

THE MEANING OF HOME IN YORUBA CULTURE

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Abstract

This study examined the meaning of home in Yoruba culture in Ogbomoso Nigeria Africa. Ogbomoso is one of Yoruba cities that reveals the innate social and cultural tendencies of traditional Yoruba cities. Data for the studies were collected from residents of houses categorised into five types of family house, single family dwelling, apartment, duplex and rooming houses Purposive sampling technique was utilised to obtain information from head of these houses. Subjecting the data collected from residents to analysis, the study provided information that 40.3 %, 22.8%, 17.3%, 12.5% and 5.3% choose the single family dwelling, duplex, apartment, family house, rooming house or “face me i face you” in descending order as the house that respondent readily think of as home, Furthermore the result of a factor analysis also provided information that 16.95%, 8.33% and 7.13% of variances refers to availability of functional spaces, emotional factor and privacy respectively out of nine factors which define the meaning of home in Ogbomosho. Data was also collected using an in-depth interview, the result of the analysis provided information that the home means the cradle, a place of comfort, shelter, a place of abode and safety, and a house with facilities that gives comfortable living. The study found that there is significant relationship between private nature of conveniences in houses which directly influence comfort and privacy and this could explain why the single family dwelling, duplex and apartment were rated as homes to the respondent. Generally home means a shelter and a place of abode, a single family dwelling. This is because premium is set on ownership of a house in Yoruba culture. This meaning of home as the cradle and source of origin is supported by the general cultural belief of the Yoruba..

Key words: Meaning, House, Home, Yoruba culture, Cradle, Premium

Introduction

The home is more than a house or an apartment. It is a structure or area in which an emotional investment has been made by an individual or a small group (Pourteous 1976). The house as opposed to the home has been explored according to several perceived dimensions which include those that are associated with physical, economic, social and personal attributes. As noted by Lawrence (1987), houses are commonly attributed an economic value, an exchange value, an aesthetic value and a use value, whereas in addition to these, a home is usually attributed a sentimental and symbolic value.

Home means different things to different people. Home in the western sense is seen as the major site of family social relations and kinship interactions, a place to carry out the everyday routine of family life (Allan and Crow, 1989). The study of meaning of home has been approached from many different perspectives such as sociology, psychology, anthropology and environment behaviour studies (Moore, 2004).

Most of these studies on the meaning of home have focused predominantly on Western inputs and lifestyles, with next to nothing on African culture (Harvey C. Perkins, David C. Thorns, Ann Winstanley, Bronwyn M. Newton 2002) Therefore, this study of the meaning of home in Ogbomosho in Yoruba culture will be a useful complement to current literature knowing fully well that the house or indeed the home is context specific.

The Yoruba are a West African people and most of them live in Nigeria. They occupy the south-western part of the country and extend beyond Nigeria into the Republic of Benin (formerly Dahomey). They are united by language, by traditional beliefs and a common ancestry. However, though they are united by language, there are considerable dialectical variations in different part of their area, but by traditional belief they are all descendants of “Oduduwa”.

Yoruba house in its most traditional form is characterized by one or more courtyards, and are of the traditional compound system. The House

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usually has a rectangular plan with a single entrance gate, with rooms in the compound facing the courtyard. This traditional compound usually houses a group of patrilineally related families and encourages close personal contacts, a factor believed to have contributed to the unity of the people's traditional social structure.

This house type in Yoruba culture is referred to as "Agbo-Ile" and it is very precious to the family members. Lawrence {2006} indicated that housing is shaped by the lifestyles and the needs of a people. Because there is a change in lifestyle of Yoruba people and their needs, which is as a result of civilization and culture mix, now there are different types of houses found all over the Yoruba cities and towns and their form were developed in response to the needs, lifestyles and as a result of culture mix. For the purpose of this study the homes were categorised into five house types of family house, single family dwelling, apartment, duplex and rooming house or what is termed "face me i face you" in the Nigerian parlance. Meaning is an important aspect of the built environment. It provides much of the rationale for the ways in which the dwelling is shaped and used. In fact, the meaning aspect of the environment are critical and central to the extent that the physical environment like clothes, furnishings, building, garden, streets and neighbourhoods are used in the enculturation of children. (Rapoport, 1970; Rapoport, 1990a, and Sebba, 1991).

To this end, this study on the meaning of home in Ogbomoso of Yoruba culture by examining the social, psychological, cultural and physical factors that define home in Ogbomoso will find out what a home means in this culture. This is so because the home is unique in that there are many factors that define it as home and which the home must fulfil before it can be regarded as home and this is why it is always referred to as a physical place and a cognitive concept.

The fact that social, personal, cultural and psychological factors define or influences home before it can be regarded as home is a pointer to the home having different meanings. In particular, this study revealed that about 9 (nine) factors define home from the quantitative analysis and the analysis of the in-depth interview revealed that there is a significant relationship between meaning of home and certain house types. Generally this

study concluded that home means shelter, a place of abode, a single house occupied and owned by one family. This is because premium is set on ownership of a house in Yoruba culture.

Methodology

Data Collection

The study employed both the qualitative and quantitative research methods. The data for the study was collected through questionnaires administered to 400 residents and an in-depth interview conducted on 20 residents in the study area.

The primary data obtained using the structured questionnaire and personal physical observation included house types that readily come to mind as home, what made house type chosen home, then 31 variables which define home were subjected to factor analysis. In order to distribute the 400 questionnaires, a ratio of 3:2:1 was employed respectively for the high, medium and low density residential areas of Ogbomoso. This was done in line with the generally believed pattern of population distribution within residential areas as indicated by Adeboyejo and Onyeneoru (2002). In administering the questionnaire, the major street in an area was identified; the first building was randomly selected, with subsequent units at internal of every fifth building. Maximum of five (5) questionnaires were administered in an area. And the household head were selected using a purposive sampling technique. The four hundred (400) houses that emerged represented the sample. The total number of questionnaires administered were recovered. This is due to the fact that, the questionnaire were filled and collected on the spot. In cases where the respondent was not willing to fill the questionnaire on the spot, a new selection was made. This represents a 100% questionnaire recovery rate. The data was analyzed empirically. The qualitative aspect involved conducting an in-depth interview on 20 residents in the study area. The primary data obtained using an interview schedule was prepared to obtain information on the aspects of meaning and the cultural interpretations of the socio-physical dimensions of the houses. A schedule was prepared as suggested by Kvale (1996) to elicit information from house owners and inhabitants about their experiences, their deeply held feelings about their homes and what home means to them.

This method of data collection was adopted because human experience is of primary importance. And in-depth reports by those having the experience represented the best source of understanding. Experiences cannot be removed from their contexts.

For the purpose of this study, in-depth interview was conducted on at least two respondents living in each of the identified housetypes in all the residential areas. The data included the meaning of home, the factors that define the meaning of home, the things that must be present in a house to make it a home, the type of house that the respondents had lived in before, whether or not the spaces were adequate for the household, and what type of house each respondent would regard as home.

Qualitative research typically results in a vast amount of data. These data are embedded in the interview transcript, graphic sketches and photographs. Qualitative research seeks to identify the deeper structure and common elements in experiences while valuing the uniqueness of each person's experiences. The interview schedule for each respondent was treated individually but later reduced by coding into various themes which were used to provide a thick description of the aim of the study. the principal mode of analysis was through words.

Results

The findings of the study are as presented in the sections below. All tables, themes in this section emanated from the field survey of September, 2007.

A general classification of the houses into types by tenure, form of building, number of households and organization of space resulted into five house types. These were family house, single house on one lot occupied by one family, apartment in a building with more than one apartment, duplex and rooming house or face-me-I-face-you occupied by more than one family.

The analysis revealed that, of the 400 houses sampled, 161 (40.25%) were family house, 137(34.25%) were rooming houses, 52 (13%) were single house on one lot occupied by one family, 45 (11.25%) were apartment in a building with more than one apartment, and 5 (1.25%) were duplex. The analysis further revealed that the bulk of the house type in the high density residential area were family house, while rooming house formed the bulk of the house type in the medium and low density residential area.

Respondents were asked to pick the house type that readily comes into their mind when they think of home.

Table 1 Thought of home: Frequency distribution of the house type that respondents readily think of as home.

S/No.	Housetype that readily comes to mind as home	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Family House	50	12.5%
2.	Single house on one lot occupied by one family	161	40.25%
3.	Apartment in a building with more than one apartment	70	17.25%
4.	Duplex	91	22.75%
5.	Rooming House or face-me-I-face-you	21	5.25%
6.	Others	07	1.75%
	Total	400	100

Table1 revealed that single house on one lot occupied by one family was the house that respondents readily thought of as home. This was based on the fact that 40.25% of the 400 respondents chose the housetypes; this was followed by Duplex house type with 22.75% of the sample. Respondents who chose apartment in a building with more than one apartment were 17.5% of the sample, 12.5% chose family house

and just 5.25% of the sample chose rooming house.

Respondents were also asked to indicate about five things that made the house type they have chosen to be home to them. Their responses among other things included security, availability of basic services such as water and electricity, privacy, owner/occupier status, adequate number of rooms and others.

To be able to determine the frequency and percentages, security was coded as 1, availability of basic services as 2, privacy as 3, home ownership as 4, adequate number of rooms as 5

and other things as 6. Table 2 represents the things that made the housetype chosen home to be home.

Table 2 What made House type chosen Home

S/No.	Things that made the Housetype Home	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Security	84	21%
2.	Availability of basic services	54	13.5%
3.	Privacy	94	23.5%
4.	Home Ownership	140	35%
5.	Adequate Number of Rooms	8	2%
6.	Others	20	5%
	Total	400	100

Table 2 revealed that house ownership was the most important thing that made the housetype chosen to be home which made up 35% of the sample, privacy made up 23.5% of the sample, this is followed by security which made up 21% of the sample, and availability of basic services 13.5% and just 2% of the sample regarded adequate number of rooms as what made house type chosen home, all other things mentioned were categorised as others and this made up 5% of the sample.

The Meaning of Home

For this study to achieve its aim of examining the meaning of home in Ogbomoso, the data obtained from the quantitative methods were analyzed first by finding the frequency and percentages of Housetype that readily comes to mind as home, things that made the house type home and others. Finally 31 variables which define home were subjected to factor analysis, specifically the principal component analysis.

The rationale was that each respondent would present his/her unique meaning through the principal factors which explain the responses of the inhabitants in their different homes. The results are presented in Table 3 and Table 4 shows the factor eigen values, the cumulative percentage of total variance explained and the factor loading on each of the 31 variables; while table 4 shows the name given to the factor and variables that load under the factor name.

The results presented in Table 3 and 4 shows the factor that defines the meaning of home in Ogbomoso. All the 31 variables aggregate under 9 factors. The first factor with percentage of variance 16.95% refers to availability of functional spaces and facilities in the home as a factor that

defines the meaning of home. This factor relatively has the highest percentage of variance. The second factor with factor label, emotional factor has 8.33% of variance. The distinguishing quality in this factor is the variables that load on the factor which are variables such as place of responsibility, permanent place, place of emotion place of familiarity and place of meaning. These were psychological characteristics which cannot be separated from home. The third factor which explains factors that define the meaning of home was privacy with 7.18% of variance. This is another important factor of home because privacy and freedom are part of the requisite of a home. Next is factor (4) which explains 7.05% of variance. This factor refers to spatio-physical factors. The variables that load on the factor include; location of home/area, physical structure, number of rooms and sizes of rooms.

Factor (5) explains 5.76% of variance as shown in Table 4 It refers to sense of belonging, the variables that load on the factor are; sense of belonging as a result of life with siblings, as a result of life with members of family and a place for the extended family.

The 6th factor explained 5.24% of variance. It refers to tenure and communal relationship. Factor (7) explained 5.02% of variance and it refers to basic services in the house. The variables that load on this factor were availability of electricity and availability of water which are basic to the functioning of a home and the last 2 factors, factors 8 and 9 account for 4.98% and 3.70% of variance respectively.

The meaning of home in Ogbomoso was defined by the residents as availability of

functional spaces and facilities in the house, psychological factors, privacy, spatio/physical factors, and sense of belonging, tenure /communal relationship, basic services, happiness and place of learning.

Result of Analysis of In-Dept Interview/ Factors Which Define the Meaning of Home From The Qualitative Methods.

The analysis of the in-depth interview resulted in key themes which were identified from a coding scheme. This is used in the textual narrative of the subject matter, with an emphasis on the narrative form.

The coding scheme of this study is done. The interview was conducted in Yoruba language, and the interview transcript and coding was also done in Yoruba language, but the themes from the coding was translated to English.

Six themes were identified from the transcript coding and they represent the factor which defines the meaning of home from the qualitative interview. The themes are:

- (a) Home means the cradle, the source and the abode of one's ancestors;
- (b) Home means comfort, whoever builds a house is comfortable and is regarded as prosperous;
- (c) Home means a house that is owned by an individual, this means that such individual must be the owner/and occupier;
- (d) Home means a house type where access to services and facilities are private, e.g. apartment house type or a duplex. A home is a place of privacy.
- (e) Home means a comfortable place where one can get adequate spaces such as bedroom, parlour, toilets and basic infrastructure such as water and electricity.
- (f) Home means a place of safety.

Conclusion

The study of housing and the meaning of home has been studied by several researchers including those from anthropology, sociology, environment behaviour studies and architecture. A house is not exactly the same as home. But the idea of what makes a house home is not absolutely definable, it occurs in varying degrees. The need to examine the meaning of home as perceived by

the Yoruba in general but typified by the inhabitants of Ogbomoso city of Oyo State in Nigeria is a motivation for this study, the need to extend the range of cultural context in which the concept and the meaning of home is explored is another motivation for the study.

The methodology employed in this study consisted of both the qualitative and quantitative research methods. Thus the specific methods included in-depth interviews and use of questionnaire for capturing relevant research data. Nine (9) factors define home in Ogbomoso. Some of the factors were: availability of functional spaces, security psychological factors, privacy and sense of belonging.

Results of the analysis showed that house ownership was the most important consideration that makes a house to be home. Home was generally regarded from this study as cradle, the source and a place that confers national identity of ancestors on the owner who is also the occupier. Home was regarded as synonymous with comfort and symbol of being above board in the ability to meet financial emergency. It was seen as a place where one can retire to with a full sense of belonging. Home was further more defined as a place of safety, a place where one could lay claim to, a place of peace and tranquillity.

This study also revealed that there is a significant relationship between meaning of home and house types. For example, the family house type which was normally occupied by those whose right of residence was derived from common ancestry with the house owner means cradle and a source of origin. The private nature of conveniences in houses influences comfort and privacy and this could explain why single house on one lot occupied by one family, duplex and apartment were rated as house types that definitely means home.

Generally, home means a shelter and a place of abode; a single house occupied by one family which is owned by the family. This is because premium is set on ownership of house in Yoruba culture.

The meaning of home as the cradle and the source of origin is supported by the general cultural belief of the Yoruba and this claim was reflected in this study by the Yoruba residents of Ogbomoso city.

Table 3 Analysis of the factors which defined the meaning of Home

S/N	Factor	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1.	Eigen Value	7.20	3.10	1.79	1.62	1.45	1.33	1.21	1.11	1.06
2.	Percentage of total variance	16.95	8.33	7.18	7.05	5.76	5.24	5.02	4.98	3.70
	Variables	Factor Loading								
1.	General feeling of happiness	0.10	0.17	0.14	0.21	0.28	0.14	0.08	(0.59)	0.09
2.	Sense of belonging as a result of life with sibling	0.09	0.13	0.05	0.07	(0.60)	0.03	0.17	0.16	0.17
3.	Sense of belonging as a result of life with spouse	0.09	0.04	0.09	0.04	0.20	0.08	0.25	(0.63)	0.17
4.	Sense of belonging as a result of life with member of family	0.02	0.14	0.11	0.11	(0.74)	0.11	0.04	0.13	0.09
5.	A place to always want to return to	0.06	0.21	0.19	0.01	0.05	0.10	0.05	(0.68)	0.02
6.	A place of privacy	0.22	0.04	(0.75)	0.17	0.13	0.04	0.07	0.09	0.06
7.	A place of freedom	0.11	0.13	(0.74)	0.18	0.09	0.03	0.13	0.08	0.16
8.	A place for the extended family	0.17	0.19	0.25	0.09	(0.57)	0.40	0.17	0.11	0.10
9.	A place for nuclear family	0.35	0.10	(0.54)	0.12	0.07	0.07	0.10	0.01	0.25
10.	A place of responsibility	0.07	(0.53)	0.45	0.10	0.13	0.14	0.11	0.01	0.23
11.	A permanent place	0.16	(0.61)	0.20	0.18	0.03	0.13	0.03	0.02	0.25
12.	A place of emotion	0.13	(0.72)	0.08	0.04	0.06	0.06	0.03	0.26	0.21
13.	A place of familiarity	0.03	(0.73)	0.04	0.03	0.21	0.19	0.12	0.06	0.03
14.	A place of meaning	0.04	(0.74)	0.12	0.28	0.08	0.02	0.03	0.09	0.12
15.	A place of learning	0.07	0.13	0.01	0.24	0.06	0.38	0.12	0.22	(0.62)
16.	Tenure status	0.21	0.05	0.26	0.09	0.19	(0.50)	0.03	0.06	0.03
17.	Good Neighbourhood	0.01	0.03	0.04	0.08	0.05	(0.80)	0.01	0.05	0.03
18.	Location of House/Area	0.05	0.03	0.06	(0.55)	0.28	0.25	0.18	0.09	0.04
19.	Security	0.14	0.15	0.16	0.28	0.05	0.18	0.34	0.14	(0.63)
20.	Physical Structure style	0.38	0.04	0.28	(0.52)	0.06	0.08	0.24	0.02	0.07
21.	Number of Rooms	-	-	-	0.68	-	-	-	-	-
22.	Size of rooms	-	-	-	0.69	-	-	-	-	-
23.	Availability of Electricity	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.58	-	-
24.	Availability of Water	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.84	-	-
25.	Open Space/Garden	0.68	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
26.	Workspace in the Kitchen	0.74	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
27.	Availability of equipments such as Microwave Oven, Washing Machine etc.	0.79	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
28.	Bathroom facilities	0.85	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
29.	Kitchen facilities	0.86	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
30.	Living room facilities	0.76	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
31.	Dinning space facilities	0.79	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
21.	Number of Rooms	-	-	-	0.68	-	-	-	-	-

Table 4 Factor that Define Home (A summary)

Factor No.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Factor Name	Availability of functional spaces and facilities in the home	Psychological factors	Privacy	Spatia/Physical factors	Sense of belonging	Tenure/communal relationship	Basic service	Happiness	Place of learning
Variables	Open space garden for relaxation. Workspace in the kitchen. Availability of equipment such as microwave oven, washing machine etc. Bathroom facilities. Kitchen facilities; Living room facilities; Dining space facilities	A place of responsibility; A permanent place; A place of emotion; A place of familiarity; A place of meaning	A place of privacy; A place of freedom; A place for nuclear family	Location of house/area.; Physical structure/ style; Number of rooms; Size of rooms	Sense of belonging as a result of life with sibling; Sense of belonging as a result of life with members of family; A place for the extended family	Tenure status; Good Neighbourhood	Availability of Electricity; Availability of Water	General feeling of happiness; Sense of belonging as a result of life with spouse; A place to always want to return to.	A place of learning; Security.

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