterion is particularly relevant in non-industrialized and semi-urban environments, where cultural practices strongly influence spatial hierarchies and the arrangement of rooms (Lawrence & Kousoulas, 2016; Watson, 2018).

➤ **Relevance and Adaptation of Classification Criteria**

While Lawrence's original framework was based on apartment blocks in Europe, the principles can be adapted for domestic built environments in non-industrialized contexts. In this study, particular attention is given to the spatial layout of houses, which reflects both functional requirements and socio-cultural norms. Classification based on spatial organization provides insights into how houses accommodate family size, privacy needs, and everyday social practices (Lechner *et al.*, 2019). Such analysis focuses on spatial characteristics rather than aesthetic or purely economic indicators, aligning with the aim of examining how different house-types can be adapted to meet developmental aspects of house design. Fieldwork documentation, including measured plans and photographic records, allows researchers to classify and compare house-types systematically while accounting for cultural and functional variation (Watson, 2018).

2.2.5 Organization, Use and Meaning of Space

Human settlements are inherently structured into spaces with varying degrees of privacy and public accessibility. The organization of the built environment significantly influences social interactions, determining how individuals and groups relate to one another within private, semi-private, and public domains (Lawrence & Kousoulas, 2016; Watson, 2018). The delineation between public and private space not only shapes daily behavior but also governs social norms, territoriality, and community cohesion.

- **Public and Private Space:** Public space refers to areas used collectively by individuals who do not exercise exclusive control over them. Contemporary research emphasizes that public spaces are socially regulated environments, often structured to balance accessibility with behavioral expectations (Bina *et al.*, 2019; Watson, 2018). Individuals generally have the right to enter public spaces, which are communally shared by members of the local community or defined territorial unit (Lechner *et al.*, 2019). However, the use of public space is context-dependent. Visitors from outside the territory may be considered guests, and their access is often temporary or conditional, reflecting social norms, cultural practices, or regulatory constraints (Bina *et al.*, 2019). Public spaces thus serve as arenas for interaction, negotiation, and the demonstration of social inclusion, while simultaneously reinforcing territorial identity.
- **Levels of Space Use:** Correa's (1985) categorization of outdoor space, originally based on observations in Bombay, India, remains relevant in contemporary analyses of settlement patterns and domestic spatial organization:

- **Private Space:** Areas designated for exclusive use by the household, such as bedrooms, kitchens, storage areas, and internal courtyards. These spaces provide privacy, security, and controlled environments for family routines (Lawrence & Kousoulas, 2016; Watson, 2018).
- **Semi-Private/Intimate Space:** Zones that facilitate informal social interaction, including front doorways, verandas, and small garden areas where family members or neighbors may gather. These semi-private spaces mediate between private and communal life, allowing controlled social exchange while maintaining some degree of privacy (Lechner *et al.*, 2019).
- **Community/Neighborhood Space:** Shared areas within the local community, such as courtyards, pathways, and neighborhood squares. These spaces encourage collective interaction, cultural practices, and the development of a sense of belonging (Bina *et al.*, 2019; Watson, 2018).
- **Public/Urban Space:** Areas accessible to the broader public, including main streets, parks, plazas, and urban centers. These spaces are sites for civic engagement, social visibility, and cultural expression (Lechner *et al.*, 2019). Covered and open-to-sky spaces are particularly important in tropical climates, where daily activities like cooking, sleeping, socializing, and play occur outdoors. This is especially true in Benin City, where hot and humid coastal conditions make semi-outdoor and open-air spaces critical for social and functional life (Lechner *et al.*, 2019; Watson, 2018).
- **Privacy, Personal Space, and Crowding:** The concepts of personal space, territoriality, and crowding are central to understanding public and private relationships in domestic environments. Privacy involves controlling unwanted interpersonal interaction and managing communication flow at individual, group, or social levels (Bina *et al.*, 2019; Lawrence & Kousoulas, 2016). Modern research highlights that privacy is maintained through rules, manners, spatial organization, and physical or symbolic barriers, such as walls, partitions, hedges, or thresholds. These boundaries define limits of space and regulate access, preventing intrusion while enabling desired interaction (Lechner *et al.*, 2019; Watson, 2018). Population density and crowding influence how privacy is negotiated, with higher densities requiring more deliberate spatial strategies.
- **Boundaries and Territorial Control:** Boundaries, both visible and symbolic, are critical in domestic architecture, shaping space use, social interaction, and privacy management. They can be classified as:
 - Physical barriers limit access or communication.
 - Symbolic markers conveying social, cultural, or aesthetic meaning.
 - Legal or judicial demarcations defining ownership rights.
 - Administrative limits for management or governance (Lawrence & Kousoulas, 2016; Bina *et al.*, 2019).

Control of space extends beyond physical enclosure to include the ability to regulate access and use, creating territorial zones defended against intrusion (Watson, 2018; Lechner *et al.*, 2019). Personalization through walls, fences, surface treatments, or symbolic markers further reinforces territorial claims and reflects social identity.

- **Multipurpose Use of Domestic Spaces:** In informal or unplanned settlements, rooms frequently serve multiple functions, such as sleeping, cooking, and social interaction, challenging conventional categorizations like “bedroom” or “living room” (Lechner *et al.*, 2019). Observation of space use, both indoors and outdoors, is therefore critical for understanding adaptation strategies, household priorities, and cultural practices.
- **Implications for Modernization and Urban Contexts:** Studying space organization, boundaries, and privacy provides insights into patterns of domestic architecture transformation. Establishing privacy and controlling space may act as both adaptive strategies and drivers of modernization, particularly in contexts where formal building codes are absent. Observations at the plot and neighborhood level reveal how cultural norms, social behavior, environmental factors, and household needs collectively shape domestic spaces (Lawrence & Kousoulas, 2016; Watson, 2018). This comprehensive perspective underscores the importance of designing culturally responsive, socially functional, and flexible housing, capable of accommodating both traditional practices and modern urban demands.

2.2.6 Household

The concept of the household is complex and context-specific, particularly in African societies where social structures, kinship systems, and economic arrangements vary widely. Understanding the household is essential for analyzing house design and domestic architecture transformations, as household composition directly influences spatial organization, room allocation, and functional zoning.

➤ **Definitions and Characteristics**

Several scholars have defined the household based on social, economic, and domestic practices. Schwerdtfeger (1982) studied Hausa settlements in Northern Nigeria and described a household as: “a separate unit of domestic economy consisting of all persons who eat together from the same pot, dwell together in one part of the compound, and contribute most of the time in kind and labor services.” This definition emphasizes shared economic responsibility, cohabitation, and collective domestic activity. Schlyter and Schlyter (1979) proposed a broader definition, considering household membership beyond immediate co-residence. They noted that sons and daughters with their families are included in the household if they live under the same roof, even if they maintain separate cooking arrangements. Other relatives or friends residing in the household without paying rent are counted as part of the household, while tenants or paying lodgers are considered separate households. In

polygamous households, variations arise depending on the residence patterns of wives. If wives live together and share domestic activities, the group may constitute a single household. However, when wives reside separately, they are often counted as distinct households, reflecting differences in economic dependency and domestic authority. Based on these observations, Schlyter and Schlyter categorized households as follows:

1. Single man with children, grandchildren, relatives, or friends.
2. Single woman, second wife, or widowed woman with children, relatives, or friends.
3. Husband and wife with children, grandchildren, or extended relatives/friends.
4. Husband with multiple wives and children.

➤ **Household Types in African Contexts**

Laslett (1974) provides a classification system that remains useful for understanding households in urban African settings, such as Benin City:

- **Simple/Nuclear Households:** Comprised of a married couple with or without children, or a widowed person with offspring.
- **Extended Households:** Consist of two or more simple family units connected through kinship or marriage.
- **Multiple/Compound Households:** Include complex arrangements of several nuclear or extended units living in a shared compound or residence. In contemporary Nigerian contexts, households are highly diverse. Monogamous households often include a husband, wife, children, and sometimes extended family members. Polygamous households may consist of one man with multiple wives, either sharing a single dwelling or living in separate houses within the same compound. Additionally, households can evolve dynamically; for example, a divorced woman may return to her parental home with her children, creating a new household unit, or adult children may reside with parents while maintaining autonomous domestic responsibilities.

➤ **Implications for House Design**

The composition and structure of households have direct implications for domestic architecture:

- **Spatial Organization:** Extended or multiple households require larger compounds, additional rooms, or subdivided living spaces to maintain privacy and functionality.
- **Functional Zoning:** Shared facilities, such as kitchens or courtyards, must accommodate multiple generations or sub-units within the household.

- Flexibility: Domestic spaces need to adapt to changing household structures over time, reflecting life events such as marriage, divorce, or relocation.

➤ **Contemporary Studies and Empirical Insights**

Recent studies on Nigerian domestic architecture emphasize the significance of household composition in shaping spatial layouts and house-types:

- Ekhaese (2024) highlights how socio-economic characteristics and household size in Benin City influence the spatial configuration of homes and the adaptation of traditional layouts to contemporary needs.
- Nwagwu *et al.* (2024) model residential dwellings in Nigeria, showing that household size and composition determine room allocation, compound layout, and access to services, especially in informal settlements.
- Awe & Akinluyi (2022) emphasize that urbanization and demographic shifts drive changes in household arrangements, which in turn influence architectural transformations, including the adoption of new materials and building typologies.
- Odoyi & Riekkinen (2022) discuss how low-income households navigate housing constraints and how household structure impacts access to functional and safe housing in urban contexts.

These studies reinforce the notion that households are not only social units but also architectural determinants: the size, composition, and function of a household directly inform the form, layout, and evolution of domestic built environments in Nigeria.

➤ **Continuity and Change in Domestic Built Environment**

The study of domestic architecture in Benin City is framed within the broader relationship between built form and culture, emphasizing the concepts of continuity and change. Cultural elements expressed through the built environment can be categorized as core elements, which persist over long periods, or as peripheral elements, which evolve more rapidly. Core elements—such as spatial hierarchies, courtyard layouts, and traditional construction practices—remain evident in the city’s central areas. Peripheral elements, including stylistic details, materials, and room functions, are more dynamic and tend to emerge in the city’s expanding periphery. A cross-sectional analysis of Benin City shows a progression from core to periphery, illustrating the temporal and cultural evolution of domestic architecture. The core area represents continuity with historical traditions, the intermediate zones display transitional forms blending old and new practices, and the periphery reflects modern influences shaped by urbanization, socio-economic changes, and evolving household needs. This framework highlights how the interaction of household structures and cultural elements drives domestic architecture transformation. Recognizing these patterns is essential for designing housing that

accommodates diverse household types, cultural practices, and socio-economic realities, while remaining flexible to ongoing urban and demographic changes.

This chapter has examined key theories and concepts that underpin the study of house form, culture, technological change, house-types, organization, use and meaning of space, and households in Benin domestic architecture. The discussions provide a conceptual framework for understanding the changes and continuities in domestic built environments and guide the methodology for the study. The concept of culture was explored from an anthropological perspective, emphasizing its role in shaping human behaviour, social organisation, religious practices, economic activities, and everyday life. The study focused on the social, organisational, religious, economic, behavioural, historical, normative, structural, and symbolic dimensions of culture to understand how cultural values manifest in Benin domestic architecture and influence changes and continuity in house forms.

On the house form, Rapoport's perspective was employed to explain that the form of houses is determined not only by physical, material, and technological factors but also by sociocultural forces. The study highlighted how factors such as family organization, gender roles, privacy, social interaction, and vision of an ideal life shape the layout, structure, and spatial organization of dwellings. It was further observed that while some cultural elements remain core and persistent, others evolve at the periphery of urban development, reflecting dynamic adaptation to socio-economic and technological changes. House-types were classified based on Lawrence's (1994) approach, which uses architectural plans and field observations to identify patterns in spatial layout, construction methods, stylistic features, and access to private and public domains. The classification emphasised the spatial organisation of domestic units, highlighting the relationship between house layout and household functions. The organisation, use, and meaning of space were examined using Correa's framework, categorising spaces into four levels: private spaces (for cooking, sleeping, eating, and storage), semi-private/intimate contact areas (play areas, interaction with neighbours), neighbourhood meeting spaces (communal or social interaction), and public urban spaces. The study also considered concepts of personal space, territoriality, crowding, and privacy, showing how residents employ physical and symbolic boundaries to control access, regulate interactions, and define the use of indoor and outdoor spaces. These observations are particularly relevant in unplanned or informal urban areas, where flexible adaptation of spaces is common.

The concept of household was explored as a complex and context-specific phenomenon, drawing from Schwerdtfeger, Schlyter, and Laslett. Households were analyzed as social and economic units, ranging from single, nuclear, extended, to multifamily arrangements, reflecting diverse family compositions and domestic practices. Households were seen not only as groups that live and eat together but also as units of the domestic economy where members contribute labor and resources. Changes in household

composition were linked to spatial requirements and architectural adaptation, demonstrating the interplay between social structure and domestic architecture. Overall, the integration of these concepts and frameworks provides a comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing domestic architecture in Benin. They offer insight into the processes of continuity and change in house forms, spatial organisation, and household arrangements. These conceptual foundations help prevent misinterpretation of observed patterns and guide the methodology and analytical approach employed in the subsequent chapters.

2.3 LITERATURE REVIEW

The aim of this chapter is to critically review previous studies related to domestic architecture, particularly in the context of social and cultural factors that contribute to both continuity and change. It also examines literature on domestic space, exploring how the organization, use, and meaning of residential environments reflect broader cultural, social, and physical transformations. By situating this review within the framework of built form and culture, the chapter establishes the intellectual foundation for understanding the evolution of domestic architecture in Benin City. Domestic architecture is not only a reflection of material construction techniques but also a cultural text through which societies express identity, social hierarchies, values, and beliefs (Vellinga, 2015; Low, 2017). Consequently, examining literature on the subject requires attention to both the tangible and intangible aspects of architecture—the built form as a physical manifestation, and the cultural dimensions embedded within spatial organization and symbolic design.

This chapter focuses on the Edo context, considering the urbanization process in Benin City, the growth and transformation of its residential districts, and the socio-cultural dynamics influencing domestic architecture. Literature on urban growth, settlement patterns, and the evolution of domestic spaces within predominantly Edo communities is particularly pertinent. These studies reveal how historical, social, and cultural processes intersect with architectural development, shaping both continuity and innovation in housing forms. The review is organized thematically into four broad areas:

- 1. Domestic Architecture and Culture** – Exploring the intersection of built form with
- 2. Cultural identity, values, and symbolic practices** emphasize how architecture encodes social norms, spiritual beliefs, and collective memory.
- 3. Culture Change and Continuity** – Examining theories and case studies that illustrate how cultural practices adapt over time, influencing modifications in domestic architecture while preserving certain core elements.

4. **Urbanization and Urban Change** – Reviewing literature on urban growth, residential district expansion, and socio-spatial transformations, highlighting how urban pressures impact domestic architecture in African cities, including Benin.
5. **Social Factors, Use and Organization of Space** – Investigating how household composition, gender roles, privacy expectations, and daily routines influence the organization, functional layout, and social meaning of domestic spaces. By reviewing these themes, the chapter situates domestic architecture within a sociocultural, historical, and urban framework. It highlights how physical structures both shape and are shaped by social life, cultural identity, and urban dynamics. This literature review, therefore, serves as the conceptual and empirical basis for analyzing continuity and change in domestic architecture, guiding the methodology and interpretation of findings in subsequent chapters.

2.3.1 Domestic Architecture and Culture

Research continues to affirm that domestic architecture is fundamentally a cultural product. Contemporary scholars argue that architecture and culture are inseparable, as the built environment often emerges directly from a people's values, worldviews and behavioural systems (Akintoye & Olujimi, 2016; Ekhaese & Amole, 2014). On this foundation, this study examines how various scholars interpret the relationship between culture and domestic architecture.

Recent literature explains that domestic architectural models embody what can be described as the “mechanics of culture”—the cultural rules, spatial behaviours and shared social understandings that guide how people organise space (Olotuah & Ayo-Vaughan, 2017). The relationship between architecture, people and space therefore generates societal norms that help individuals relate to one another in predictable, culturally reinforced ways. These cultural values may be complex and fragile during periods of transition, but they often become more stable, simplified and embedded over time (Osasona, 2014; Oginni & Adewale, 2020). Modern architectural theorists further argue that the meaning of architecture lies not only in its physical form, but also in the ideas and cultural intentions that these forms express (Yaro & Olotuah, 2019). Buildings communicate identity, memory, belonging and power. Without accurate documentation of the cultural logic behind their design, later interpretations can easily become distorted. Understanding the nature of cultural continuity is therefore crucial in interpreting traditional or contemporary domestic environments (Uduak & Enabulele, 2019).

Domestic architecture also reflects the society that produces it. The materials, spatial hierarchies and construction patterns used in homes often reveal workshop practices, craft traditions, periods of technological transition, and the socio-economic conditions of the builders (Obasuyi & Eweka, 2016). Scholars such as Nwosu and Okwuoma (2020) note that modern processes such as globalization, urbanization and industrialization have weakened many indigenous architectural traditions. Consequently, many societies—especially in Africa—are now seeking ways to reconnect with local

cultural values in order to re-establish continuity, identity and meaning within the built environment. Recent research identifies several cultural variables that are central to creating culturally meaningful domestic environments. These include social use of space, family structure, rituals, belief systems, privacy expectations, gender roles, and communal relationships (Olatunji & Arayela, 2018). The spatial, symbolic and aesthetic dimensions of architecture also play essential roles in interpreting cultural identity in both multicultural and evolving societies. Increasingly, the role of community participation has been emphasised as a strategy for preserving cultural integrity in the design process (Adebambo & Edewor, 2021). The architectural creativity of designers is likewise shaped by their internal values, lived experiences, and the cultural environment of the society they serve. The work of architects, therefore, mirrors the aspirations, conflicts and identity of a people at any given time (Ehigiator & Okharedia, 2015; Bello & Abiodun, 2020). Culture also influences how built environments respond to human needs. Scholars distinguish between “core culture” (deep-seated values that are slow to change) and “peripheral culture” (elements that readily adapt to new influences). This distinction is particularly useful in analysing rapid cultural transitions, where traditional forms may persist in some aspects while changing significantly in others (Adeniyi & Ojo, 2017). Traditionally built forms tended to respond effectively to cultural expectations, suggesting that professional design systems must evolve if they are to remain culturally responsive (Iyanda & Fadamiro, 2022). Changes in economy, social structure, technology and collective consciousness also transform the spatial organisation of homes. These shifts often reshape the relationship between humans and the natural environment, influencing architectural form, material use and spatial hierarchy (Omisore & Abolade, 2018). Culturally informed design also requires attention to spatial regulations, implicit social norms and everyday behavioural patterns. Studies of informal settlements—where buildings evolve outside formal planning systems—demonstrate that housing forms are often shaped more by cultural logic and social networks than by physical planning standards (Olayiwola & Ojo, 2019; Kombe & Mfinanga, 2015). In many African contexts, domestic architecture evolves through customary land tenure, economic constraints and shared cultural practices rather than formalised design processes. These environments often reveal the strongest expressions of socio-cultural continuity and adaptation (Oluwasola, 2020).

Furthermore, governments in many developing societies tend to tolerate culturally rooted domestic environments, enabling their gradual consolidation into formally recognised settlements (Ogunbodede & Falade, 2016). Such tolerance—combined with low land costs - has encouraged residents to invest more in the improvement of domestic spaces, contributing to the distinctive qualities of informal domestic architecture. Given these trends, studying the processes of domestic architectural transformation becomes essential. Understanding how socio-cultural variables manifest in emerging domestic environments helps reveal the actors, decision-making systems and value structures that shape the built form (Aghimien *et al.*, 2021). In summary, architecture is dynamic, multidisciplinary and inherently culture-specific. The factors that influence architectural change—particularly socio-cultural

ones—are the same factors that distinguish the domestic architecture of one society, place or period from another. As socio-cultural factors evolve, the built environment also transforms, sometimes gradually over long periods of time (Usman & Adedeji, 2016). These changes are inscribed in the built form, making architecture a visible record of cultural continuity and transformation across generations.

2.3.2 Social and Cultural Change

Culture is the distinguishing feature of a people, their domestic architecture, and the domestic built environment that arises from it. It defines the way a society inhabits space, arranges households, and embeds social, spiritual, and aesthetic meaning in physical structures. Social and cultural change, therefore, directly influences the transformation of domestic architecture, as communities negotiate between tradition, modernity, and the pressures of urbanization (Ekhaese *et al.*, 2021; Omale & Ola-Ajayi, 2024). The study of socio-cultural change entails a systematic analysis of variations within social and cultural systems. Because society and culture are mutually interdependent, understanding how one changes or remains continuous requires consideration of both dimensions simultaneously (Acheampong & Ibrahim, 2016; Asomani-Boateng, 2020). Changes in cultural practices, household composition, and social roles are often incremental and subtle, sometimes occurring over decades or centuries, leaving residents only vaguely aware of the transformation (Ekhaese & Amole, 2014). In the context of domestic architecture, socio-cultural change manifests as both continuity and adaptation. Traditional spatial arrangements, compound organization, and ceremonial spaces may persist, while building materials, aesthetic forms, and internal layouts evolve in response to new social, economic, and environmental conditions (Izobo-Martins, 2015; Omale & Ola-Ajayi, 2024). Understanding the interplay between continuity and change is crucial for analyzing domestic built environments, as it highlights the mechanisms through which culture mediates architectural transformation.

2.3.3 Theoretical Perspectives on Socio-Cultural Change

Recent scholarship frames socio-cultural change as a dynamic, interactive process shaped by multiple agents and structures. Dovey and Pafka (2014) emphasize the symbiotic relationship between “top-down” regulatory or structural forces (urban planning, building codes, and policy) and “bottom-up” community agency, where residents negotiate and reinterpret architectural norms. This perspective highlights how cultural change is mediated both by institutional structures and individual or collective agency in domestic environments. Similarly, Moser and McIlwaine (2014) argue that socio-cultural transformation in urban contexts often emerges from the intersection of household-level adaptations, economic mobility, and neighborhood dynamics. In rapidly urbanizing African cities, these processes result in hybrid domestic architectures that reflect both global influences and deeply rooted local traditions (Asomani-Boateng, 2020; Ekhaese *et al.*, 2021).

2.3.4 Continuity and Identity

Continuity in domestic architecture serves as a cultural anchor, connecting individuals and communities to their heritage. Attachment to place, family compounds, and inherited dwellings reinforces identity and collective memory, providing a sense of stability amidst socio-economic and environmental change (Omale & Ola-Ajayi, 2024; Hicks, 2020). In Benin City, continuity is evident in the retention of courtyards, ceremonial spaces, and compound layouts that accommodate extended families. These features persist not merely as architectural elements but as vehicles for transmitting cultural knowledge, reinforcing kinship structures, and sustaining religious or ritual practices (Ekhaese & Amole, 2014; Ekhaese *et al.*, 2021). Continuity is not static; it is negotiated across generations. Recent studies emphasize that repeated use, ritual practices, and intergenerational knowledge transfer stabilize domestic patterns, even in evolving social contexts (Usman *et al.*, 2025). This reflects a broader principle in socio-cultural research: the past is an active resource in shaping contemporary living environments (Gamble, 2021; Ekhaese *et al.*, 2021).

2.3.5 Cultural Change and Adaptation

Cultural change is often driven by socio-economic pressures, technological adoption, migration, and exposure to global cultural flows. Omale & Ola-Ajayi (2024) highlight that contemporary domestic architecture in Nigerian cities increasingly integrates modern materials, formalized layouts, and Western aesthetic influences while preserving symbolic and functional elements of traditional compounds. Such hybridization reflects adaptive strategies that allow communities to reconcile continuity with modernity. For example, the introduction of multi-storey structures, en-suite rooms, and open-plan interiors in Benin City coexists with courtyards, ceremonial gates, and gendered spaces, producing culturally responsive domestic forms (Ekhaese *et al.*, 2021). Cultural adaptation is not uniform. Households of higher socio-economic status may adopt modern layouts more extensively, whereas lower-income or traditionalist families retain more vernacular forms (Acheampong & Ibrahim, 2016). This demonstrates that socio-cultural change in domestic architecture is a negotiated process, shaped by access to resources, social aspirations, and values regarding heritage preservation (Asomani-Boateng, 2020).

2.3.6 Factors Driving Socio-Cultural Change in Domestic Architecture

1. Economic and Technological Factors

Economic mobility, land cost, and construction technologies influence architectural adaptation. Households with greater financial capacity can afford hybrid or a fully modern home that integrates both comfort and cultural symbolism (Omale & Ola-Ajayi, 2024). Digital media, online design platforms, and architectural exposure also influence household choices, accelerating the adoption of non-traditional styles while negotiating cultural meaning (Usman *et al.*, 2025).

➤ Urbanization and Land Use Pressures

Urban expansion pressures traditional compound structures, requiring innovative spatial arrangements. Fragmented plots, higher density, and regulatory compliance reshape layouts while preserving culturally significant elements (Ekhaese & Amole, 2014; Ekhaese *et al.*, 2021). Such pressures result in adaptive reuse of space and the evolution of domestic forms that retain symbolic and functional continuity.

➤ **Social and Cultural Norms**

Kinship, religion, and gender norms guide spatial organization. Edo compounds traditionally accommodated extended families with gendered and hierarchical divisions of space (Ekhaese & Amole, 2014). Religious practices, including ancestor veneration, continue to shape the allocation and design of ritual spaces, demonstrating that socio-cultural drivers of change are not purely material but also symbolic (Omole & Ola-Ajayi, 2024).

2. Environmental and Climatic Considerations

Climate-responsive design and material choice are also culturally mediated. Courtyards, roof forms, and building orientation respond both to environmental conditions and culturally prescribed domestic routines, illustrating the integrated nature of socio-cultural and environmental adaptation (Asomani-Boateng, 2020; Ekhaese *et al.*, 2021).

2.3.7 Implications for Domestic Architecture

The dynamic interplay between continuity and change has profound implications for understanding domestic architecture. Continuity ensures the persistence of cultural identity, social organization, and collective memory. Change reflects adaptability to socio-economic pressures, urban development, and technological innovation. Recognizing this duality allows architects, planners, and cultural theorists to design interventions that respect heritage while accommodating contemporary needs (Gamble, 2021; Omole & Ola-Ajayi, 2024). In Benin City, this manifests as a spectrum of domestic forms, from fully traditional compounds to hybrid dwellings and modern residences with embedded cultural references. Studying these patterns provides insight into the mechanisms of socio-cultural transformation and informs policy, design, and preservation strategies.

2.3.8 Urbanization and Urban Change

Urbanization represents a continuous transformative process shaped by modernization, technological advancement, and evolving socio-economic conditions. As populations expand, migrate, and reorganize, the urban environment undergoes structural, spatial, and cultural shifts that redefine the use and meaning of built spaces. These changes reshape architecture, modify residential patterns, and gradually influence cultural norms, particularly in societies undergoing rapid demographic and economic transitions. In contemporary scholarship, urbanization is understood not only as physical expansion but as a multidimensional process that restructures social relations, value systems,

community patterns, and everyday domestic life. Consequently, the transformation of domestic spaces becomes a reflection of broader urban change, revealing the ways in which economic reforms, technological developments, and cultural transitions influence how people live, build, and interact within the urban milieu. Recent studies emphasize that urban change is inseparable from economic growth and institutional reform. According to Zhao and Zhang (2018), significant urban change almost always coincides with shifts in economic structures, especially in developing regions where household income growth and new employment patterns accelerate the demand for new forms of housing. When economic transitions occur, they trigger spatial reorganization, changes in residential preferences, and the restructuring of neighbourhoods. Likewise, Sýkora and Bouzarovski (2018) argue that rapid urban growth produces uneven development, creating zones of advantage and disadvantage within cities. These inequalities arise from differences in governance capacity, land markets, and varying degrees of integration into national and global economic systems. Similar findings by Chen (2020) show that cities undergoing fast-paced reforms often experience fragmented spatial development, producing new patterns of social separation or integration. The idea that ownership of land and dwellings reflects deep cultural significance remains relevant in contemporary studies. Forrest and Yip (2017) explain that home ownership in many societies symbolizes stability, identity, and intergenerational continuity, even when traditional forms of domestic life weaken under urban pressures. This aligns with research by Liu et al. (2020), who show that shifts in residential architecture frequently reflect social change, as domestic structures express both personal and collective aspirations. Domestic architecture is therefore a crucial indicator of cultural transformation because it reveals how households adapt to changing socio-economic realities while negotiating cultural expectations.

Modern scholarship continues to affirm that the built form is a cultural expression. The argument that material structures extend human identity, first articulated by earlier theorists, has been elaborated by contemporary authors such as Pink (2015) and Gunn et al. (2020), who show how everyday material objects—including houses—act as mediators of cultural meaning. These studies reveal that what people build reflects their values, lifestyle choices, and social orientation, and that domestic architecture is deeply connected to identity formation. Differences in domestic layout, aesthetic preference, and spatial organization reflect variations in cultural priorities, gender roles, privacy norms, ritual practices, and family structures. Thus, even under similar climatic and technological conditions, societies produce distinct architectural forms because their cultural logics differ. The symbolic nature of domestic space continues to attract scholarly interest. Recent ethnographic and architectural studies affirm that cultural values shape how activities such as cooking, sleeping, bathing, ceremonies, social interaction, and gender-based functions are distributed across space. Yaneva (2022) notes that domestic space is not merely functional; it encodes symbolic systems such as orientation, hierarchy, and ritual significance. These symbolic structures often persist even in modern architecture, demonstrating the resilience of cultural norms even under pressures of urbanization. Yet, cultural systems remain flexible: as cities

modernize, architectural traditions adapt, hybridize, or diminish depending on social dynamics and the rate of urban change.

Urbanization also influences architectural technology and household habits. Studies show that modern construction technologies tend to standardize building forms, often prioritizing efficiency and functionality over cultural specificity. According to Madeddu and Zhang (2017), contemporary housing increasingly reflects globalized aesthetics, reducing place based architectural diversity and eroding traditional material cultures. This standardization can alter social relationships, redefine privacy norms, and shift the spatial organization of domestic life. The growing prevalence of mass-produced building materials and modular housing has been linked to the commodification of homes, making dwellings less personalized and more market-driven. Meanwhile, the “do-it-yourself” culture described by modern authors remains a significant avenue through which households attempt to reclaim control over their domestic environments by customizing interiors and adapting architectural shells to personal taste.

Urbanization and domestic transformation remain intertwined in developing societies, where rapid growth often collides with traditional cultural expectations. Recent studies from SubSaharan Africa—for example, works by Baffoe and Mutisya (2019)—show that the influx of rural migrants into cities reshapes the domestic built environment as new residents negotiate between traditional spatial norms and urban living constraints. Migration not only alters family structures but also affects architectural choices, such as the shift from communal courtyard layouts to individualized, compact dwelling units. Many migrants retain emotional and economic ties to rural homes, influencing their investment in urban housing and shaping residential patterns. Contemporary phenomenological perspectives also reinforce the idea that dwelling is both a physical and emotional experience. The notion that homes are central to identity formation is supported by recent scholarship such as Seamon (2018), who argues that a sense of place emerges through lived experience, habitual practice, and emotional attachment. These studies show that when individuals or communities experience displacement, migration, or rapid urban restructuring, their sense of place may be weakened, affecting social cohesion and cultural stability. As urbanization disrupts established patterns of dwelling, architectural forms may lose their symbolic resonance, prompting either innovation or cultural erosion.

Environmental psychology and architectural anthropology also highlight the relationship between people, housing, and nature. Research by Scannell and Gifford (2017) demonstrates that people’s relationships with their homes reveal broader ecological and cultural orientations, reflecting whether societies value environmental harmony or prioritize economic expansion. Modern and traditional cultures often differ in their approach to housing: while traditional domestic architecture typically integrates ecological wisdom, modern urban housing tends to emphasize efficiency, individualism, and status. This tension underscores the broader cultural transformation associated with urbanization.

Domestic architecture in contemporary societies increasingly oscillates between individuality and standardization. Modern housing markets, influenced by global consumer culture, promote dwellings as economic commodities rather than cultural artefacts. According to Zhang and Forrest (2021), homes now function as symbols of socioeconomic status, investment assets, and markers of personal achievement. Yet at the same time, communities and households pursue housing autonomy—designing, modifying, or personalizing dwellings to express identity and reclaim cultural relevance within standardized urban environments. Studies addressing self-built housing, informal settlements, and hybrid urban architectures highlight the complex interplay between personal agency and structural constraints. Urban transformation also interacts with demographic change. As families evolve across generations, their spatial needs change, influencing residential patterns. Research by Adegun and Adedeji (2017) reveals that household expansion, dispersion, and reorganization in African cities produce dynamic domestic forms, showing that domestic architecture is not static but evolves as families' transition through life-cycle stages. These changes ripple outward, shaping neighbourhoods, influencing land use patterns, and contributing to broader urban restructuring. Thus, demographic and cultural transitions at household level collectively drive spatial transformation at city scale. Technological, economic, and demographic forces also play central roles in shaping the built environment. Frampton's earlier insights remain relevant and have been expanded by recent works such as Ellsworth (2021), who explains that contemporary urban expansion remains driven by unprecedented population growth, advances in building technologies, and changing socio-economic aspirations. These forces often lead to the densification of residential areas, the transformation of rural settlements into urban neighbourhoods, and the replacement of traditional compounds with multistory dwellings. Such transformations alter social relationships, spatial patterns, and notions of community.

The concept of preserving cultural values while embracing modernization continues to guide sustainable urban development discourse. According to Fathy and Montasser (2018), integrating traditional architectural principles with contemporary technologies offers pathways to culturally coherent yet modern domestic environments. This view aligns with modern sustainable architecture studies which emphasize designing urban spaces that respect local climates, materials, social systems, and cultural heritage. The challenge remains to balance the efficiency of modern architecture with the adaptability, symbolism, and ecological knowledge embedded in traditional domestic design.

Urbanization also introduces the risk of cultural erosion when global architectural models overshadow local design traditions. Imported construction materials and foreign design standards often fail to respond adequately to local climatic conditions, resulting in buildings that require artificial energy systems to remain comfortable. Recent research by Agyeman and Pearse (2019) argues that sustainable urban development depends on the adaptive integration of local environmental knowledge, cultural practices, and modern technologies. When societies successfully merge these elements, they create

domestic built environments that meet contemporary needs while preserving cultural identity. In essence, urbanization functions as a powerful agent of cultural, social, and architectural transformation. Domestic environments adapt continually as societies pursue modernity, negotiate tradition, and respond to demographic, economic, and technological pressures. The shift from traditional huts and compounds to contemporary dwellings, larger neighbourhoods, and complex residential districts reflects broader patterns of civilization change. While urbanization introduces disruption, it also offers opportunities for reinvention, innovation, and the redefinition of cultural identity within the built environment. A common thread across the literature is the recognition that continuity and change coexist, and both are essential to understanding how domestic architecture evolves within a rapidly transforming urban world.

Summary

The different scholars' reviews have been able to establish the fact that architecture is dynamic, multi-disciplinary, and culture specific. They further show that certain factors identify a domestic architecture of a society, a people, a place, and a time, and are responsible for the dynamic nature of architecture. These factors are subject to change as well as continuity, especially the socio-cultural ones, which transform the domestic architecture and entire built environment of a people in the same direction over relatively long periods of time. The review has also revealed that notwithstanding the type of society, whether ethnic or tribal or modern, social and cultural changes and continuity are inevitable. The review shows that studying and documenting the continuity and changes of a society will help to understand the pattern of development of the city (i.e., culturally, physically, economically, aesthetically, socially, and technologically).

It has been understood so far that urbanization and urban change greatly affect the transformation of a culture and any built environment; that is, cultural and social changes are due to urbanization and urban change. Therefore, the re-engineering of a single space like a hut, ark, etc., into a home, dwelling, houses, family compounds, and even palaces, be it traditional or contemporary house-types is the direct consequence of urbanization. However, continuity and change, whether rapid or slow, are compulsory in any society. This shows that in the study of domestic architecture in Benin City, focusing on continuity and change, it is expected that physical changes may be read in the house-types across the City, representing different homes built at different times. Some domestic spaces will change while others remain/continue in terms of organization, meaning, and usage across the entire City. The explanations for these changes are associated with social and cultural change. These socio-cultural changes are related to some concepts/ideas that are the defining characteristics of homes, as we would

observe in the next chapter. Amole *et al.* (1993) comparative studies accounted for these concepts because all cultures account for them. It is reasonable to assume that receiving strangers/visitors, food preparation and eating, religion, hygiene, and storage will experience some form of transformation across the City.

CHAPTER THREE

3.0 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This study employed a combination of complementary research methods to achieve the research objectives outlined in Section 1.4. The methodology integrates architectural documentation, resident-based inquiry, spatial analysis, and case study analysis to examine patterns of change and continuity in domestic architecture in Benin City. House plans were documented and analysed to identify spatial transformations and enduring design elements. Interviews with residents and key informants were conducted to understand the socio-cultural factors underlying these changes. Residents' attitudes toward architectural change and continuity were further examined using factor analysis to identify dominant influences shaping domestic space. Direct observation, photographic documentation, and expert assessment were used to examine the organisation and use of indoor and outdoor domestic spaces. Space syntax analysis was applied to investigate functional relationships between spaces, providing insights into spatial hierarchy, circulation, and patterns of use. Selected case studies were then used to illustrate these findings in concrete architectural terms across different residential zones.

This chapter therefore presents the research design, study population, sampling framework, data collection methods, analytical techniques, and case study analysis adopted for the study.

3.2 RESEARCH DESIGN

This study investigates socio-cultural change and continuity in the domestic architecture of the Edo people of Benin. It examines factors driving changes in house form and spatial organisation, residents' patterns of space use, and the housing types currently found in Benin City. In traditional Edo society, architectural change is largely resident-driven, reflecting cultural values, family structure, economic capacity, and evolving aspirations. Given that this study focuses on people, domestic space, and cultural practice, direct engagement with residents was essential. This approach aligns with human-centred research perspectives that emphasise lived experience, cultural meaning, and spatial behaviour (Flick, 2014; Silverman, 201C; Denzin & Lincoln, 2018).

Accordingly, a mixed-methods research design was adopted. Quantitative methods provide descriptive and supportive statistical evidence, while qualitative methods enabled deeper exploration of spatial organisation, cultural meaning, and residents' perceptions (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017; Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Leavy, 2017). This approach is consistent with contemporary architectural research that integrates spatial analysis, user behaviour, and cultural interpretation (Groat & Wang, 201U; Lawrence & Low, 2014; Rapoport, 201C). A pilot study was conducted prior to the main fieldwork, and feedback

from this exercise informed revisions to the questionnaire to improve clarity, cultural sensitivity, and validity.

3.3 RESEARCH POPULATION

The study population comprises residents and residential buildings within Benin City. These groups directly experience and shape changes and continuity in domestic architecture. A field-based approach was therefore necessary to obtain reliable and context-sensitive data. Benin City has experienced rapid demographic and spatial growth. Population projections from the National Population Commission (NPC, 2024) and records from the Edo State Ministry of Physical Planning (2023) indicate that the city's population now exceeds 1.0 million. This growth has contributed to the expansion of residential areas, redevelopment of traditional compounds, and transformation of historic housing forms. Recent estimates suggest that the city contains over 70,000 residential buildings (NPC, 2024; Edo State Ministry of Housing, 2023), necessitating a representative sampling strategy.

➤ Zoning of the Study Area

For analytical clarity, Benin City was divided into four residential zones:

1. Core Residential Zone – historic family compounds and traditional housing forms
2. Intermediate Residential Zone – a mix of traditional and modern housing
3. Suburban Residential Zone – rapidly expanding areas dominated by modern housing
4. Planned Estate Residential Zone – formally planned neighbourhoods developed by public and private institutions

Systematic random sampling was adopted across these zones.

3.4 SAMPLING METHODS AND PROCEDURE

A city-wide cross-sectional survey was conducted across the four residential zones. Given the estimated 350,000 residential units in Benin City as of 2024 (NPC, 2023; Okosun et al., 2022), a probability-based sampling technique was adopted. Systematic random sampling was applied within each zone, with every k th house selected in proportion to zone size. A sample size of 2% of residential units per zone was adopted, resulting in a total of 1,054 houses. Household heads were interviewed with the assistance of trained research assistants, allowing for accurate questionnaire administration, observation, and documentation of spatial changes.

3.5 RESEARCH SAMPLE SIZE

The final sample consisted of 1,054 residential houses across the four residential zones. In addition, 15 residents were purposively selected for in-depth interviews to provide qualitative insights across different age groups, socio-economic backgrounds, and housing types.

3.6 RESEARCH DATA COLLECTION METHOD

The study explained the analytical techniques applied in the data collection and analysis. Data collection tools used include: in-depth personal interviews schedule, questionnaires, review and analysis of policy documents, observation and measurements, and documentation (sketching) of the architectural plan of the selected houses across the city. Both quantitative and qualitative approaches were employed to collect data in this study. In the quantitative approach, the questionnaires contained both structured and unstructured questions (i.e., closed-ended and open-ended). While in the qualitative approach in in-depth personal interviews were conducted, photographs of the houses were taken; sketches of plans of the houses were measured, drawn, and documented. Space syntax was employed to analyse and determine the relationship between domestic spaces, the change in the domestic spaces, and the continuity in the domestic spaces. Factor analysis was used to determine the factors responsible for the attitude of the respondents towards change and the factors that determine their response towards the change, as well as the continuity.

3.6.1 Design of Questionnaire

The questionnaire distributions were designed in such a way that required thirty (30) research assistants to cover the entire Benin City. Each research assistant was to cover a particular area of the four residential zones. Every residential zone was supposed to have at least 4-8 research assistants, depending on the size of the zone. These research assistants were drawn from postgraduate and undergraduate students of architecture, as well as others from the allied building professions. The questionnaire was so structured that the research assistant must administer the questionnaire in person to the head of each household, help tick the boxes provided in the questionnaire, and thereafter sketch the house plan. The variables were expressed in the question form to elicit information on their subject. The questionnaire was written in English and was expressed in simple sentences so as to ensure the possibility of giving clarity of intention. The questions were of both open-ended and closed types. They were pre-coded with alternative responses provided; this procedure afforded the respondents the choice of responses. The questionnaire was made up of two sections, A and B.

➤ Section A- (General Questions)

This section was divided into two parts, the first part contained 18 items that were meant to collect background information about the respondent and the physical characteristics of the building, the second part, focussed on information about the different spaces in the building so as to ascertain the usage, organization, meaning and the difference in spaces present in the different buildings across the entire City. The respondents were asked to tick the appropriate box from the options available.

➤ Section B- (Attitudinal Questions)

This section was designed to determine the respondents' attitudes to these spaces that represent changes and their attitudes to the spaces that remained or continued to be available. It also solicited their response

to the changes. The attitudes and responses towards change and continuity in the domestic spaces across the four residential zones were a result of certain factors. Factor analysis was used to determine these different factors separately across each zone, and in the end, the factors were further factor analysed to ascertain the overall factors responsible in the entire City.

3.6.2 Design of Interview Schedules

The interview schedule was designed so that certain cultural and social issues that could not be captured by the questionnaire would be solicited from personal interviews. The questions were semi-structured (i.e. open ended with some restrictions). In other words some questions were prepared in the interview schedule, but as each question is raised, the response from the interviewee, will determine the next question either from the interview schedule or a fall out from the response received. The different sections of the interviews were recorded in audio and video recorders. Thereafter they were transcribed. The respondents were drawn from diverse sections of society, they include; traditional community elders, traditional chiefs, government employee, professionals and artisans in the building industries. The research questions centre on the aspects of change and continuity, the influence, reasons, their thought and how it affects the people, the culture and the City. Moreover, interview schedules were prepared and administered to about 15 key informants drawn from traditional community elders, traditional chiefs, university don, professionals and artisans in the building industry. The selection of respondents for the interview was based on their functions/roles in the kingdom, age, their knowledge of the subject matter and the location of their houses across the four residential zones in the City. They were all men within the age bracket of between 56 and 85yrs.

3.7 METHOD OF DATA ANALYSIS

The data collected for this study were analysed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. In the treatment of data, descriptive data were presented using tables, frequency counts, percentages, mean, and charts. The analyses of data relied on appropriate statistical operations and were tested using multivariate analysis. The tests were performed at a 0.05 level of significance using a 2-tailed test. For the purpose of clarity, a detailed methodology of the thesis is presented. The sample of plans drawn, collected, and documented was analysed and interpreted using socio-physical analysis, i.e., using space syntax to determine the inter-relationship, depth, control, and segmentation of each space in relation to the use, organization, and meaning.

From the analysis of the space usage and organization, the transformation process was easily traced to detect the changes and the continuities. In the end, factor analysis was used to determine the factors responsible for the transformation. Factor analysis was used to determine the factors responsible for the attitudes and the responses of the respondents towards the change and the continuity identified.

CHAPTER FOUR

4.0 ANALYSIS, FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the results of the questionnaire survey carried out among residents of Benin City. The data were generated to reflect the research objectives of the study, which focus on continuity and change in domestic architecture. A total of 150 questionnaires were analysed.

4.2 SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF RESPONDENTS

Gender	Frequency
Male	68
Female	82
Total	150

Table 4.1: Gender Distribution

The result shows that females (54.7%) were slightly more than males (45.3%). This indicates that both genders are actively involved in housing and domestic space decisions in Benin City.

Age Group	Frequency
Below 20	16

21–30	54
31–40	38
41–50	32
51 and above	10
Total	150

Table 4.2: Age Distribution

The age group 21–30 years recorded the highest frequency, showing that young adults form the largest group of residents influencing present housing trends.

4.3 INTERPRETATION OF OPINION-BASED SURVEY RESPONSES

This section offers a comprehensive interpretation of the 25 opinion-based questions, organized according to the study's research questions and objectives.

House types in Benin	Categories	Location (Zones)	Characteristics
The Palace Compound	Core	residential	3
i. Egue i Oto			
ii. Eghodo			
The Family Compound	Core	residential	142
i. Owa Eken			
The Modified Traditional Courtyard House Type	Core	residential	56
The Adapted Family Compound Benin House	intermediate	residential	43
The Hybrid Family Compound Benin House	intermediate	residential	
The Common Central Corridor House Type (face-me-I-face-planned estate)	Intermediate suburb and planned estate	Residential	104

you)

The detached bungalow house type (owa eken'ebo)	Intermediate suburb and planned estate	Residential	165
The semi-detached flat of single floor house type	Intermediate suburb and planned estate	Residential	132
The semi-detached flat of double floor house type	Intermediate suburb and planned estate	Residential	77
The detached double floor duplex house type	planned estate	Residential	28
The detached double floor villa house type	planned estate	Residential	20
TOTAL	Eleven House Types in Benin City		1054

Table 4.3: Various house types studied, their locations and numbers studied

As a result of the classification, eleven major house-types were identified which includes; The Palace Compound courtyard House-Types —*Eguei Oto-Eghodol*, The Family Compound courtyard House-Types. —*Owa Eken" Ikun design*, The modified traditional courtyard house-type, The Adapted Family-Compound Benin House, The hybrid FamilyCompound Benin House, The Common Central Corridor House-Types (Face Me I Face You), The Detached Bungalow House-Types ("*Owaeken'ebo*"), The Semi-Detached Flat of Single Floor HouseTypes, The Semi-Detached Flats of Double Floor House-type, The Detached Duplexes and The Detached Double Floor Villa House-Types. The house-types were identified across four residential zones in Benin namely; core, intermediate, sub-urban and planned estate residential zones.

4.3.1 Research Question One: What are the housing characteristics of the buildings?

House Type	Frequency
Traditional compound	39
Bungalow	54
Storey building	36
Flats/apartments	21
Total	150

Table 4.4: Type of House

Bungalows form the largest house type, showing the influence of modern housing, while traditional compound houses still exist, reflecting continuity.

Material	Frequency
Mud	22
Cement blocks	75
Timber	15
Mixed materials	38
Total	150

Table 4.5: Main Building Materials

The dominance of cement block is (50%) shows modernization, while the presence of mud and mixed materials shows the persistence of traditional construction methods.

Response	Frequency
Yes	83
No	67
Total	150

Table 4.6: Presence of Courtyard

More than half of the respondents still have courtyards in their house, which shows the survival of traditional spatial organization.

Response	Frequency
Yes	72
No	78
Total	150

Table 4.7: Presence of Family Shrine

This shows that ancestral and spiritual practices still influence domestic architecture, even in modern houses.

4.3.2 Research Question Two: What are the perceptions of change?

Response	Frequency
Strongly Agree	52
Agree	45
Neutral	22
Disagree	18
Strongly Disagree	13
Total	150

Table 4.8: Urbanization Has Changed Domestic Architecture

About 65% of respondents agreed that urbanization has changed domestic architecture in Benin City.

Response	Frequency
Strongly Agree	60
Agree	48
Neutral	23
Disagree	12
Strongly Disagree	7
Total	150

Table 4.9: Cultural Identity Is Important in Housing

Over 70% of respondents believe cultural identity should be preserved in modern housing.

Response	Frequency
Yes	108
No	42
Total	150

Table 4.10: Preference for Hybrid Architecture

Most respondents prefer a combination of traditional and modern architecture, supporting the concept of continuity and change.

4.4 CASE STUDIES: by Residential Zones

Rather than presenting all documented houses, selected buildings were analysed as case studies to illustrate dominant housing types and spatial patterns. From the total sample of 1,054 houses, representative case studies were selected based on:

- Representativeness of a recognised housing type
- Clarity of spatial organisation
- Cultural and historical relevance
- Degree of transformation from traditional to contemporary forms
- Location within a defined residential zone

Using these criteria, eleven major housing types were identified and analysed across the four residential zones.

4.4.1 Core Residential Zone

The core residential zone is at the centre of Benin; it is oldest part of the City where the Oba, Chiefs and their royal lineage live. In view of the fact that Benin started as pockets of communities named after powerful leaders, once it became a city, the communities developed into quarters (Aimiwu, 2005). Therefore the core area consist of quarters like; *Ogbe, Adesogbe, Ore-Oghene, Ogboka, Ibiwe, Ikpema, Eben, Isekhere, Isenmwendo, Ihogbe, Urubi, Oliha, Uzebu*. See fig 1.4. All these names are of royal lineage and so the houses are old, cultural, and hereditary. After a vigilant field study and sampling of a cross-section of the houses in the core residential zone, the house-types in the zone were categorized into two broad categories namely;

1. Domestic/Traditional Courtyard House-Type —*Owa Oto-Eghodo*” Impluvium Design.
 - a. The Palace Compound Courtyard House-Types —*Eguei Oto-Eghodo*
 - b. The Family Compound Courtyard House-Types. —*Owa Eken*” *Ikun design*
2. The Modified Traditional Courtyard House-Types

1. Domestic/Traditional Courtyard House-Type -“*Owa Oto-Eghodo*” (Impluvium Design).

The traditional residential courtyard houses of the Edos are of two types according to Aisien —The palace compound house-types and the family compound house-types. Comparatively the palace compound house which includes the Oba’s palace, the hereditary chiefs’ palace and the non-hereditary chiefs’ palace. These palaces which also double as their residential houses and are larger and had more courtyards than the family compound courtyard house of the nobles and the commoners”. The residential traditional courtyard houses could be differentiated in their aspects of the quality and complexity, but they have one thing in common, and that is during the planning and construction stages, consideration was usually given to the public and private areas.



Figure 4.1a: Photo showing private courtyard (harem for women and children) Ikun n'derie
Source: Researcher's field work, 2026



Figure 4.1b: Photo showing private courtyard (harem for women and children) Ikun n'derie
Source: Researcher's field work, 2026



Figure 4.1c: Photo showing private courtyard (harem for women and children) Ikun n'derie
Source: Researcher's field work, 2026



Figure 4.2: Outer courtyard for shrines and idols (Ikun n'arhuera)
Source: Researcher's field work, 2026

This housing type exemplifies the gradual transition from traditional compound living to more contemporary residential forms, while preserving elements of cultural continuity.

➤ **Palace Compound Courtyard House-Type (Eguei Oto–Eghodo)**

The houses of royalties (Benin Oba & chiefs) are planned so that the rooms are arranged around a series of internal courtyards (Plate 5.1), leading one into the other much on the pattern of the Classical Roman house with its sequence of atria. The palace compound courtyard house-type represents the most traditional and culturally significant form of domestic architecture in Benin City. This housing form, which includes the Oba's palace as well as the palaces of hereditary and non-hereditary chiefs, is characterised by a sequence of multiple courtyards arranged along a clear spatial hierarchy. Each courtyard performs specific social, ritual, and domestic functions, with public courtyards located near the entrance and more private courtyards reserved for family activities and restricted use. The impluvium courtyard system enhances natural lighting, ventilation, and climatic comfort while reinforcing cultural practices and symbolic meanings. Spatial organisation within the palace compound strongly reflects lineage, status, and authority, demonstrating the close relationship between architecture and socio-political structure in traditional Edo society.

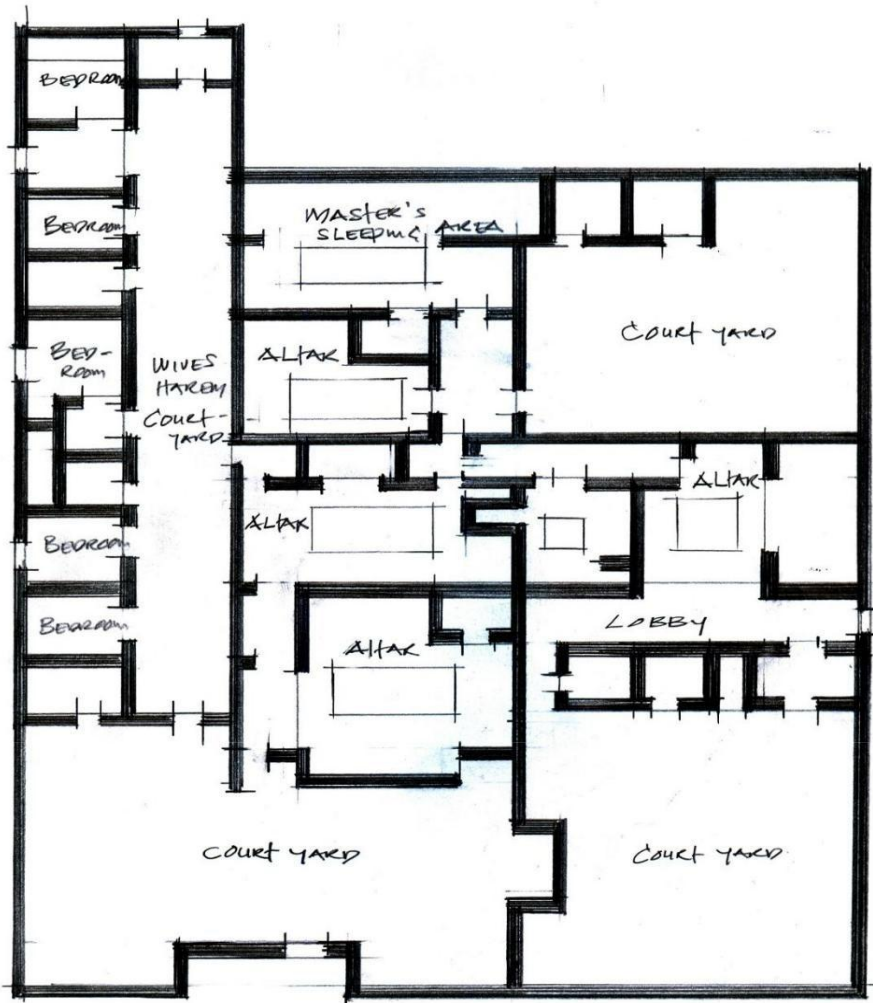


Plate 4.1a: Floor Plan of a Typical Palace-Compound Benin House

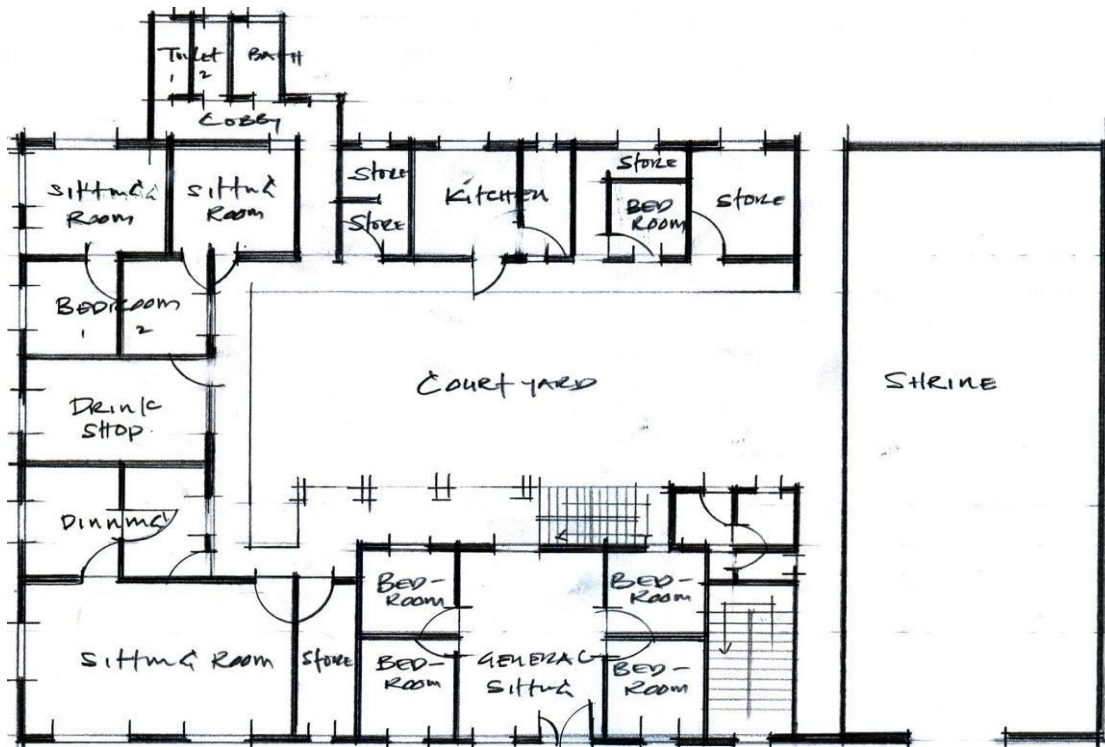


Plate 4.1b: Floor Plan of a Typical Palace-Compound Benin House

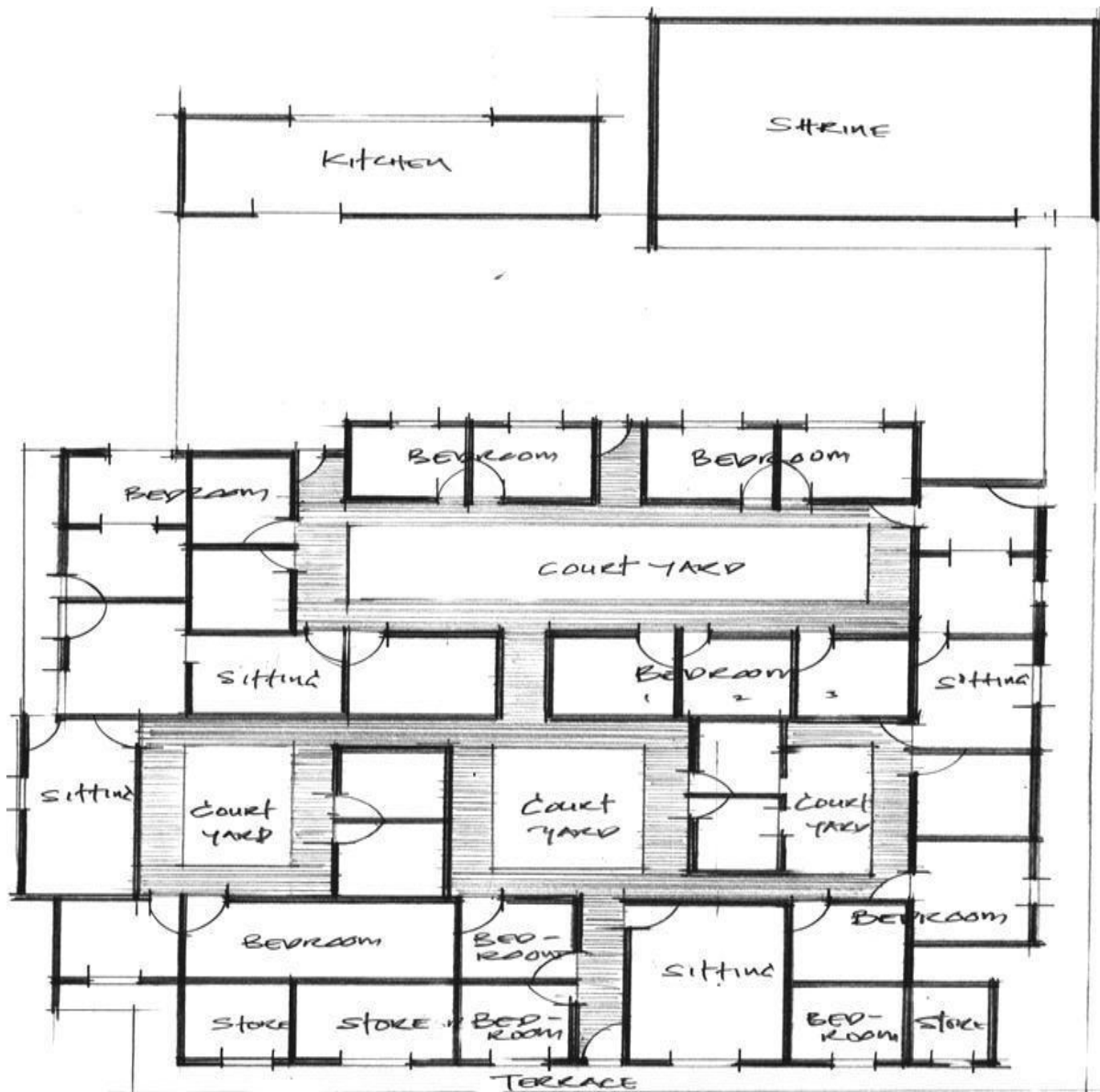


Plate 4.1c: Floor Plan of a Typical Palace Compound Benin House

➤ **Family Compound Courtyard House-Type (Owa Efiem)**

The house was built of mud (laterite), rectangular in shape having a large structure, seven levels high, a hollow structure with four courtyards, and spread on a large expanse of land. Design naturally is divided into; Front, for the servants of the house usually men, the side of the house towards the front is for the owner of the house. (*Egun*), Close to the back door is the kitchen detached from the main house. Main parlour in front is for visitor; then a door leading from the fore-courtyard, in the courtyard houses to the shrine of the household head (father). Thereafter, a door lead from that courtyard towards the back to the harem for women, and the number of rooms depends on the number of wives and children, It allow proper ventilations, proper light but brings into the other spaces, the environmental atmosphere, thereby making the building (design) pattern, environmentally friendly.

2. Modified Traditional Courtyard House-Type

The modified traditional courtyard house-type represents an early stage of architectural transformation within the core residential zone. While retaining the courtyard as a central organising element, the number and scale of courtyards are often reduced. Modern construction materials, such as sandcrete blocks and corrugated roofing sheets, are commonly introduced, reflecting changing economic conditions, reduced household size, and increasing rental use.

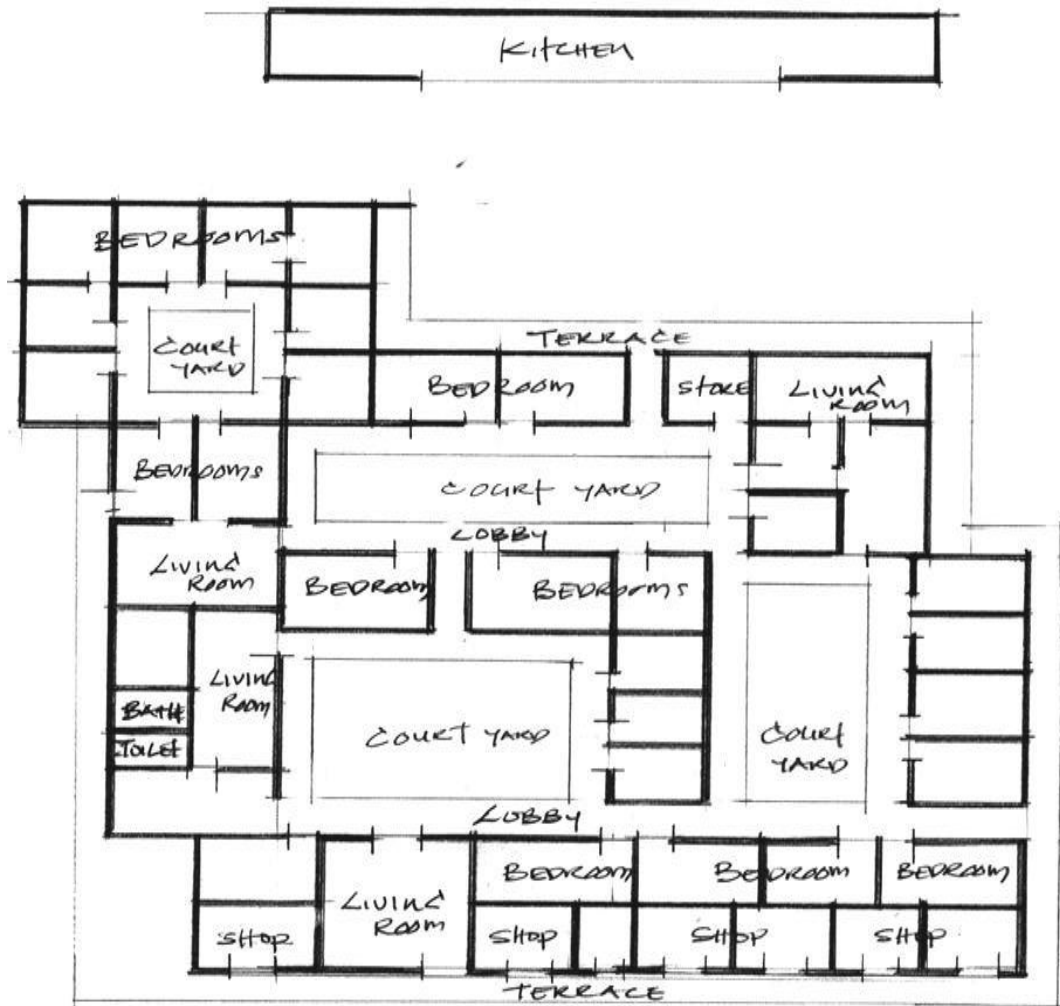


Plate 4.2: Floor Plan of a Typical Family-Compound Benin House

4.4.2 Intermediate Residential Zone

The intermediate residential zone is the area after the core residential zone, inside the zone is the world large hand-dogged moat in the 14th century. The moats and walls are huge mounds of earth; the walls are 1,200 kilometres long and a height of up to 20 metres. Today it is declared a world heritage site and is being conserved. (USAID, 2002) The intermediate residential zone is some kilometre before the historical moat acting as boundary between the core zone and the intermediate zone. About the moat and beyond are houses built all around. The quarters in the zone are; part of *Uzebu*, *Oliha*, and *Urubi* others are *Okhoro*, *Uselu*, *Ikpoba*, *Ikpokpan* and G.R.A. After a detailed survey of the houses in the zone, three (3) broad categories of house-type were identified. They include;

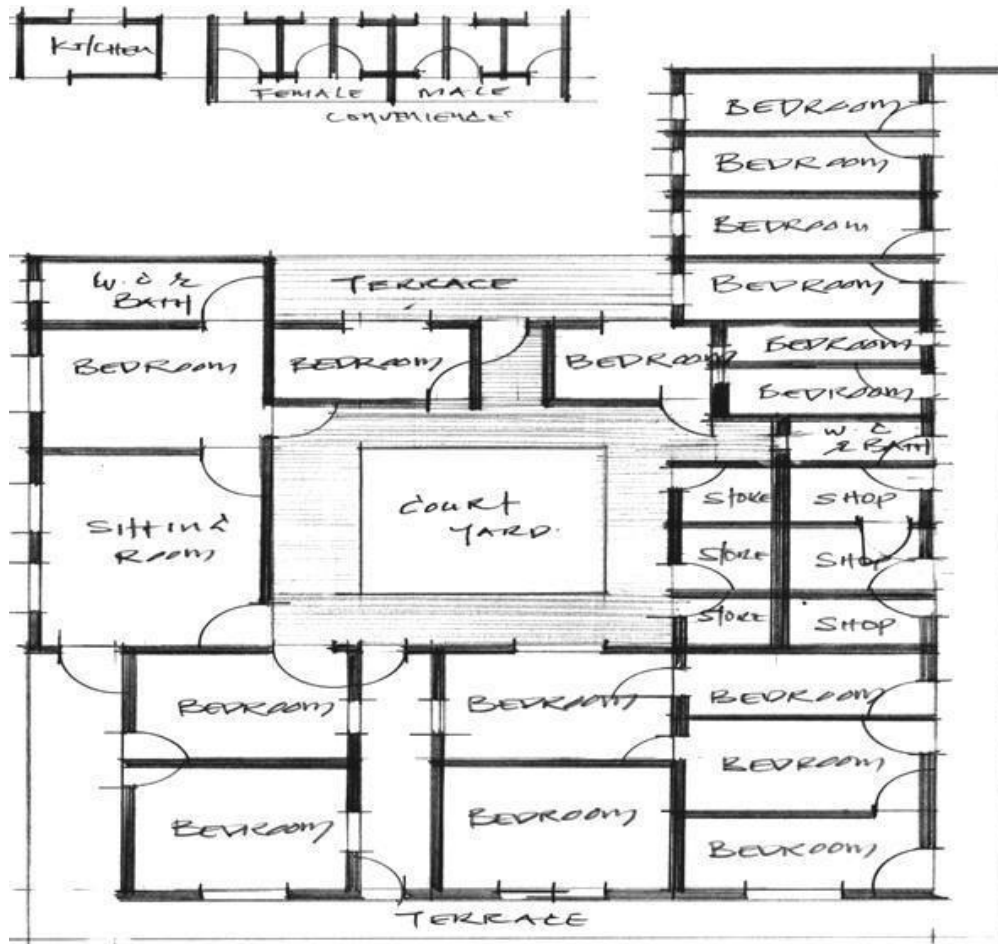


Plate 4.3: Floor Plan of a Typical Modified Family-Compound Benin House

1. The modified traditional courtyard house-type
 - a. The Family Compound House-Types
 - b. The Adapted Family-Compound Benin House
 - c. The hybrid Family-Compound Benin House
2. The Common Central Corridor House-Types (Face Me I Face You)
3. The Institutional house-type
 1. The Detached Bungalow House-Types (“Owa Eken’ebo”)
 2. The Semi-Detached Flats of Double Floor House

1. The Modified Traditional Courtyard House-Types

This house-type is an improvement on the domestic/traditional design. They are found immediately after the core residential zone, i.e. the intermediate residential zone and the sub-urban residential zone. The study labelled the house-type as modified courtyard houstype because it is an upgrade of the domestic/traditional courtyard house.

➤ **Family Compound Courtyard House-Type (Owa Efien)**

The family compound courtyard house-type is a smaller and less complex version of the palace compound, but follows similar spatial principles. Rooms are arranged around a central courtyard that serves as the main focus for social interaction, worship, and everyday domestic activities. This housing type accommodates extended family living and is clearly organised into public, semi-private, and private zones. Its courtyard-based layout promotes social cohesion, privacy regulation, and climatic responsiveness, making it well-suited to traditional Edo cultural and environmental conditions.

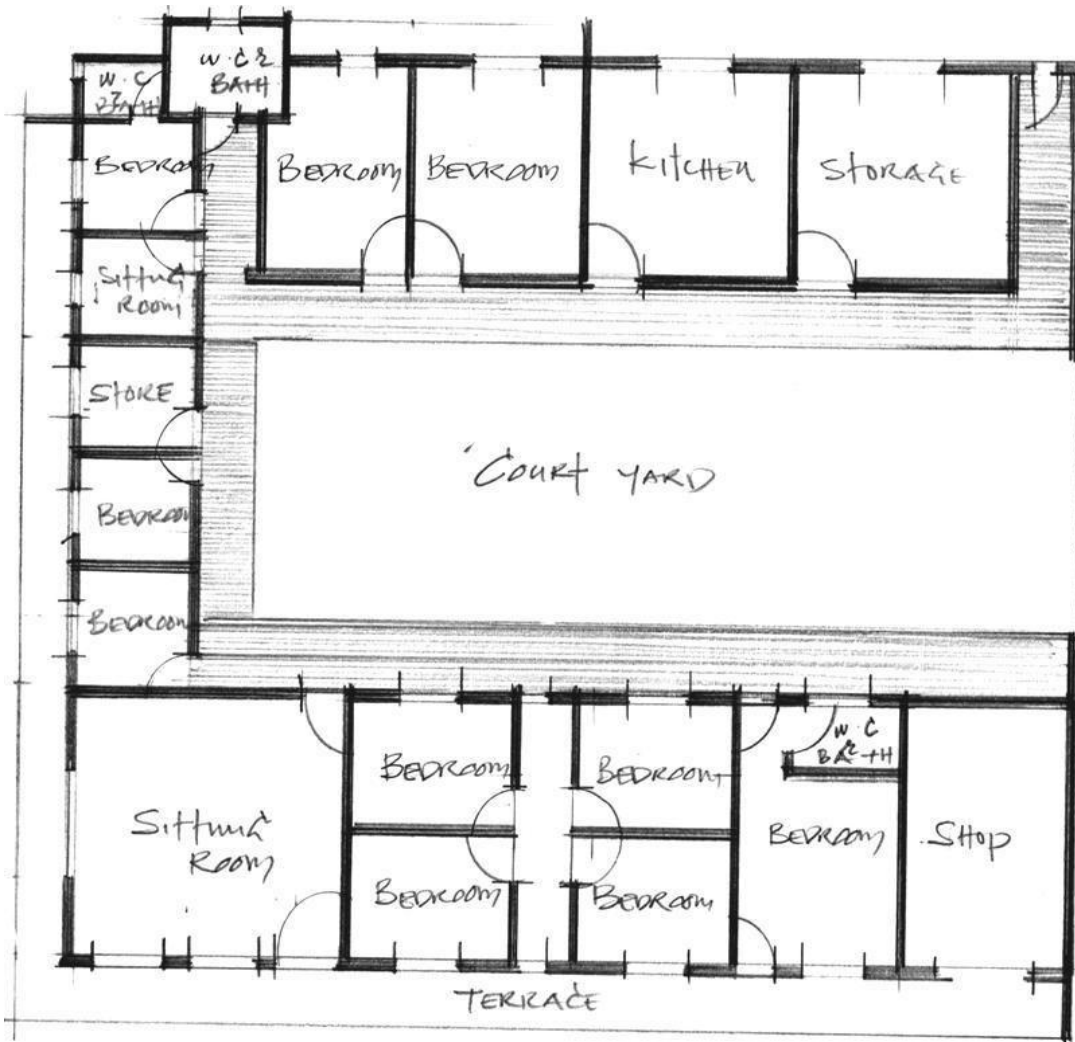


Plate 4.4a: Floor Plan of a Typical Family-Compound Benin House

➤ **Adapted Family-Compound House-Type**

The adapted family-compound house-type represents a transitional housing form derived from the traditional courtyard compound. While the courtyard remains a lively organising element, it is often partially enclosed or modified with auxiliary structures such as kitchens, service spaces, or shrines. This housing type accommodates both family members and tenants, reflecting increasing social diversity and economic pressure within the intermediate zone. Spatial organisation becomes more flexible, allowing for mixed domestic and rental use, while traditional cultural elements and spatial hierarchy remain evident.

➤ **Hybrid Family-Compound House-Type**

The hybrid family-compound house-type is a modified traditional courtyard house that combines features of multiple housing forms within a single compound. It typically includes elements of the traditional courtyard house, adapted compound house, and modern residential layouts. The courtyard in this housing type is usually open-ended, either at the front or rear, and is not fully enclosed by surrounding buildings. This configuration distinguishes it from the adapted family-compound house, where courtyards tend to be more inward-looping. The hybrid form reflects architectural adaptation driven by urbanisation, changing lifestyles, and the need to maximise land use while retaining aspects of traditional spatial organisation.

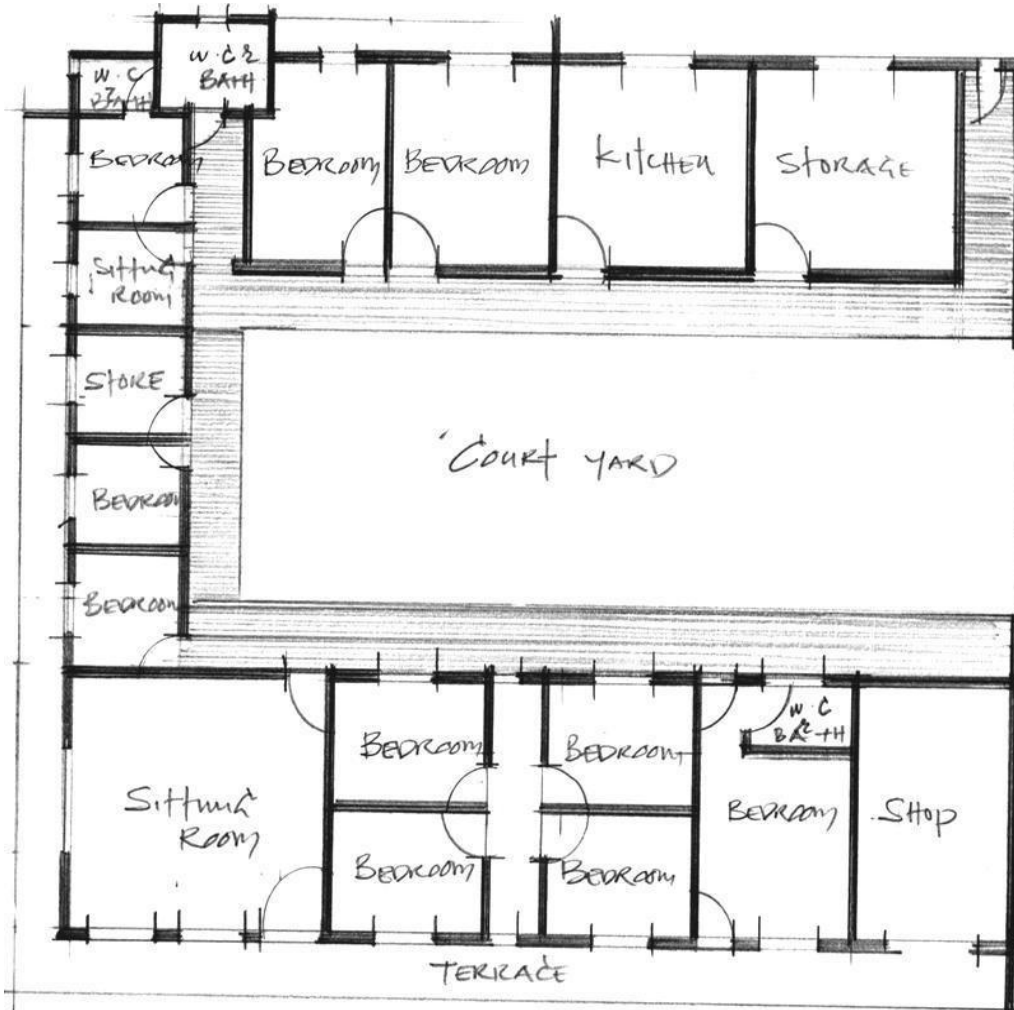


Plate 4.4b: Floor Plan of a Typical Family-Compound Benin House

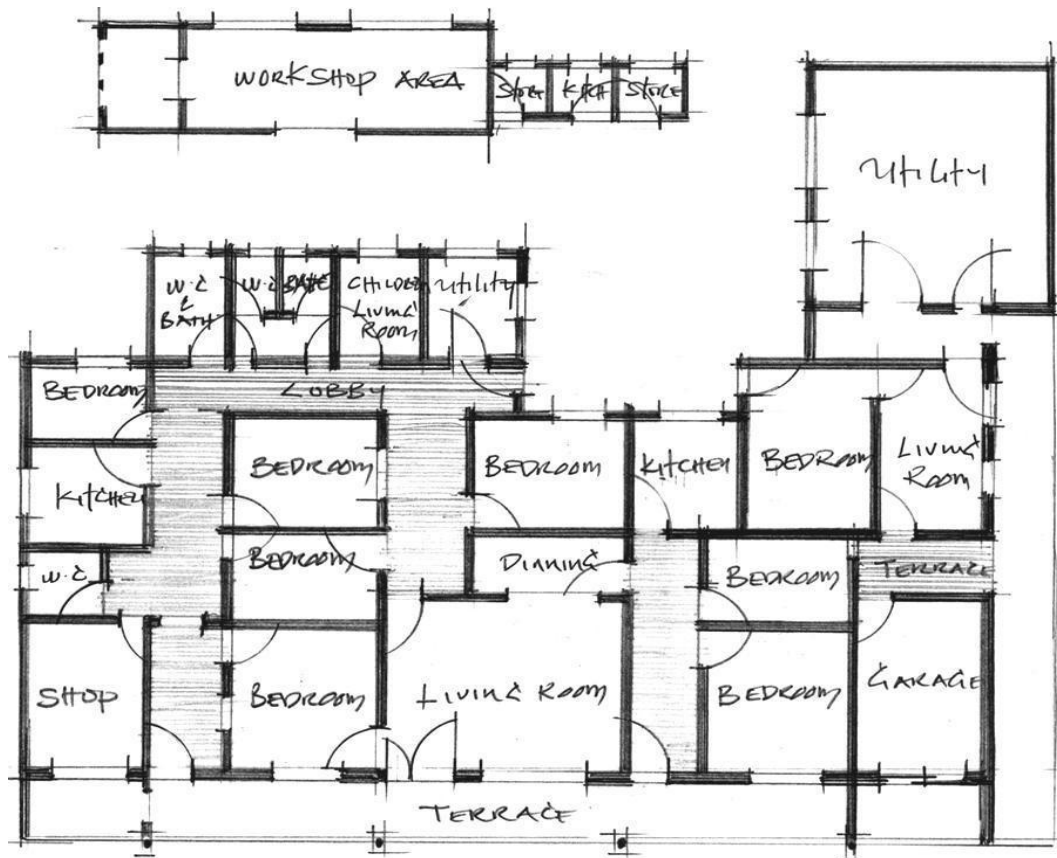


Plate 4.5: Floor plan of a typical adapted family-compound Benin house
 Source: Researcher's field work, 2026

2. Corridor House-Type (“Face Me I Face You”)

The corridor house-type, commonly referred to as “face me I face you,” represents a significant departure from courtyard-based domestic organisation. In this housing form, the traditional courtyard is replaced by a long internal corridor, with rooms opening on both sides. Service spaces such as kitchens, bathrooms, and toilets are typically located in a horizontal block at the rear of the building. This housing type is highly efficient for high- density occupation and rental purposes and is therefore prevalent within the intermediate residential zone. Its spatial arrangement reflects the shift from communal courtyard living to economically driven, space-efficient housing.

➤ Suburban Residential Zone Modified Courtyard House-Type

The modified courtyard house-type in the suburban zone represents a further stage in the transformation of traditional domestic architecture. While the courtyard is retained, it is often reduced in size, repositioned, or visually disconnected from the main living spaces. Modern amenities such as en-suite bedrooms, internal kitchens, and improved sanitary facilities are commonly introduced, reflecting a shift toward nuclear family living and contemporary lifestyle preferences. This housing type illustrates the gradual weakening of traditional spatial hierarchy in favour of functional efficiency and privacy.

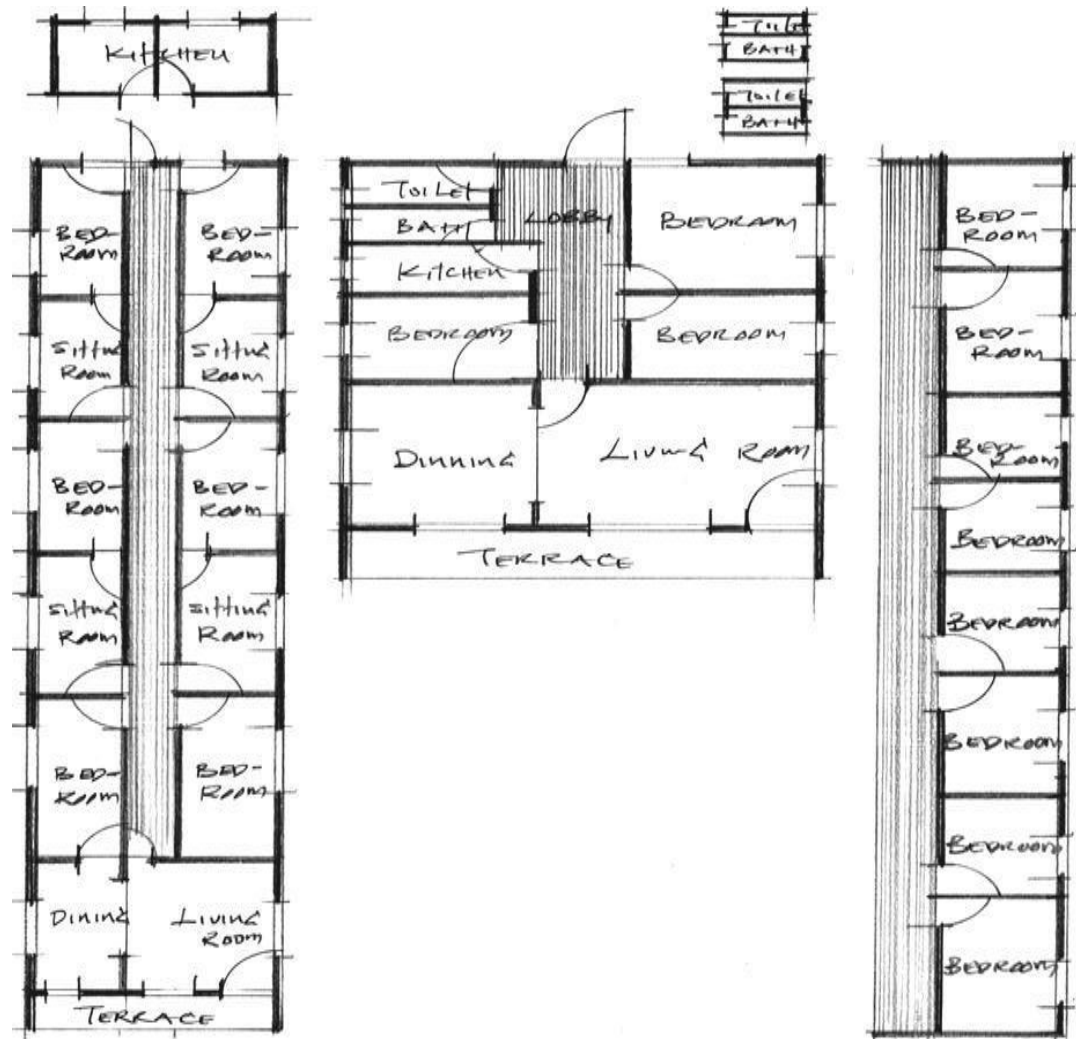


Plate 4.6: Floor plan of a typical hybrid family-compound Benin house
 Source: Researcher's field work, 2026

➤ **Semi-Detached Flats (Single and Double Floor)**

Semi-detached flats in the suburban zone are institutional housing forms designed to accommodate multiple independent households within a single structure. These buildings may be single-storey or double-storey and typically follow prototype designs using modern construction materials. This housing type emphasises economic efficiency, ease of construction, and high rental value, making it popular among private developers and public-private housing schemes. Its spatial organisation makes a clear shift away from compound living toward independent household units.

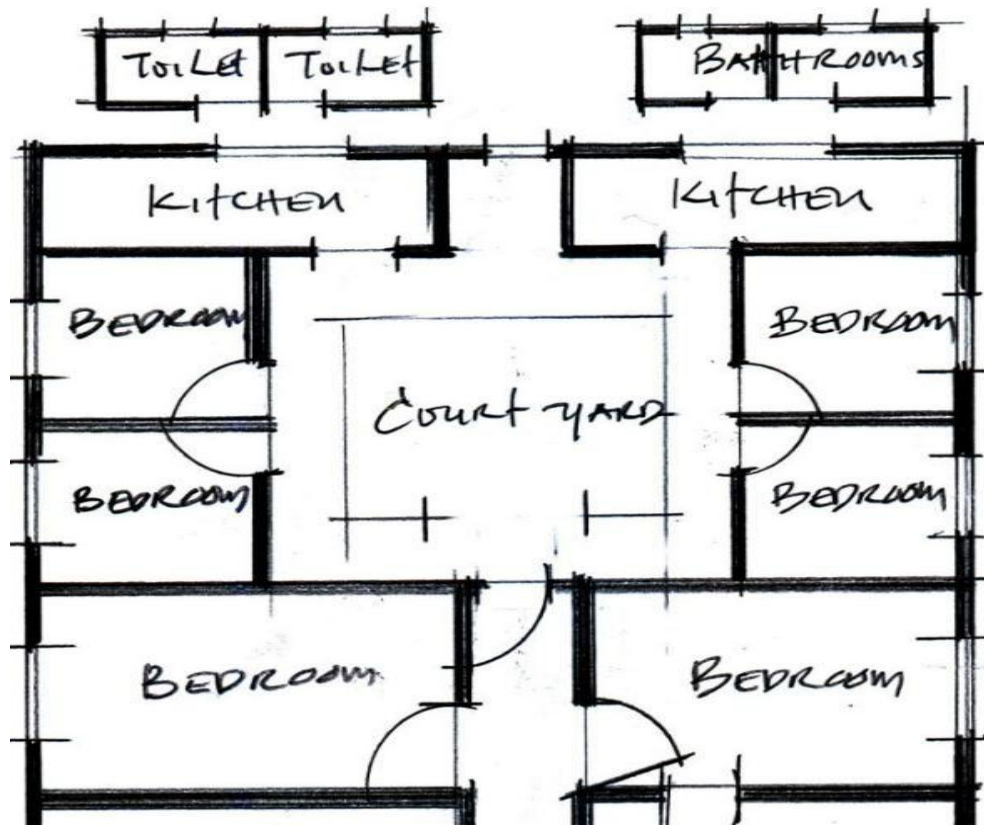


Plate 4.7a: Floor plan of a typical corridor house-type ("face me i face you")
 Source: Researcher's field work, 2026

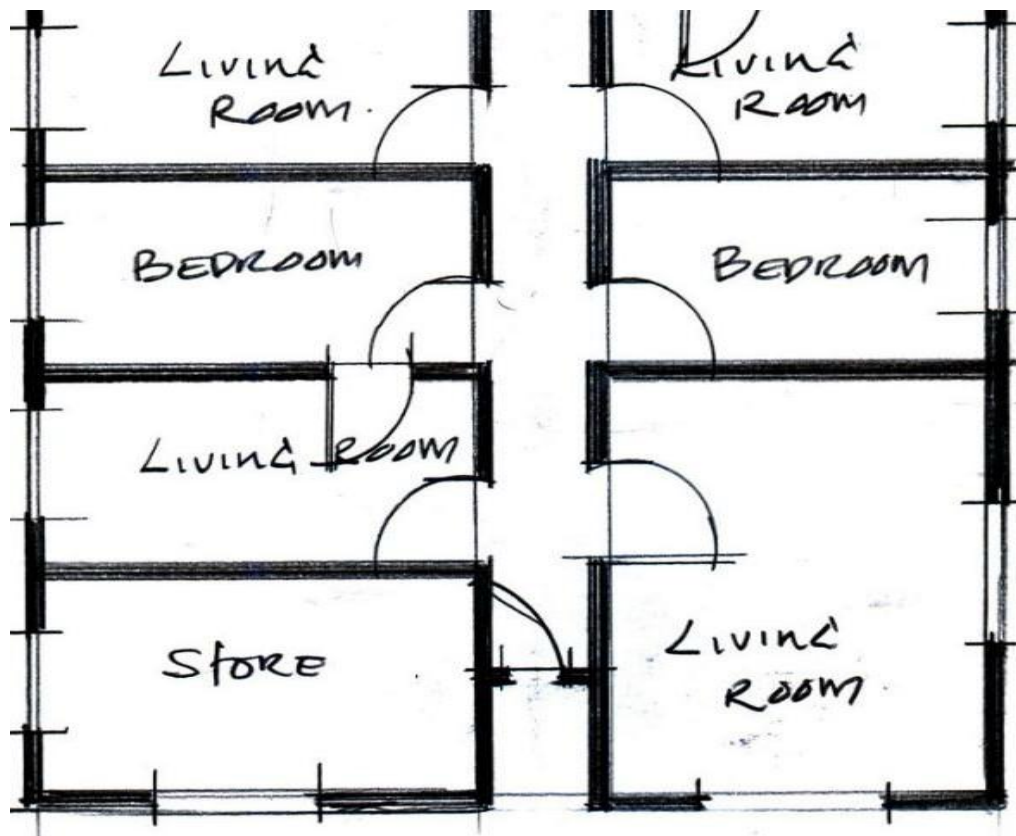


Plate 4.7b: Floor plan of a typical corridor house-type (“face me i face you”)
 Source: Researcher’s field work, 2026

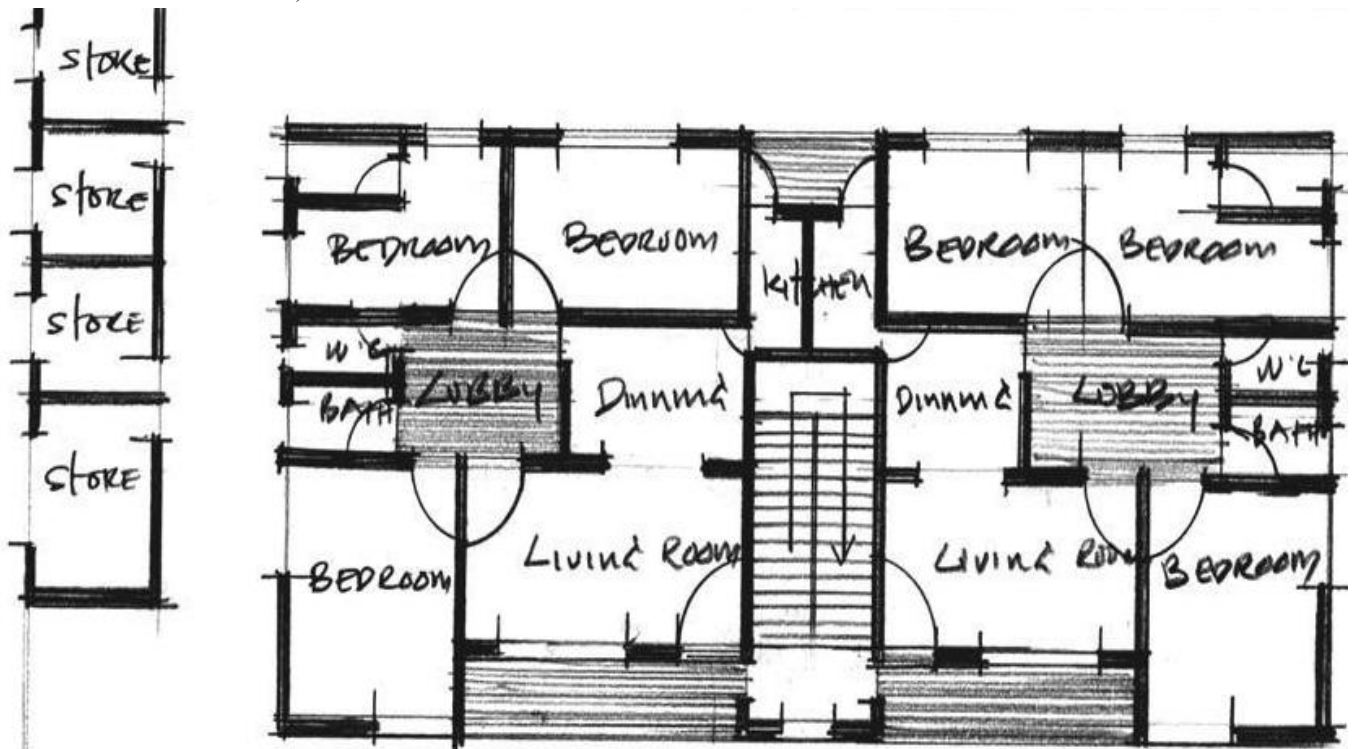


Plate 4.8: Floor plan of a typical semi-detached flat (single and double floor)
 Source: Researcher’s field work, 2026

3. Detached Bungalow House-Type

The detached bungalow house type represents a fully modern residential form that prioritises privacy, individuality, and internalised spatial organisation. All domestic functions are contained within a single self-contained building, with circulation spaces replacing the traditional courtyard. This housing type commonly features modern materials, personalised layouts, and clearly defined functional zones. Its prevalence in the suburban zone reflects changing socio-economic aspirations and increased demand for private, owner-occupied housing.

➤ Planned Estate Residential Zone Detached Duplex and Villa House-Types

Detached duplexes and villa house-types represent the most contemporary forms of residential architecture in Benin City. These houses are primarily designed for nuclear families and are characterised by vertical zoning, with public spaces typically located on the ground floor and private spaces on upper floors. The spatial organisation emphasises privacy, functional efficiency, and modern living standards, incorporating features such as garages, studies, balconies, and recreational spaces. Cultural elements are minimal, and design decisions are largely influenced by modern lifestyles, planning regulations, and socio-economic status.

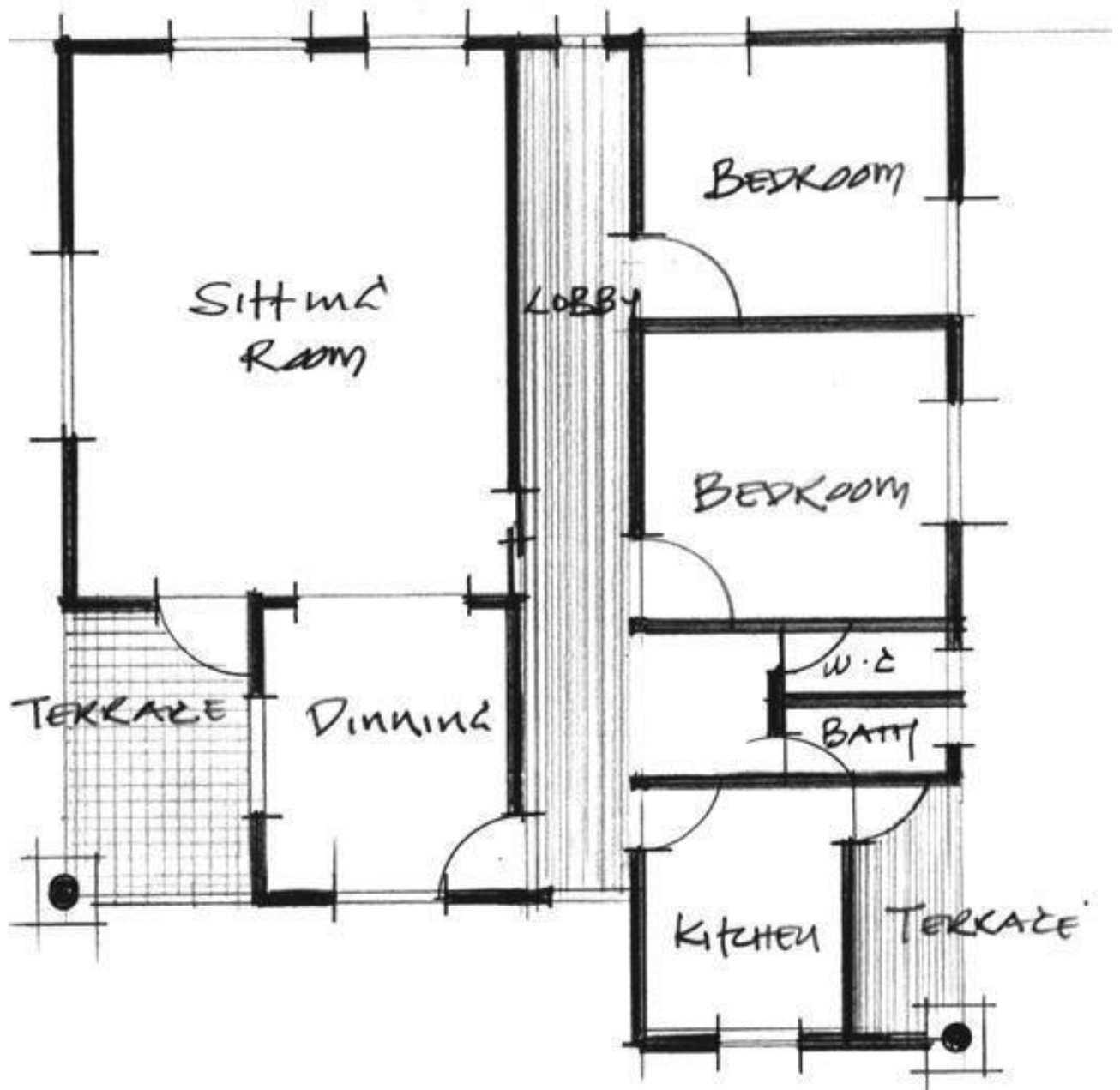


Plate 4.9: Floor plan of a typical detached bungalow house-type
 Source: Researcher's field work, 2026

➤ **Semi-Detached Flats in Planned Estates**

Semi-detached flats within planned estates are institutional housing types developed using standardised prototype designs. They are arranged to maximise land use efficiency while accommodating multiple independent households. This housing form is popular due to its high rental value, economic viability, and ease of maintenance. Spatial layouts prioritise functionality and efficiency, with limited variation and reduced emphasis on cultural symbolism, reflecting the formal planning and regulatory framework of estate developments.

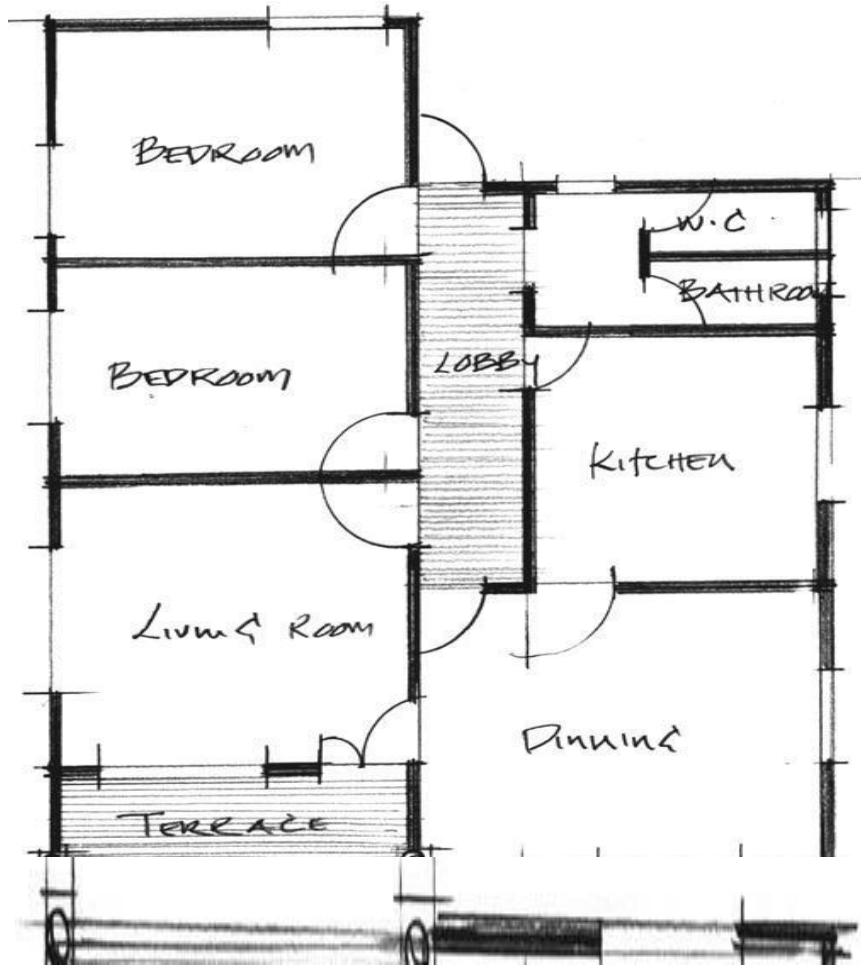


Plate 4.10: Floor Plan of a typical detached duplex and villa house-types
 Source: Researcher's field work, 2026.

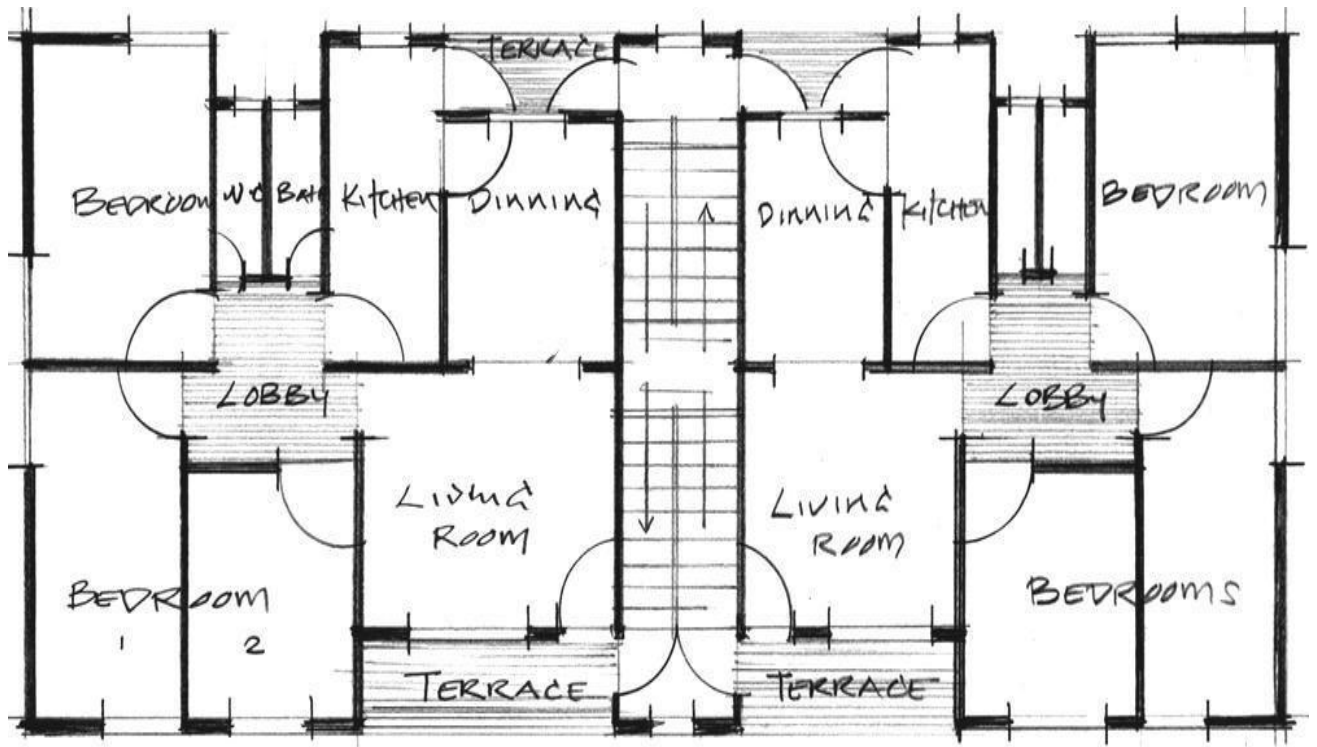


Plate 4.11a: Floor Plan of a typical detached flat in planned estates
 Source: Researcher's field work, 2026.

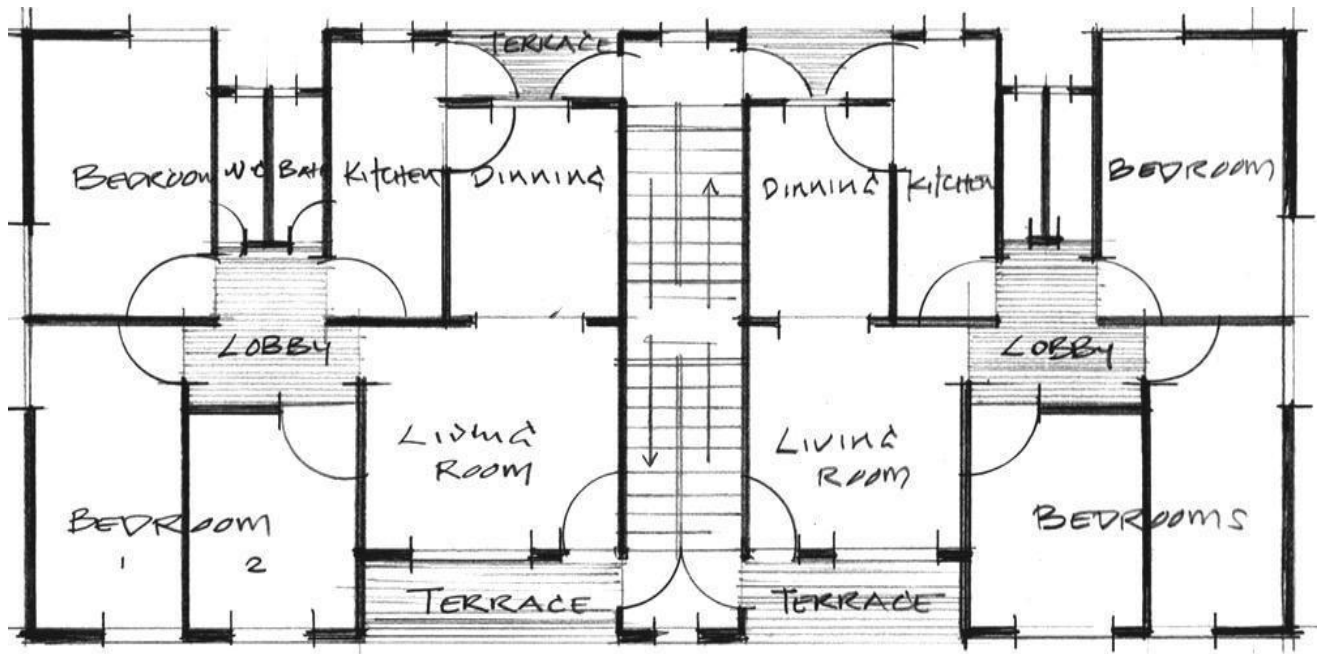


Plate 4.11b: Floor Plan of a typical detached flat in planned estates
 Source: Researcher's field work, 2026.

This chapter presents the research methodology and case study analysis employed in the study. Through a combination of surveys, interviews, spatial analysis, and selected case studies, the research examined how domestic architecture in Benin City has evolved across residential zones. The findings reveal a clear transition from traditional courtyard-based housing in the core zone to modern, institutional housing forms in planned estates. While traditional housing emphasises communal living, cultural hierarchy, and climatic responsiveness, contemporary housing prioritises privacy, efficiency, and modern lifestyles. The coexistence of these forms demonstrates that domestic architecture in Benin City is dynamic and continuously shaped by socio-cultural and economic forces.

CHAPTER FIVE

5.0 SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The transformation of domestic architecture in Benin City demonstrates that spatial change is more than the mere rearrangement of rooms; it involves the redefinition of relationships between spaces and the activities that occur within them. The evolution of Edo domestic environments continues to reflect long-standing cultural principles such as spatial hierarchy and level distinction. These indigenous logics have guided the reinterpretation of traditional house-forms in response to emerging socio-economic conditions. Despite visible formal changes, residents' preferences and behavioural patterns confirm that certain cultural values remain resilient. Continuity in domestic space is therefore a gradual and layered process, shaped by environmental observation, cultural memory, and habitual behaviour. Contemporary research affirms that socio-economic shifts, technological advancement, and political influences are central determinants of how domestic environments are conceptualised and transformed (Adeyemi, 2015; Uduafi & Enabulele, 2016). These factors shape collective imagination, structure daily routines, and determine the rate and direction of spatial change. Consequently, the cultural significance of a domestic space can often be measured by the extent to which its core features persist over time.

The findings indicate that spatial continuity remains integral in contemporary Benin housing, although it is no longer tightly regulated by traditional or religious norms. Instead, it functions as an adaptable prototype that can be modified according to individual needs. However, its symbolic depth has diminished due to increasing cultural detachment and limited knowledge of indigenous building practices (Ofiolie, Adebayo & Omigie, 2017; Efihaese & Amole, 2014). Modern home designs now prioritise durability, aesthetics, comfort, and class, yet these priorities still allow for reinterpretation of spatial continuity through new materials, technologies, and stylistic expressions. Historical assessment shows that from the 1US0s onward, modernisation significantly reoriented domestic architecture in Benin City. Contemporary house-types were influenced by aspirations to align with Western lifestyles, often rejecting indigenous spatial logic. New designs incorporated uniform floor levels, water heaters, and imported fittings, reflecting globalised domestic standards (Obasuyi & Ewefia, 2018; Ighalo & Ogie, 2020). These preferences were motivated by modern identity rather than an appreciation of indigenous spatial values.

5.1 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Analysis of the transformation process reveals several significant observations. In detached houses of the 1U50s and 1US0s, the traditional lineage of essential domestic spaces was largely preserved. In contemporary house-types, these relationships have been reorganised, and the central courtyard, once the core of spatial and social life, has largely disappeared. What remains are fragmented spaces intended to accommodate selected courtyard activities. The only consistent indicator of the original spatial system is the adjoining relationship between the main bedroom and living room, which appears almost universally in contemporary plans.

The emergence of a central lobby as the primary circulation space represents a major spatial shift, replacing the traditional ugha and courtyard in guiding internal movement. Analysis of space–activity relationships indicates that the main bedroom has become activity-depleted, signalling a loss of its former centrality in family life. In contrast, the kitchen, toilet, and bathroom have successfully transitioned across the traditional conceptual boundary separating the “dirty, low-level zone” from the “clean, high-level zone.” Spaces such as the oto-eghodo and ugha, which once served as outlets for social and semi-public activities, have had their functions reassigned to the terrace, ante- room, living room, and dining area.

The most significant transformation is observed in the evolution of the courtyard. Its multiple roles have been redistributed across six newly emerged spaces in contemporary houses. The utility room, balcony, ante-room, lobby areas, dining room, and laundry now accommodate activities formerly concentrated in the courtyard. The central lobby inherits its positional and organisational role as the circulation hub.

Notably, what have been transferred from the courtyard is not only its activities but also aspects of its structural logic. Except for the central lobby, which primarily inherits circulation functions, the newly created rooms have been elevated into the “clean” zone of the contemporary spatial hierarchy. While the traditional mud floor, originally used for cooling, has been replaced by modern construction materials, its secondary cultural function—the embodied clean–dirty distinction refined over generations—has been retained and reinterpreted in contemporary homes.

5.2 CONCLUSION

The organisation and use of domestic spaces in Benin illustrate how spatial strategies shape lifestyles. Kitchens and bedrooms are fine indicators of these strategies. Kitchens, traditionally the longest collective space, now function as family gathering points, while bedrooms provide strict privacy. Visitor spaces, including living and dining areas, remain accessible, whereas inhabitants’ spaces are controlled. Contemporary Benin domestic spaces combine traditional and modern traits, creating a unique middle-class residential genotype. This synthesis integrates individuality, historical spatial legacies, and functional innovation. While morphologically modern, these houses continue to reflect Edo spatial logic and cultural continuity, illustrating that domestic architecture in Benin City is both adaptive and resilient.

5.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

Several issues warrant further investigation. First, the distinction between public and private spaces is increasingly blurred as developers expand indoor areas at the expense of outdoor spaces. A participatory planning approach could help define public and private zones, supported by local authorities. Privacy, an essential aspect of domestic life, varies across cultural backgrounds and requires more in-depth study, particularly in high-density urban areas. Training and re-training of local builders is critical to ensure construction quality aligns with contemporary technologies. Security also remains a fine driver of housing transformation; the effectiveness of design-based security measures, such as concrete walls and burglar-

proof installations, requires evaluation. Finally, contemporary house plans, often imported from Western contexts, inadequately consider local culture and climate. Further research on culturally and climatically responsive housing is essential to improve indoor environmental quality and occupant wellbeing (Olotuah & Ayo- Vaughan, 2017; Adebambo & Edewor, 2021).

➤ SYNTHESIS

Through topological analysis of Edo house plans collected from the City of Benin, this study identifies a shift in house-types over the last five decades. The traditional domestic mud houses with its spread-out rooms is no longer the prevailing trend, nor are its modified or institutional variants. Contemporary residents now favour compact concrete-frame houses that enclose all spaces, activities, and inhabitants within a single built unit. Despite new design trends, some traditional features, such as high boundary walls and the segregation of male and female domains, continue to exist in newly developed house types.

Information technology and globalisation have influenced domestic spatial behaviour, making Western European architectural norms increasingly evident. This influence, which began during the colonial period, persists through the adoption of Western paradigms of modern and postmodern design in architectural schools and practice. In Benin, Western norms in planning and design remain apparent, yet traditional Edo patterns continue to subtly inform the organisation and use of domestic space.

The study finds that mass construction of contemporary-style houses began shortly after independence in 1960. Within just over half a century, house forms and domestic culture in Benin have been radically transformed. New house-types, including semi-detached flats and “face me I face you” corridor houses, proved economically and culturally adaptable to middle-class needs. By the 1990s, these house-types became dominant, while the traditional courtyard house-type, prototyped to typify domestic life in Benin until the 1950s, was largely overshadowed by contemporary forms.

Morphologically, traditional courtyard houses, which were inward-looking, have been replaced by self-contained, outward-looking contemporary houses. While overall form has changed, some spaces, such as the courtyard, have been eliminated and replaced by new multifunctional rooms. Spaces like the *ugha* and *otueghodo* in old houses have been given new names, such as master’s bedroom and living room, reflecting specialised functions in contemporary designs. Continuity and change are therefore better understood through “space–activity” interactions, tracing how activities are preserved, migrate, and regroup into new spatial frameworks. In Benin, institutional house-types typically include single- and double-floor variants, while contemporary detached bungalows, duplexes, and villas illustrate further evolution.

➤ Continuity and Change in Domestic Spaces

Analysis across the four residential zones shows that while certain spaces have transformed in size, function, and location, others have persisted. Cooking, eating, storage, visitor reception, and sanitation

spaces remain essential components of domestic architecture, though their organisation and meaning have evolved. The Edo guild system historically trained local builders, ensuring consistent construction quality. With urban development, domestic spaces have been reconfigured to accommodate families and tenants, affecting house size, shape, and design. Despite these changes, some spatial features, fixtures, and organisational patterns have persisted. This demonstrates that transformation in Benin domestic architecture is not wholesale replacement but a combination of adaptation, continuity, and cultural reinterpretation. Residents' attitudes towards these changes reflect both practical needs and cultural preferences, highlighting the complex interplay between tradition and modernity.

➤ **Implications of Findings**

Traditional courtyard houses, which defined domestic life in Benin for centuries, have been replaced by contemporary houses in the twentieth century. Although morphologically different, these transformations represent a gradual and deliberate adaptation of traditional living patterns into new spatial frameworks. The “space– activity” approach used in this study reveals that as rooms are renamed and repurposed, their functional activities are recombined, creating measurable topological paths that reflect the direction of spatial evolution.

Space–activity interactions occur both at the partitioned-space level and at the collective-space level, preserving the traditional concept of binary opposition, i.e., “elevated clean space” versus “earthen-floored dirty space.” Even in the midst of rapid change, domestic culture in Benin continues to preserve core inherited values through both conscious and unconscious design decisions.

REFERENCES

- Acheampong, R. & Ibrahim, A. (2018). Housing Transformation and Socio-Cultural Change in African Cities. *Urban Studies Review*, 12(1), 55–70.
- Adebambo, A. & Edewor, P. (2021). Community Participation and Cultural Sustainability in Architecture. *Journal of African Built Environment Studies*, 8(2), 40–50.
- Adebayo, A. & Osasona, C. (2018). Indigenous Architecture and Modern Housing Development in Nigeria. *Journal of Architecture and Urbanism*, 40(3), 201–210.
- Adegun, O. & Adedeji, Y. (2017). Household Structure and Housing Patterns in Nigerian Cities. *Housing and Society*, 44(2), 110–133.
- Adeniyi, T. & Ojo, O. (2017). Cultural Continuity and Housing Transformation in Nigerian Cities. *International Journal of Housing Studies*, 5(1), S1–75.
- Afiintoye, O. & Olujimi, J. (2018). Culture and Domestic Architecture in Nigerian Cities. *Journal of Environmental Design*, 10(1), 33–40.
- Aghimien, D., Aigbavboa, C. & Thwala, W. (2021). Cultural Influences on Housing Design in Developing Countries. *Journal of Construction in Developing Countries*, 25(1), 123–138.
- Asomani-Boateng, R. (2020). Urban Housing Transformation in Sub-Saharan Africa. *Urban Research & Practice*, 13(4), 421–437.
- Baffoe, G. & Mutisya, E. (2018). Rural–Urban Migration and Housing Development in African Cities. *Cities*, 82, 1–10.
- Bello, O. & Abiodun, A. (2020). Architectural Identity and Cultural Values in Contemporary African Cities. *Journal of African Architecture*, 5(2), 75–80.
- Bina, O., Inch, A. & Pereira, L. (2018). Public Spaces and Social Interaction in Urban Environments. *Urban Design International*, 24(3), 187–199.
- Bourdieu, P. (2014). *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*. London: Routledge.
- Chen, Y. (2020). Urban Transformation and Spatial Restructuring in Developing Cities. *Urban Geography*, 41(5), 700–718.
- Duranti, A. (2015). *The Anthropology of Culture*. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Efihaese, E. & Amole, D. (2014). Socio-Cultural Influences on Residential Architecture in Benin City, Nigeria. *Frontiers of Architectural Research*, 3(4), 350–380.
- Efihaese, E., Amole, D. & Ogunsemi, D. (2021). Housing Transformation in Edo State, Nigeria. *Journal of Housing and the Built Environment*, 35(2), 551–557.
- Ehigiator, I. & Ofiharedia, E. (2015). Cultural expression in contemporary Nigerian architecture. *International Journal of Architectural Research*, U(3), 115–128.
- Fiombe, W., & Mfinanga, D. (2015). Informal Settlements and Urban Development in Africa. *Habitat International*, 48, 103–112.
- Forrest, R. & Yip, N. (2017). Housing Markets and Home Ownership in Global Cities. *Housing Studies*, 32(1), 1–12.

- Gamble, C. (2021). Cultural Continuity and Human Settlements. *Journal of Anthropological Research*, 77(3), 380–405.
- Geertz, C. (2017). *The Interpretation of Cultures*. New York: Basic Books.
- Gunn, W., Otto, T. & Smith, R. (2020). *Design Anthropology: Theory and Practice*. London: Bloomsbury.
- Henrich, J. (2018). *The Secret of our Success: How Culture Is Driving Human Evolution*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Hicfis, D. (2020). *The Oxford Handbook of Material Culture Studies*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Ingold, T. (2015). *The Life of Lines*. London: Routledge.
- Lang, J. (2003). *Urban Design: A Typology of Procedures and Products*. Oxford: Architectural Press.
- Lawrence, R. (2014). Housing, Dwelling and Homes: Design Theory and Practice. *Habitat International*, 41, 22–31.
- Lawrence, R. & Fiousoulas, S. (2018). Housing Design and Socio-Cultural Factors in Urban Environments. *Housing Studies*, 31(5), 512–520.
- Lechner, N., Anderton, D. & Moore, S. (2018). *Heating, Cooling, Lighting: Sustainable Design Methods For Architects*. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley.
- Low, S. (2017). Spatializing Culture: The Ethnography of Space and Place. *American Ethnologist*, 44(2), 1–13.
- Madeddu, M. & Zhang, L. (2017). Urban Housing Development and Globalization. *Urban Studies*, 54(S), 1403–1410.
- Moser, C. & McIlwaine, C. (2014). Urban Poverty and Social Transformation. *World Development*, 54, 123–135.
- Nwosu, O. & Ofiwuoma, C. (2020). Cultural Resilience in African Architecture. *Journal of Cultural Heritage Management and Sustainable Development*, 10(2), 177–180.
- Oginni, F. & Adewale, B. (2020). Culture and Spatial Design in Nigerian Housing. *African Journal of Environmental Studies*, 14(1), 52–57.
- Olatunji, S. & Arayela, O. (2018). Housing Culture and Residential Design in Nigeria. *Journal of Sustainable Architecture*, 5(3), 83–108.
- Olayiwola, L. & Ojo, T. (2018). Informal Housing and Spatial Organization in African Cities. *Cities*, 80, 1–10.
- Olotuah, A. O. & Ayo-Vaughan, O. (2017). Housing Development and Sustainability in Nigerian Cities. *Journal of Sustainable Development in Africa*, 18(3), 120–134.
- Omale, J. & Ola-Ajayi, O. (2024). Cultural Continuity and Transformation in Nigerian Housing Patterns. *African Journal of Built Environment Research*, 15(2), 72–80.
- Omisore, E. & Abolade, O. (2018). Socio-Economic Factors Influencing Housing Development. *Journal of Housing Research*, 27(1), 45–50.
- Osasona, C. (2014). Indigenous Architecture and Cultural Identity in Nigeria. *Architectural Heritage Journal*, 12(2), 88–101.

Pinfi, S. (2015). *Doing Sensory Ethnography*. London: Sage.

Scannell, L. & Gifford, R. (2017). Place Attachment and Housing Identity. *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, 50, 1–10.

Vellinga, M., Oliver, P. & Bridge, A. (2008). *Atlas of Vernacular Architecture of the World*. London: Routledge.

Watson, S. (2018). *The Architecture of Housing*. London: Routledge.

Yaneva, A. (2022). *Architecture after Method*. London: Routledge.

Zhang, L. & Forrest, R. (2021). Housing as a Marker of Social Status. *Housing Studies*, 35(4), 585–602.

Zhao, P. & Zhang, M. (2018). Urbanization and Housing Transformation in Developing Economies. *Urban Affairs Review*, 54(3), 437–455.

APPENDIX

SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

Topic: CONTINUITY AND CHANGE IN DOMESTIC ARCHITECTURE IN BENIN CITY, EDO STATE.

By **Uchendu Ifebuche**

Mat No: **Env2103377**

Submitted to the Department of Architecture,
Faculty of Environmental Science,
University of Benin Questionnaire

Dear Respondent,

This questionnaire is prepared to collect information for an academic study on continuity and change in domestic architecture in Benin City. The research seeks to understand how traditional architectural features are being maintained or modified in modern residential buildings.

The information gathered will help identify the influence of modernization, culture, and socio-economic factors on housing design and the extent to which traditional architectural elements are still present in contemporary homes.

All responses will be treated with strict confidentiality and will be used solely for academic purposes. Participation in this survey is voluntary, and no personal identification will be required.

Your honest responses will contribute significantly to the success of this research.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Yours faithfully,
UCHENDU IFEBUCHE
Researcher

Appendix A

SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE COLLECT DATA FROM RESIDENTS ON CONTINUITY AND CHANGE IN DOMESTIC ARCHITECTURE IN BENIN CITY, EDO STATE

Part One: Demographic Information: Respondent Profile

Please tick (✓) the appropriate response.

SECTION A: Socio-Demographic Information

1. **Gender**

- Male
 Female

2. **Age**

- Below 20
 21–30
 31–40
 41–50
 51 and above

3. **Marital Status**

- Single
- Married
- Divorced
- Widowed

4. Educational Level

- Primary
- Secondary
- Tertiary
- No formal education

5. Occupation

- Student
- Civil servant
- Trader
- Artisan
- Self-employed
- Other

6. Length of stay in Benin City

- Less than 5 years
- 5–10 years
- 11–20 years
- Above 20 years

Part Two: Research Questions

SECTION B: Housing Characteristics

1. What type of house do you live in?

- Traditional compound house
- Bungalow
- Storey building
- Flat/apartment
- Building material mainly used:
 - Mud
 - Cement blocks
 - Timber
 - Mixed materials

2. Age of the building?

- Less than 10 years
- 10–20 years
- 21–40 years
- Above 40 years

3. Does your house have a courtyard?

- Yes
- No

4. Is there a family shrine or sacred space in the house?

- Yes
- No

SECTION C: Traditional Features and Continuity

1. Traditional elements are still important in modern houses?

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

2. My house still reflects Edo cultural values

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

3. Courtyards encourage family interaction

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

4. The ancestral shrine is still culturally important

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

SECTION D: Change and Modern Influence

1. Modern building materials are better than traditional ones

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

2. Western house designs influence new buildings in Benin City

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

3. Urbanization has changed domestic architecture

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

4. Technology influences house design today

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

SECTION E: Use and Organization of Space

1. My house provides enough privacy

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

2. Spaces in my house are used for more than one function

- Yes
- No

3. There are clear public and private areas in my house

- Yes
- No

4. Outdoor spaces are important in daily activities

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

SECTION F: Cultural Identity and Future

1. Cultural identity should be preserved in modern housing

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

2. Traditional house forms should be adapted, not abandoned

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree

Strongly Disagree

3. Government should encourage culturally responsive housing

Strongly Agree

Agree

Neutral

Disagree

Strongly Disagree

4. Would you prefer a house that combines traditional and modern design?

Yes

No

SECTION G: Open-ended

1. What traditional feature do you think should never disappear?

2. What modern feature do you value most?

3. In your opinion, how can Benin City preserve its architectural identity?

