



Evaluating the Architectural Features of the Different Migrant Residences in Sabon Gari Township Zaria

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ABSTRACT

The concept of migrant and migration were defined by several field of studies within their own context, for instance, Geographers and sociologists have studied migration mostly, classify migrants as people who relocate their domicile within the same country for economic, social and political reasons. Migration cannot be discussed without discussing colonisation and therefore one of the remaining landmarks of colonisation in African continent are the introduction of urban centres which are different from the existing ancient towns and cities. Exclusion of architectural typology in architectural discourse will be addressed by assessing the architectural features and cultural diversity through documentation of different migrant houses. The qualitative method used include case study, survey, physical observation, interview with stakeholders, obtaining drawings/photographs. In addition, the investigation include survey, and assessment of the various sections of Sabon Gari Township in terms of the socio-cultural expressions of its architectural spaces and its surroundings. Purposive sampling was used and this is because of the character of the house, The sample size is drawn from the total number of houses in the study area. but twenty-five (25) houses were chosen. The township was planned by the colonial administration and it was in grid iron pattern with enough set back at the frontage of the house facing the road and is used for ceremonies. most of the houses visited are in “L” shaped whereby the building is on one side and kitchen and toilet are at extreme end of the house. It was observed and documented the houses in the township were hipped-roofed with one case of dormer window and also houses with chimneys were found. Verandahs and Balconies are important to the overall visual character of almost any building in Sabon Gari colonial township. The verandah usually served for relaxation with family members and guest. It was observed that the doors and windows in the houses were made up timber casement with vent above them. some of the houses in the study area used laterite stone as a means of finishes and decoration, while on the other hand some used plaster impression as means of design and decoration in the front facade of the building as recess on the plaster and cornice. By recognizing the role of culture in shaping architectural practices and fostering dialogue between migrant groups and the broader society, policymakers, planners, and architects can promote inclusive, sustainable, and culturally responsive approaches to housing provision and urban development.

Keywords: Architectural Features, Migrant residences, Planning, Sabon Gari, Township

INTRODUCTION

Housing is more than a mere shelter but it encompasses the total environment in which people live and grow and is also an essential component of culture that is shaped by a community's values, beliefs, and customs. It

can be influenced by various factors such as climate, economy, religion and social status. The architecture of the migrant housing is influenced by a complex interplay of socio-cultural dynamics, reflecting the diverse backgrounds and experiences of migrants from various region and beyond. However,

the concept of migrant and migration which is the main focus of this study were defined by several field of studies within their own context, for instance, Geographers and sociologists who have studied migration mostly, classify migrants as people who relocate their domicile temporarily or permanently within the same country for economic, social and political reasons. In other words, migration is an *internal* process which may be contrasted with immigration which involves relocation across national boundaries. As a result of the migration residential segregation enforced by the colonial administrators led to heterogeneous population of migrants sprang up outside the wall city and this led to the issues of migrant house within the context of this study.

Migration cannot be discussed without discussing colonisation and therefore one of the remaining landmarks of colonisation in African continent are the introduction of urban centres which are different from the existing ancient towns and cities. These urban centres brought about colonial urbanisation and serves a specific interest of a particular group. Ma'aruf, (2018) and Adesote et.al., (2023) revealed that Zaria colonial township development policy was implemented through the creation of three categories of new townships based on an elaborate plan that reflects the footprints of the township ordinance. The concept of colonial township in the African continent is often to segregate "non-indigenes" from those presumed to be the autarchy of the town or city. This is done for many reasons the major one being the colonial divide and rule policies, such that inhabitants provide cheap labour for the colonialist, and a crop of traders for the colonial trade. This led to the development of new towns known as Sabon Gari township after the completion of the Railway line in 1917 where skilled and unskilled workers for the railway and the construction firms' workers and traders from the southern Nigeria migrated into Zaria to take advantage of the

economic and commercial activities that will take place and this resulted in the construction of houses for migrant's workers and traders.

The development of Sabon Gari Township and other planned layouts outside the walled cities is well documented by Urquhart (1977). These colonial townships with their architecture are distinct from the native towns are early twentieth century phenomena in most parts of Africa. The most important factor which led to the creation and establishment of such townships in northern Nigeria was the decision of the early colonial officers, to segregate Africans of non- northern Nigerian origins in special locations (Bello and Oyedele n.d). According to Bello (2014) and Essien, (2023), colonial urban centres were structured into four distinct sections that reflected in the manner of colonial urban centres. The first is the colonial military cantonment, garrison or barrack responsible for the coercive control of the urban centres concerned. The second is the civil administrative organ designed to enforce the colonial order, within which resided European colonial masters and officials of colonial trading companies, designated as European Quarters or Government Reserved Areas (G.R. A's) and the buildings were bungalows constructed with bricks or stones of double storeyed with living rooms above and offices or stores below.

The third category consisted of a number of newly established "Strangers quarters" or Migrants settlements for other "Natives" from within the colony of Nigeria, as the African region as well as migrants from other third World countries such as Syria and Lebanon who live on two storeyed buildings as merchant's quarters built above or behind shops in the ground floor. For the colony of Nigeria, they planned differently on 50ft by 100ft plot having a small shop in front and rows of two to four buildings with three to four rooms built facing open courtyard. The initial migrants that were

allotted plots constructed houses that were characterized by an architecture that was distinct from the architecture of the host community and the European types of houses that were built by the colonial officers. Consequently, the study therefore seeks to know why the architecture of the migrant are unique and different from that of the host community and their architectural characteristics.

The ideas of migrant house have been linked to transnationalism and interpreted through the lens of materialism as an architectural typology that has been excluded from architectural discourse as a form of vernacular architecture. Assessing the architectural features and the cultural diversity will lead to documenting the difference in the migrant houses in Sabon Gari Township. Consequently, the aim of the paper is to access the different migrant residences with a view to evaluating their architectural features in Sabon Gari township.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Migrant and Migration

Migration is a culturally patterned movement of people, changing their residence and work place from one region to another. One can discern two categories of migrations (Bello et al, n.d) the immediate and paramount. After the extension of the railway line to Zaria via Kano and subsequent proliferation of European firms was the question of finding clerks, accountants, labourers and other categories of workers for both government departments and commercial firms. The migrations are Group or Collective and Individual Migrations. Group migrants are those that move with the Royal West African Frontier Forces (RWAFF) and the Railway line construction team. The group migrations influence the individual or family migrations because essential services of trade and supply of food items were provided for the wage-earning migrants. Migration is a selective process affecting

individuals or families with certain economic, social, educational and demographic characteristics (Ogunmakinde, et. al. 2015, Nwokolobia et.al 2025).

Furthermore, migration also brought about a shift from extended family to nuclear family, with the extended family being replaced by nuclear family (Aldos,1962, Oladunmoye,2024). As a result of the decision of the colonial government (formation of the Royal West African Frontier Force and the construction of railway line in 1911 stretching from Lagos to Kano). In addition, Sani-Katsina, (2013) cite Mai and Shamsuddin (2008) suggesting that migration also impacts significantly on urbanization, especially in the cities of developing societies like Nigeria. And also, migrant housing are the houses built by the migrants to suit their socio-cultural needs.

However, studies of migration have been carried out by different researchers in four disciplines; anthropology, sociology, geography and history. The anthropologist studies of migration attempt to explain biological changes and the transmission of cultural and linguistic as “ethnic” traits at population level. While the sociologist studies contemporary migration pattern that has generated a considerable number of economic, demographic and social. The basic factors that lead to the causes of migration into the northern Nigeria and by extension to Zaria is the establishments of (RWAFF), Construction of Railway line in 1911 stretching from Lagos to Kano and the multinational companies and all this is done in the first two decades of the 20th century. Migration occurs as a response to economic development as well as socio-cultural, environmental and political factors and effect on areas of the origin as well as destination.

Migrant Housing

Migrant house has link to the ideas of transnational and belonging and is interpreted through the lens of materiality, elements and the typology. It also tends to

define or highlight the ethnic and cultural identities of the immigrants. In the context of this study, migrant housing is defined as the residential structures inhabited by individuals or communities who have relocated from their places of origin, serves as a tangible expression of the socio-cultural identities, economic circumstances, and aspirations of these migrant populations.

Migrant house has been highlighted as ethnic markers or identifiers which generalize and reduce its meaning to its most apparent visual features. The ideas of migrant house have been linked to transnationalism and interpreted through the lens of materialism as an architectural typology that has been excluded from the architectural discourse as a form of vernacular architecture. However, researchers have attempted to categories of vernacular architecture so to be incorporated into the migrant housing discourse and it will help to find out what makes the migrant house unique from non-migrant.

Architectural Features

The concept of architecture could be traced to Vitruvius period, which is the earliest known work on architecture that are of prime importance, utilitas; firmitas; venustas; i.e., utility, firmness and delight (Oumar, 1997). Based on these aspects of architecture all buildings have utility, firmness and delight which means strength, durability and aesthetic, (Noth, 1990). Vitruvius stressed the importance of culture which is fundamental to the field of architecture and in fact, the significance of this element can be seen on how he has defined architecture.

Furthermore, the study of domestic house form traces to the social history of the milieu. Hence showing the nature, size and disposition of the people accommodated within it. Domestic architecture is a means of studying synchronic account of the past era, recent and as well as distant, (Oumar, 1997 cited Glassie, 1975). The domestic architecture is the predominant form of

indigenous house form experiencing changes over a long period leading to development of regional architecture.

Architectural identity and characteristics refer to the discontinuous contemporary context across time as its formation is influenced by prevailing ideas, practices, or broad conditions, all of which are specific to the area's history (Mai and Khalil, 2017). According to Prucnal (2001) and Owoicho, (2024) Nigerian architecture is classified into historical, traditional and modern styles. The historical style represented the European, Brazilian trends which are the main area of concern of this study while the historical style reveals or assists the researchers in drawing their inspirations or thoughts from ancient heritage as evidenced by the regional contemporary buildings.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The methods used in carrying out this research and the nature of data required in order to answer the research questions are shaped by Bhasker's (1989) notion of critical realism which takes the view that the social world is reproduced in daily life. The research design and strategy are based on the critical realist approach, which recognizes the reality of the natural order and the events and discourses of the social world (Bryman, 2008). Research design describes a set of assumption consideration leading to data collection and analysis (Fellows and Liu, 2015). While qualitative research approach was originally developed in the social science and enable researchers to study social and cultural phenomenon, it is also concerned with exploration of social or human experiences which follows an inductive approach in relation to theory and emphasized words than numerical values. In qualitative research, the case study is a method of inquiry for knowledge development that necessitates systematic processes of data collection analysis (Donmoyer, 1990). It is critical realist approach support; case study design involves

directing research focus on specific event or phenomenon to acquire in-depth understanding of the event or phenomenon.

The case study is the framework used for generation, collection and analysis of the data in the research. The qualitative method used include visual survey, physical observation, interview with stakeholders, obtaining drawings/photographs. In addition, the investigation include survey, and assessment of the various sections of Sabon Gari Township in terms of the socio-cultural expressions of its architectural spaces and its surroundings. After the tour

guide to identify the houses prior to the data collection and to decide on the sampling techniques to be adopted that the demarcation of the study area into three clusters based on the ethnic dominance in the cluster namely; people from the south-Western Nigeria (Yoruba and Binins) in the central Sabon Gari, south-Eastern and south-South Nigeria (Igbo, Ijaw and the rest) living in the north- Eastern of the township and the third ethnic group are non-Nigerian live in the south-Western of the township includes areas like main street, Kaduna road (PZ) and the Government Reserved Areas (G.R.A.) as shown in Figure 1.

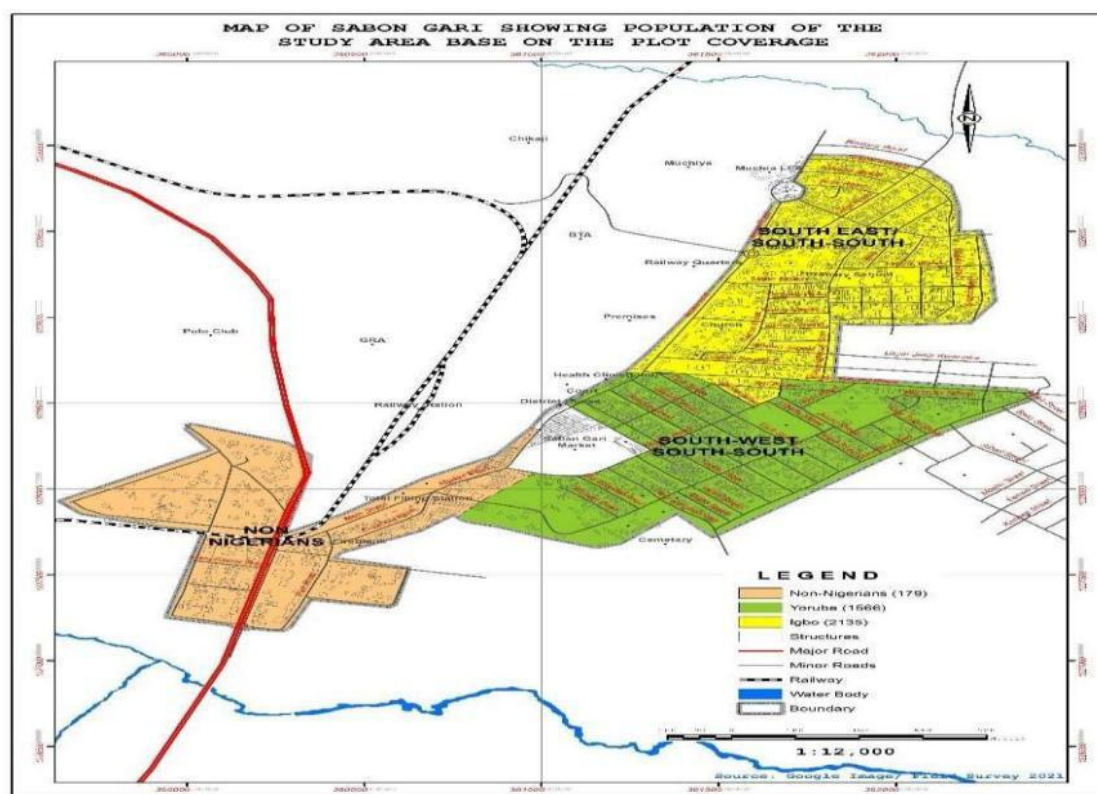


Figure 1: Google map Showing the Extent of the Sabon Gari and plots coverage for the different Ethnic Groups.

The tour guide was meant to select the houses for an in-depth study including survey, observation, interviews and administering questionnaires and it was assisted by the gate keepers, research assistants, family members and friends in the area. The gate-keepers were staff of the district office (Iyan Gari Office, Sabon Gari, Zaria) while the research

assistants were recruited student of Department of Architecture, Nuhu Bamalli Polytechnic Zaria. The family members and friends also participated in collecting the data and the researcher whom was brought up from the study area act as participant observer to the study in terms of data gathering.

Zaria is located at latitude 11-degree North longitude 7-degree 6 minutes East at foot of Madarkaci hill in Kaduna State Nigeria. Sabon Gari is part of Zaria Township and is located at the North East of Zaria Urban Area. It is bounded by River Galma, Chikaji Industrial layout in the North, Nigeria Railway Corporation to the West and the Nigeria Army Depot and the Commercial areas to the Southern boundary towards River Kubanni as shown in Figure 2 Sabon

Gari is divide into wards such as Unguwan Yamma consist of Yoruba street, Benin street, Lagos street, Warri street, Morrow street, New Hospital road, Old Hospital road and Mamman Daku road, Unguwan Gabas consist of Club street, Nupe street, Igbo road, Ja'afaru street, Dogon Bauchi road and lastly, Unguwan Marmara consist of Ibadan street, Uche road, Ijaw street, Kings road, Prince road and Sapele road.

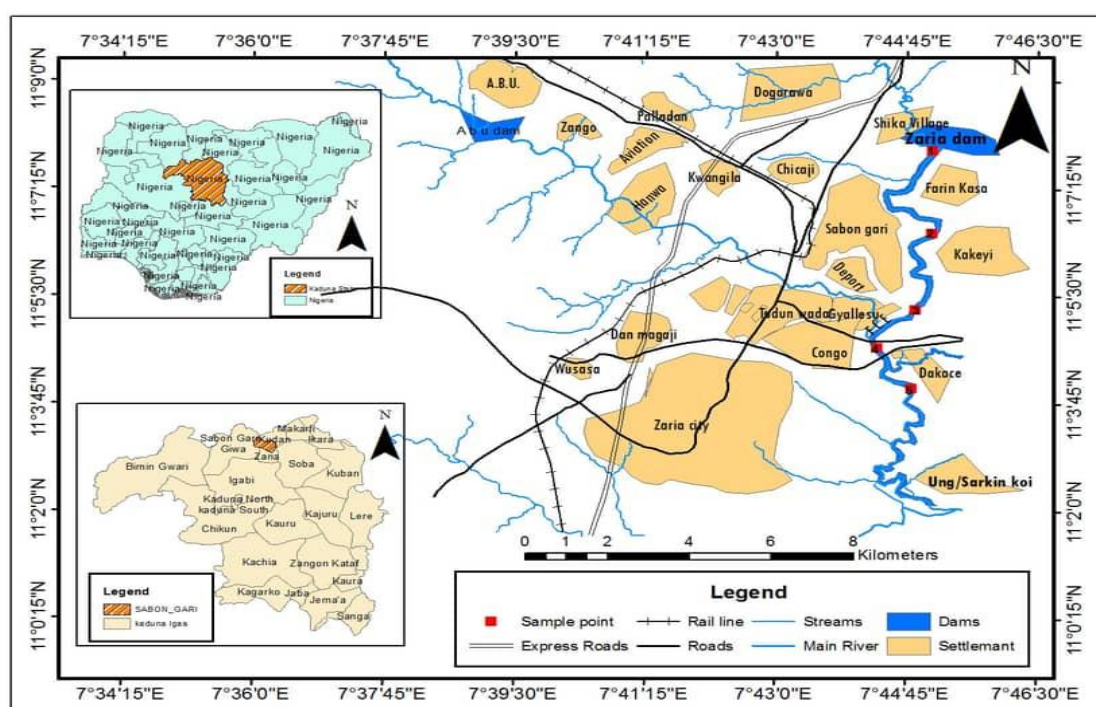


Figure 2: Showing Map of Nigeria, Kaduna state and Zaria.

Source (A. B. U. Press, 2021)

The sample is a small fraction of the total population of the study area and is a body of entities systematically chosen to be examined out of the research population. Samples must be miniature versions of the larger research population; in size and in character. For convenience and simplicity, the township was demarcated based on the layout done and it was through google imagery and reconnaissance survey. In order to select the houses for the study we first identified the dominant ethnic groups and their houses and representative sample of

each cluster was then selected from the three clusters. Therefore, purposive sampling was used to draw the sample for the research of the migrant houses that were built by themselves and this is because of ease of access and the unit of analysis is the household. The sampling used for the administering the questionnaires is purposive sampling and this is because of the character of the house, and if it had a detailed story to tell or if the transformation had been done uniquely or differently and also accessibility into the houses but with the

aid of the gate keepers some houses were accessed. This is because of the safety of the researcher and the assistance. According to (Sani-Katsina, 2013 cite Kalton, 1983; Miller, 1983; Bryman, 2008) stated that there is no universal rule regarding sample size as relate case study.

The sample size is drawn from the total number of houses in the study area. The houses were in their thousands using satellite imagery of the township and purposive sampling was adopted for the collection of the samples. However, twenty-five (25) houses were chosen based on their characters. Since the study area is a heterogeneous cosmopolitan community of people with diverse origins, ethnic affiliation, lineages and occupation. The sample size was based on the heterogeneous nature of the township where by 12-20 sample size are adequate (Saunders and Townsend, 2018 cited Kuzel, 1992). Physical observation was carried out in Sabon Gari township and the issues observed were the planning, construction techniques, use of building materials, building types, architectural characters as participant observation. The use of space within the house for daily activities was also observed and their socio-cultural values. All these were done through personal observations and this helped the researcher to have firsthand information about the data collected. However, other scholars in similar fields had used personal observations such as, Okachi, (2015), Lamidi (2015), Duyil (2017), Sani (2021). This was the method adopted in the research. Photographs of the relevant houses were taken during the field survey as means of data collection which were used by other scholars in the built environment such as Muhammad (2006), Gushem (2011), and Samuila (2018).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the results of the study from the analysis of the architectural characteristics of the migrant housing in Sabon Gari Township Zaria. It consists

analysis and discussion of the results obtained and were presented in maps, photographs, floor plans, and were discussed based on the objective of the research.

In this research the architectural features of the migrant houses have to do with the following items: planning, spatial configuration, building material, architectural character and construction technique. However, the architectural character of the migrant house has a link with the cultural values that people attach to heritage and heritage resources and it also links with the physical integrity of heritage resources. The architectural character of a building is a function of visual perception, that is seeing a building and its constituent parts and features which impart the sense of unique ambiance or said otherwise, the observed character. However, the character of the buildings in the study area includes:

- i) Site and environment,
- ii) Overall shape of the buildings,
- iii) Roof and roof features,
- iv) Projection on the building,
- v) Openings i.e., doors and doorway, windows, and
- vi) Decoration details.

Setting of the Township

The Sabon Gari laid out by Hesketh Bell in a grid plan in the manner of colonial governors since Alexander the great from 1911 to 1914, In order to record plots and register each household, (Annual Report, Zaria Province, 1913). The layout was carried out at different phases, the first layout was carried out in 1925 toward G.R. A. area, the second was done in 1933, in the central Sabon Gari and the third is the revised version in 1952 of central Sabon Gari layout and this was as a result of influx immigrants for economy opportunities as shown in Figure 3 and 4. The township was planned by the colonial administration and it was in grid iron pattern with enough set back

at the frontage of the house facing the road and is used for ceremonies.



Figure 3: Showing Layout of Sabon Gari Township in 1933

Source (Urquhart, 1977)



Figure 4: Showing a plan layout of the Township (1952).

Source (NAK, ZAR PROJ, 2021)

Also, another set-back on both sides and the rear set-back to sanitary lane. According to Alhassan (2018), a committee was set-up in 1952 under the chairmanship of the district

head of Sabon Gari, the then late emir of Zazzau Alhaji Muhammadu Aminu. The committee was headed by Malam Samaila Ahmed and others and it was charged with

the responsibilities of naming the streets, pegging the virgin land, allocation of plots, necessary clearance and citation of building plans by the health office for the new extension of Sabon Gari Zaria township. Furthermore, the committee suggested that all streets running North and South should be called “STREET” while those running East and West should be called “ROAD”, (ZAR PROJ. 1937) and the naming of streets in the Sabon Gari extension was done in 1952. The streets and roads were named after the tribes and the towns of these migrants for example, Yoruba Street, Ijaw Road, Lagos Street and Port Harcourt Road respectively.

Shape of the Buildings in the Township

The space configuration of a house is concerned with the way space is organized by its use in a culture and relationships between space. The spatial organization of the houses in Sabon Gari township has not changed because the sizes of the plots remain the way they are. The planning was done by the colonial administrators and

governed by law and the plots size are 50ftx100ft (15mx 30m). The spatial configuration of the house enhances social activities, the house cannot be studied in isolation from the settlement. However, house form refers to the plan and shape of spaces in the house distinct from its style or elevations.

The shape of the building can be an important aspect of its overall visual character as such most of the houses visited are in “L” shaped whereby the building is on one side and kitchen and toilet are at extreme end of the house. The plans of the houses in the township were room and parlour or room and shop facing the road with entrance to the compound through the forecourt by the side. The sizes of the rooms were 10ft x 12ft (3.0m x 3.6m) or 12ft x 12ft (3.6m x 3.6m). The shape of the houses in the township are rectilinear in shape with kitchen and toilet far away from the rooms. The built- up area are between 50-60% while the remaining area are courtyard shown in Figure 5 and plate I.

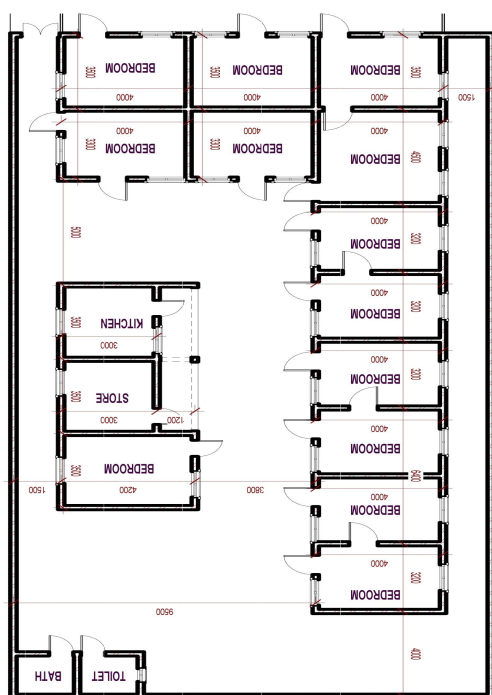


Figure 5: Showing 'L' shaped plan



Source: (Authors Field work, 2019)

Plate I: Showing the “L”

Roof and Roof Features

The roof and its related features are usually important to its overall character, such as dormer window and chimney. It was observed and documented the houses in the

township were hipped-roofed with one case of dormer window shown in plate II and III, and also houses with chimneys were found in the colonial houses in south-western part of the township.



Plate II: Showing dormer window with or without ceiling



Plate III: Showing hipped roof with large eaves

Source: (Authors Field work, 2019)

Projection on the Buildings

Verandahs and Balconies are important to the overall visual character of almost any building in Sabon Gari colonial township. The verandah usually served for relaxation with family members and guest. It is

normally demarcated with a dwarf wall of one-meter-high made of either concrete, steel iron or timber, especially in the frontage of the house facing the road, while balconies are found in the storey height building of the Syrians, Lebanese and African merchants shown in plate IV and V



Plate IV: Showing demarcated verandah with concrete balustrade

Source: (Authors Field work, 2019)

Openings on the Buildings

Door and window are very important character of a building because of its size, shape, location, materials and craftsmanship.



Plate V: Showing balcony with concrete balustrade

Source: Urquhart (1977)

It was observed that the doors and windows in the houses were made up timber casement with vent above them. The size of the door is (2100x900mm) single leaf and (2100x1200mm) double leaf, while windows

rages between (1200x1200mm) to (1200x900mm) timber casement double leaf and single leaf shown in Plate VI.



Plate VI: Showing the doors and windows timber casement with a vent above.

Source: (Authors Field work, 2023)

Architectural Styles (Decoration) on the buildings

In this case decoration is another important visual character of a building because it expresses the status of the house owner and the aesthetic value of the house. It can also perceive from the design aspect or use of

materials that is available. For instance, some of the houses in the study area used laterite stone as a means of finishes and decoration, while on the other hand some used plaster impression as means of design and decoration in the front facade of the building as recess on the plaster and cornice, shown in plates VII, VIII and IX.



Plate VII: Showing decorated concrete balustrade at the balcony

Source: Author (2023)



Plate VIII: Showing Laterite material as wall finishes as means of decoration
Source: Author (2023)



Plate IX: Showing plaster impression on the front façade as decoration

Construction Technique of Migrant house in Sabon Gari Zaria

As earlier mentioned, two forms of construction were identified in the study area, the mud brick buildings with corrugated iron roofing sheet and wooden timber doors and windows found in central Sabon Gari Township while cement block (filled solid) buildings with timber casement windows and doors with vents above them were found in the North east of Sabon Gari township. The

buildings were constructed either in rectangular box shape or in an “L” with courtyard at the centre or by the side and also the buildings were mostly elevated above the ground. The doors and windows were made up wooden timber of different size openings with vents and burglar proof. The roof of the houses are hipped roofs with average height kingpost slopes in four directions with large projected eaves and with or without ceiling materials beneath it shown in plate X and XI.



Plate X: Showing roof eaves without ceiling material.

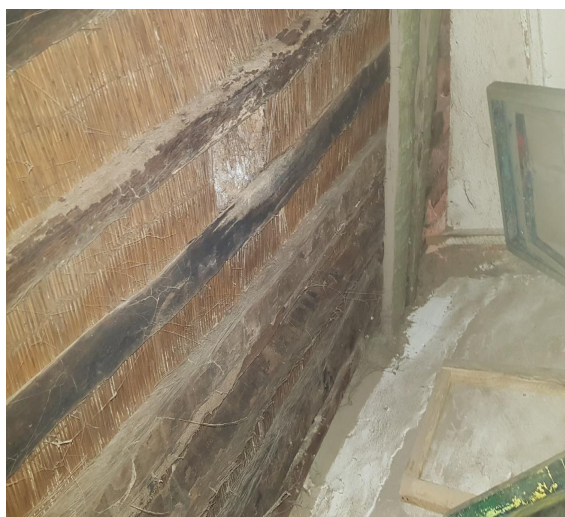


Plate XI: Showing ceiling made up grass matt over azara in one of the houses visited

Source: Author (2023)



CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the architectural characteristics of migrant housing is multifaceted and complex, reflecting the diverse experiences, aspirations, and challenges of migrant communities. By recognizing the role of culture in shaping architectural practices and fostering dialogue between migrant groups and the broader society, policymakers, planners, and architects can promote inclusive, sustainable, and culturally responsive approaches to housing provision and urban development. The paper was able to explore that buildings do tell stories of the origin of their inhabitants as the buildings differ in architectural characteristics of the towns and cities they met. There is therefore the need to document these houses before any inevitable demolition due to policy changes which destroys our cherished heritage. While structurally sound migrant houses should be maintained to showcase the history of the migrants from various regions as it relates to Sabon Gari Township.

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