

BUILDING CONSERVATION AS A VERITABLE TOOL FOR PRESERVATION OF CULTURAL HERITAGE: A CASE OF HISTORIC BUILDINGS IN CALABAR, NIGERIA

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Abstract

The phenomenon of modern conservation can be said to be virtually new in the developing world, though, it has been practiced extensively in the developed world. In almost every settlement, buildings of historic importance are under threat from either destruction or replacement with imported western technology and culture. The aim of this study is to assess the problems and prospects of conserving sites of historic buildings in Calabar in Nigeria. This study is dependent on both primary and secondary data. Primary data were obtained by direct observation, interviews and administration of questionnaires while secondary data were extracted from published and unpublished sources which include text books, journals and conference proceedings. A comprehensive reconnaissance survey of the study area was carried out and twenty-eight (28) historic buildings were identified. A stratified simple random sampling was adopted by dividing the buildings into categories out of which twelve (12) were selected as the sample size. The findings revealed that virtually all the buildings are old and over 100 years but greater percentage (66.7%) of them are in good and fair conditions while about 75.0% of them enjoy infrastructural facilities like electricity to date. It was recommended that Government should make the rehabilitation of these buildings a priority and fund for this could be achieved through establishment of National Trust Fund.

Keywords: Conservation, Cultural heritage, Historic buildings, Infrastructural facilities, Values

Introduction

The phenomenon of conservation can be said to be virtually new in the developing world, though, it has been practiced extensively in the developed world. In almost every settlement, buildings of historic importance are under threat from either destruction or replacement with imported western technology and culture. In this matter, Calabar in Nigeria which is the case study here is no exception. Calabar houses many historic buildings such as the old residency building erected in 1880 which was built to accommodate the British consulate for the Bight of Benin and Biafra. Other historic monuments include; military barracks, the Government printing press, European and General hospital, the Supreme/High Court buildings, religious buildings and schools among others. The uniqueness of the architectural design and the rich cultural heritage has made conservation of these historic buildings and monuments viable tourists' destinations.

According to Chesterton (1997), the historical buildings in cities have provided the vintage point from which the past is peeped into in order to reconstruct the present and project into the future as it is only from these prospective that men see the town in which they live or the age in which they are living. Today's building are designed more in line with technological and economic tastes than with intent to exhibit and preserve their image through an accentuation of historic and cultural elements. A substantial part of the historical structures, which were once the symbols of culture, have been defaced due to pressure from population growth, housing, water, transportation and commercialization trends. In order to accommodate these pressures, buildings of historic interest are pulled down especially at the city centres (Akomolafe, 1997). This seems the greatest threat to the conservation of the hidden treasures in the society.

Over the years, the traditional buildings in Calabar existed side by side with the modern buildings admirably but today, these have given way to hard, concrete shack with concrete rods and silhouetted glasses. As observed by Landry (1996), the city identity lies neither in quality of its palatial buildings nor in skyscrapers but in creation of a cultural society which has both

depth and promise. Therefore, cities turning their historic and cultural resources to the dictates of current market forces risk losing the heritage and identity as much as auction vital vehicle of growth and a veritable source of revenue for municipal financing.

It is obvious that Calabar city harbors substantial buildings of architectural and historic significance that ought to be conserved if effective cultural policies exist. However, the problem with poor development of cultural policies in Nigeria stems from the poor conception of historic resources in the full enjoyment of life in the urban areas. Goebert (1997) argued that the failure of market mechanism to willingly allocate resources to this sector has stemmed from this attitude that "the past belongs to history" and therefore should not be treasured

Many of the historic buildings have been abandoned and are in stages of dilapidation. The age and lack of maintenance of the buildings have turned some of the neighbourhood into slums in appearance. Some other problem as listed by Aradeon (1996) include lack of pressure groups, inadequate professionals and closeness of these sites to urban centres thereby making the land occupied by them to attract high value.

This study therefore is to investigate the problems associated with the neglect, pulling down and rapid deterioration of historic buildings in Calabar. The objectives are to:

- i. identify the typology of historic buildings in Calabar
- ii. examine the existing conditions of the historic buildings
- iii. identify the hindrance(s) to conserving the buildings
- iv. recommend possible solutions to the identified problems

Scope of the Study

This study covers Calabar Municipality which is made up of ten political wards. The structural traits of the historic buildings such as type of buildings, the use, walling materials, ownership, roofing, terrain, plot size, building orientation, age among others were the focus. Infrastructural traits such as availability of facilities within the site and cultural traits like traditional design of buildings, ancestral ownership among others are within the scope of this study. The specific buildings selected for this study are shown in Figure 1.

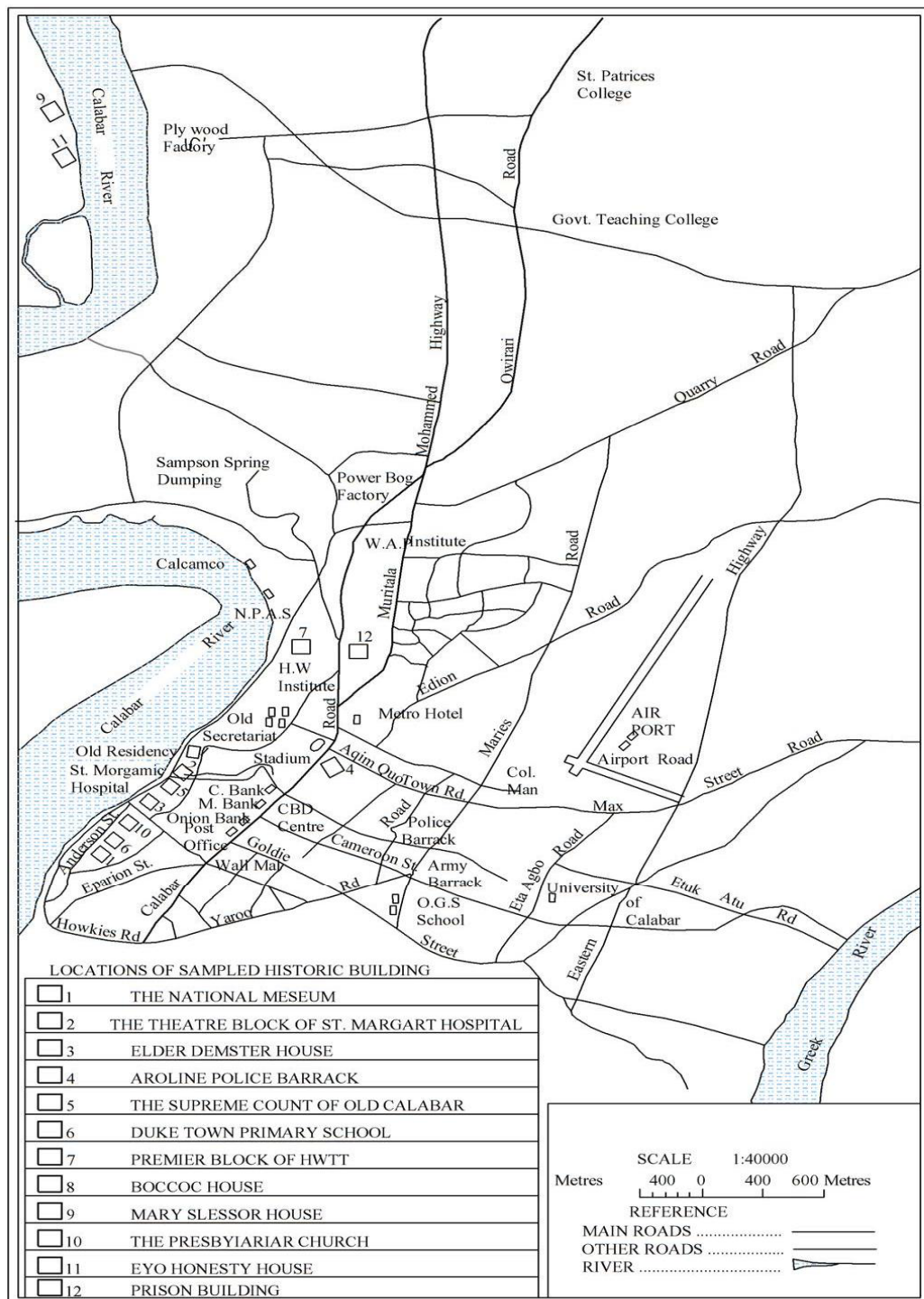
Literature Review

Recent initiative from the United States of America indicates that buildings before 20th Century are disappearing from the America landscape. This revelation is worrisome. While other structures have long been the focus of popular appreciation and preservation efforts, the value of properties from the recent past has not been widely embraced. Those interested in ensuring that 20th Century places will still be available to future generation have responded by looking anew at the properties that represent this era and finding new ways to protect them.

Edward (1989) in his building maintenance and preservation review stated that historic buildings and monuments in most developed countries are subjected to some kind of statutory protection. Where privately owned buildings in beneficial use are so protected, the statutory controls may be an important influence on the manner in which maintenance and minor adaptation works are executed. The legal provisions vary widely from country to country but most systems depend on the existence of a national or provincial inventory of monument sites, landmarks or buildings of special interest.

It has been observed that historic buildings in recent times influence Spanish architectural culture. According to Alfonso (1991) while working with historic buildings in Spain, he observed that the amount of such work and the wide ranging debate that accompany it provoked rapid revolution during the 80s such that the scene today is quite different to what was obtained some years back. Spain's notion of standard practice has been irrevocably altered. The rapid deterioration of historic centres has been halted. The large scale urban renewals of the past, leading to destruction of historic buildings have been avoided. Much of the threatened national heritage have been stabilized and the use of old structures has come to be seen as norms not only because of legal protection but also for social and economic benefits.

Figure 1: Map of Calabar Showing Location of Sampled Historical Buildings



Source: Lands Department, Calabar

Adetoye (1992) in his study on preservation of historic buildings in Lagos argued that increasing economic activities have called for increasing demand for the limited land in Metropolitan Lagos. The socio-economic instincts of people to live in buildings of modern architectural design with modern facilities has been threatening the existence of many structures which have been demolished for the sake of modern architectural structures. Although, the demolished buildings cannot generate more economic rent as the new ones that replace them, a

lot of consideration must be ensured because those demolished buildings can be of importance if preserved for historic and socio-cultural advantage. It must be noted that many old buildings if preserved will reveal the history of Lagos from the era of colonization to the future generation. Therefore, adequate measures should be adopted to avoid physical damage or alteration to any buildings of historic or socio-cultural value, so that the guise of development will not wallop those buildings of good architectural design and valuable artifacts from the history of Lagos. This is because the process of development mounts pressure which promotes changes to buildings of old.

Davies (1983) in his study on constraints to development and utilization of historic buildings identified the problems to be overcome as;

- i. The need for greater flexibility from funding agencies
- ii. The need for an acceptance of the varied goals and priorities for local group
- iii. The need for improved training and back up and that conservation would be naïve to believe that goal could be achieved without political intervention to push conservation values into public sector.

These problems though prevalent in the United Kingdom are also applicable in Nigerian environment. In Nigeria, the populace believes that every innovation and actions must be financed by the government (Dick, 1983). He added that in nearly all developing countries of the World, there are enormous demands on government to do all things including provision of infrastructure and protecting cultural heritage.

Finance is another problem identified by Dick (1983). He wondered why or how a case could be justified when in many countries; most components of historic buildings are kept intact over the years despite neglect and disaster. In justifying the need for more funding, he listed the following non-marketable values that could be derived from conservation of historic buildings. They are;

Endowment Value: Future generation from consumers that want historic buildings to be intact
Existence Value: Infrequent consumers of the historic buildings have interest of its being there for the occasional use.

Morton (1993) also supported the idea of more funding of conservation efforts but regretted that many authorities have no conservation efforts but regretted that many authorities have no conservation budget at all.

Another major problem is the ownership of the historic buildings. Dick (1983) observed that government owns nearly all the structures, city spaces, artifacts and natural environment in the United States either formally or defector. This is not totally true in the case of Nigeria from beginning, most cultural resources except those acquired by the Federal Government through the National Commission for Museums and Monuments are owned by individuals, families, communities and groups. Until lately when government realized that ownership of cultural resources such as cultural structures emanated as a result of culture, religion and historic development and as such should be under the control of government.

As stated by Olajuyin and Omisore (2002), traditional belief system is another problem militating against the conservation and effective utilization of historic cultural buildings which shelter cultural heritage in Nigeria. It could also be argued that traditional attitudes have retarded the development of conservation efforts in some instances. At times, man resists changes. The human nature to resist change tends to result in time lag between the development of improved methods and new ideas and their widespread acceptance. In less developed society, such changes are particularly shown because of the limitation imposed by poor educational systems, inadequate communication and religion. Sanni (1996) claimed that there is conflict between the adherents of Africa traditional religion and the Christian and Muslim that these heritages are possible places of human sacrifice to other gods / goddesses. Therefore, their conservation should be discouraged and public funds should not be wasted to preserve them. In some cases, these heritages were tagged as animistic, primitive and of no substance (Asani, 1998).

Ojeifo (1993) observed that in some part of central Lagos, most of the old residential area with family homes which date back to the early colonial period were built before the inception of planning and development control regulation. Accesses to most of them are through narrow alleys. She further averred that the age and lack of maintenance of these buildings with unplanned and haphazard development have turned some of the neighbourhood into slums. They constitute unhygienic and ill kept neighbourhood and could be repulsive to tourists. She suggested that a coordinated urban policy where such slums which have historical and social values associated with them ought not be destroyed but improved upon to restore their historic essence and expose their tourist potentials.

In the United States, historic buildings not only provide shelter and support to human activities, but are perceived to represent America's democratic, spiritual and educational ideas. Unfortunately, the building materials (masonry, wood and architectural metals) are all subject to damage, decay and loss overtime. With on going preservation however, the historic buildings that define neighbourhood, towns and cities will survive for future generation to use and enjoy.

Methodology

This study is dependent on both primary and secondary data. Primary data were obtained by direct observation, interviews and administration of questionnaires while secondary data were extracted from published and unpublished sources.

A comprehensive reconnaissance survey of the study area was carried out and twenty-eight (28) historic buildings were identified. A stratified simple random sampling was adopted by dividing the buildings into categories out of which twelve (12) representing approximately 45% were selected as the sample size because of the large size of the city and for logistic reasons. The twelve (12) selected buildings were those used for official and institutional uses while the remaining sixteen (16) were those not put into public use. These were either used for residential and/or other uses. The criteria adopted in selecting the samples include categorizing the historic structure erected in the 18th century that have been listed by the National Commission for Museum and Monuments for preservation and those that have impacted much influence on the life and culture of the people.

Questionnaires were administered to Heads of Department of those buildings used as offices and institution ($x = 12$) and on the selected individuals in the buildings not put to public use ($y = 16$; meaning that $x + y = 28$). The information derived were merged for reporting and analysis of this work.

Descriptive statistics such as frequency analysis was used to analyze the data. The selected buildings are presented in Table 1.

Table1: List of Selected Buildings for Sampling

S/No	Names of Conserved Building	Years of Establishment	Addresses
1	The National Museum	1884	Ekpo Eyo Drive, Calabar
2	The Theatre Block of St. Margaret Hospital	1887	Court Road by Moore Road, Calabar
3	Elder Dempster House	1847	Marina Resort, Calabar
4	The Aroline Police Barracks	1887	No. 2 IBB Road, Calabar
5	The Supreme Court of old Calabar	1887	Court Road, Calabar
6	The Duke Town Primary School	1895	No. 13 Eyamba Street, Duke Town, Calabar
7	The Premier Block of Hope Waddel Training Institute	1894	Hope Waddel Drive, Hope Waddel Training Institute, Calabar.
8	The Bocco House	1885	No 19 Bocco Street, Duke Town, Calabar
9	Mary Slessor House	1897	Okoyong, Old Calabar
10	The Presbytery Church Building	1848	No 13 Eyamba Street, Duke Town, Calabar
11	Eyo Honesty II House	1884	Creek Town, Old Calabar
12	The Prisons Building	1887	Bricksfield Prison, No. 1 Club Road, Calabar

Source: Authors' field work, 2010

Results

The findings during this study were subdivided into two groups, firstly a brief description of the 12 sampled historical sites and secondly the outcome of the data analysis. These were subdivided into four sub-headings as presented below.

Brief Description of the Selected Historic Buildings

The National Museum: This building originally known as the Government house was prefabricated in Britain in 1884 and erected at old Calabar town to accommodate the early British administration of the Niger Coast Territories. Here was the seat of the Oil Rivers and the Niger Coast Protectorates, the protectorates of Southern Nigeria and after 1914 the Resident of old Calabar Province. In 1950, it served as a ministerial Guest house and after the Nigeria Civil War as the offices of the New South Eastern State of Nigeria.

The walls and the entire top floors are made of Scandinavian red pinewood, which was considered to have high resistance to termites' attack. The wooden walls are made of overlapping boards. A framework of cast iron columns and brass supported the structure while nails keep the corrugated iron sheets roof in place.

Efforts to preserve the buildings was as early as 1953 through the initiatives of the then Antiquities Department. It was in the list of declared national monuments and handed over to the National commission for museum and monuments for preservation and restoration.

The Theatre Block of St. Margaret Hospital: This building was erected in 1887. It was made of brick walls with prefabricated wooded top and cast iron decorative plates on the ceilings of the rooms. Presently, this building houses the theatre department of the University of Calabar Teaching Hospital.

Elder Dempster House: The structure was built in 1847. It has a concrete ground floor and brick walls with prefabricated wooden top covered with corrugated iron sheets. The building housed the first Police Headquarters of the Southern protectorate of Nigeria.

Aroline Police Barracks: The barrack is a single block of building built in 1887. Built with brick walls and roofed with corrugated iron sheets. It has external facilities. The building is still being use as barracks to date.

The Supreme Court of Old Calabar: It was built in 1887. The walls were made up of bricks with prefabricated wooded top floor situated on Government Hill. The ground floor and veranda were made up of hard concrete with external iron rail staircase. The building is now being occupied by the Appeal Court of Calabar Division.

Duke Town Primary School: The building was built in 1895. Like other ancient buildings, it was erected with brick walls on a concrete foundation and roofed with corrugated iron sheets by the Presbyterian Missionaries. It is still in use as a school block up to date.

Premier Block of Hope Waddel Training Institute: The structure was erected in 1894 by Reverend Hope Waddel, a Presbyterian Missionary. Its walls and entire top floor were made up of Scandinavian red pinewood. The wooden walls were doubled made of overlapping boards. The roof is covered with a corrugated iron sheet. It is a single story building. It has been listed for take over by National Commission for Museum and Monuments for preservation.

The Bocco House: The building also known as Ekpo Ekpo Basse house was erected in 1885. It was the palace of late Obong of Calabar. The traditional activities of the Efiks took place there. The walls were made with planks while bricks and iron columns were erected as pillars to support the structure. The building played significant roles in Efiks' rituals / traditions.

The Mary Slessor House: This building is located at Akpap Okoyong was built in 1897. It housed one of the early missionaries, Rev. Mary Slessor. The walls are planks with brick pillars to support the structure. It is a single story building with facilities located externally. It has been slated for preservation by the National Commission for Museum and monument.

Presbyterian Church Building: It was built in 1848 by the early missionaries. The walls were made of woods and a framework of cast iron columns and beams which support the structure. The ground floor and veranda were made of concrete slabs. It has been slated for preservation by the National Commission for Museum and monument.

Eyo Honesty House: This building was erected in 1884. The foundation block walls were constructed with stabilized mixed cement. The walls and the entire top were made up of durable wood of overlapping boards encasing the structural pillars from inside and outside. Corrugated iron sheet was used to cover the roof. It is a single story building with wooden staircase fitted externally.

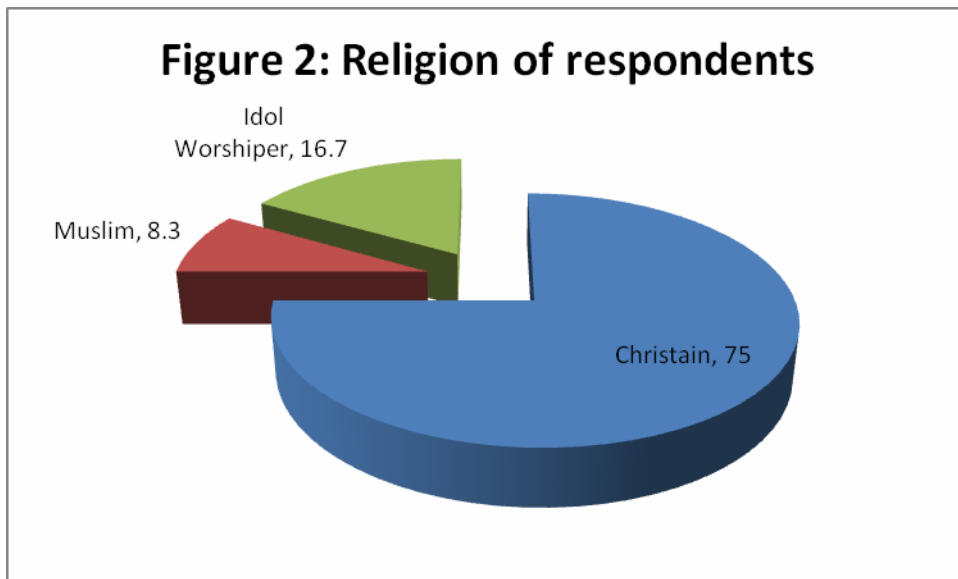
The building was the palace of the late King of Creek Town, Edidem Eyo Honesty II who was given the staff of office by the then acting British Consul of the Southern Protectorate of Nigeria in 1885. He wielded a lot of influence on his people during his time. The royal house was the nuclei of traditional activities in the area. The architectural finesse of the palace and the artistic design was quite grandiose. It is among the buildings slated for preservation by the National Commission for Museum and monument.

The Prisons' Building: Built in 1887 and is located at Leopard town. It houses the prisons' regional offices. The foundation block walls were constructed with well compacted brick blocks produced from cement and stabilized soil laid with cement/sand mortar to a level of 150mm above the ground to remove the superstructure away from the floor water. It is a single story building whose raised walls were constructed with durable woods and with wooden stair case and the roof is covered with corrugated iron sheet.

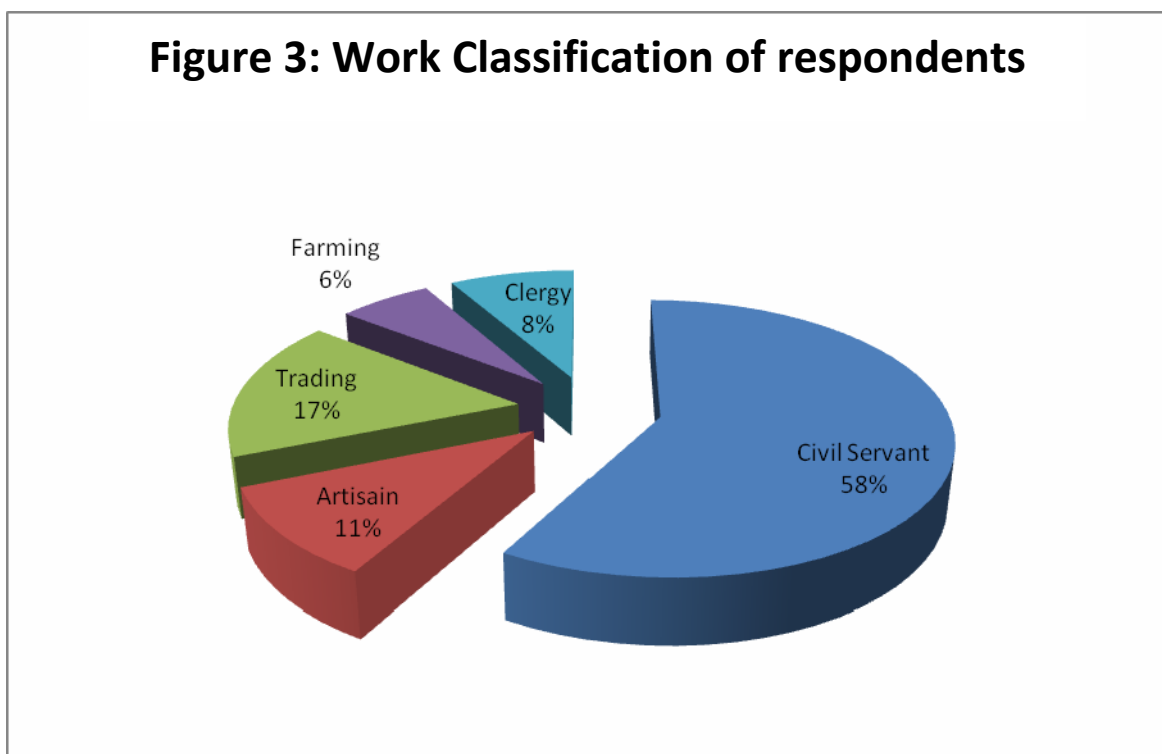
The second part of the findings is as follows:

Socio-Economic Characteristics of the Respondents

The research revealed that the population in the study area was predominantly Christians this takes 75.0% of the total sampled population, 16.7% of the population are idol worshippers while Muslims accounted for 8.3 %, see figure 2. Figure 3 shows that greatest percentage (58.3%) of the respondents were civil servants. This was not strange because a greater number of the sampled buildings were being used as offices. Those engaged in trading were 17% and farming accounted for 6% while 8% of the population was clergymen or directly engaged in full time ministry work.



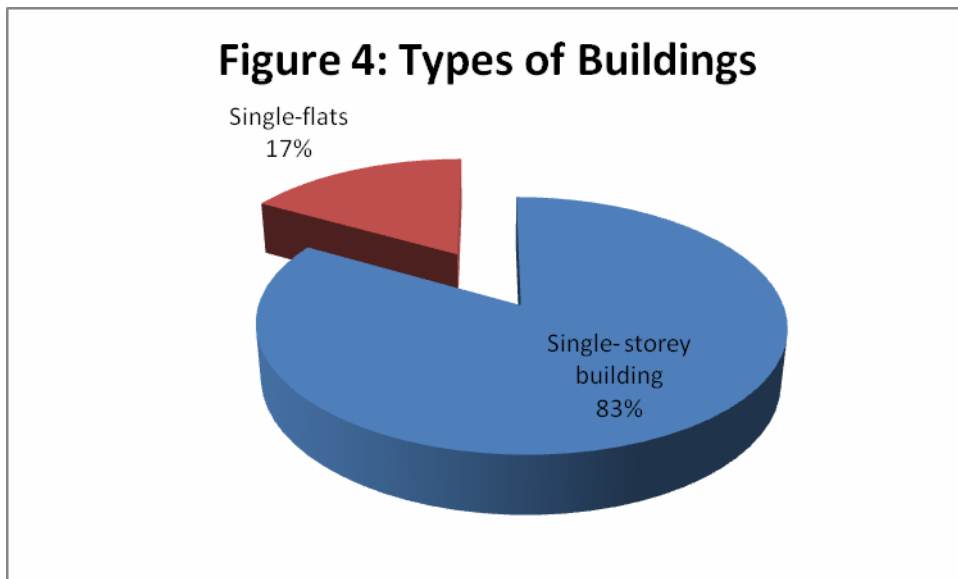
Source: Authors' field work, 2010



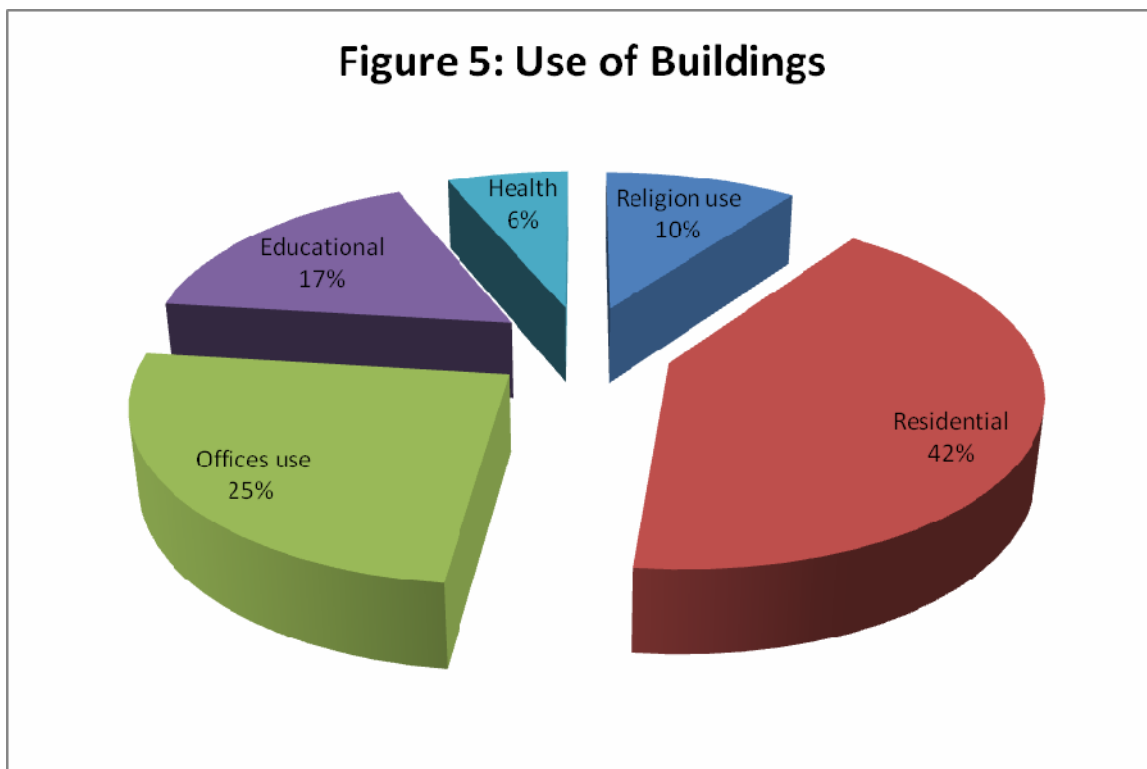
Source: Authors' field work, 2010

Structural Trait

The study revealed in figure 4 that 83.3% of the sampled buildings were single-storey buildings. Part of the reasons advanced was that the ocean surge from Cross River which often overflow its banks (before the erosion control measures of the late 19th Century) brought about the pattern of the buildings. The single-storey buildings were also a pointer to their social status and single flat takes the remaining 17%. Use of building as indicates in figure 5 shows that 42% of the buildings were use for residential purposes while 25.0% were put to office use. Educational use (schools) takes 17% while religious and health uses took 10% and 6% respectively.



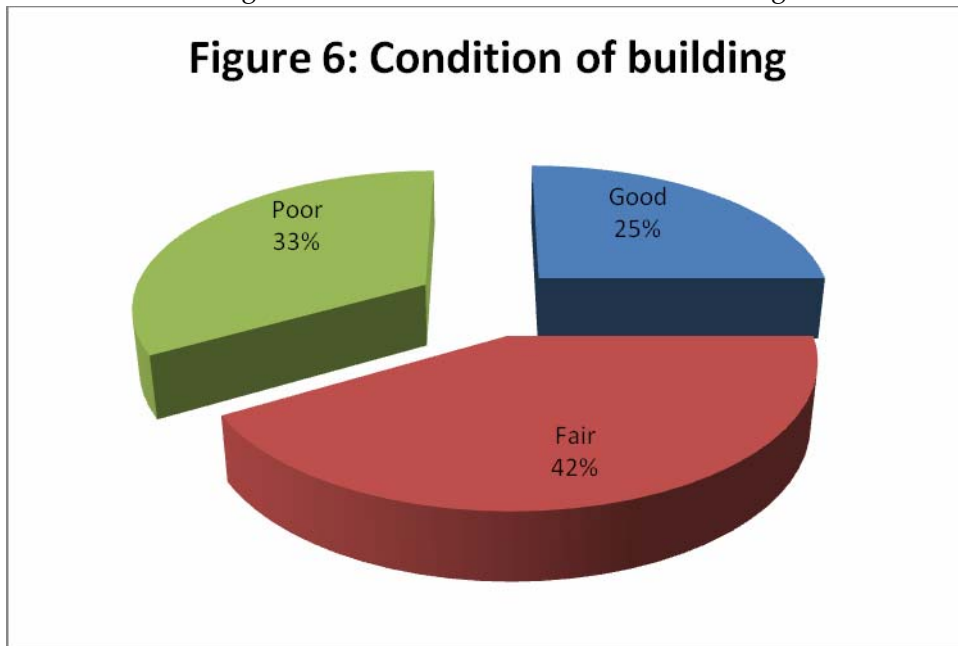
Source: Authors' field work, 2010



Source: Authors' field work, 2010

In terms of condition of the buildings as showing in figure 6 reveals that the highest percentage (42%) of the sampled buildings were in fair condition, that is, they have minor structural defects, 33.3% were categorized as being in poor condition and only 25.0% were in good condition. The condition of the buildings is not in connection with the age of the buildings. This is because the study revealed that the buildings were really old, that is, they are all over 100 years of age. Figure 7 shows that the highest percentages (75.0%) of the sampled buildings are between 100 – 120 years of age while 17% are between 121 – 140 years of age and 8.3% were between 141 – 160 years of age. The materials used for walls of these buildings

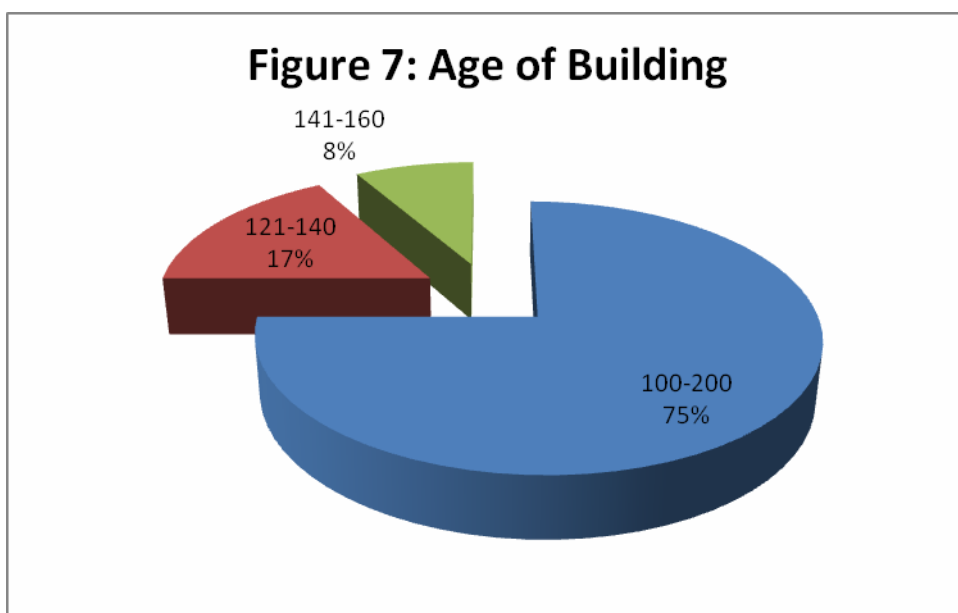
equally revealed that the buildings were equally old. For instance, figure 7 shows that 58.3% of the historic buildings were made of wood while the remaining 41.7% were made of bricks.



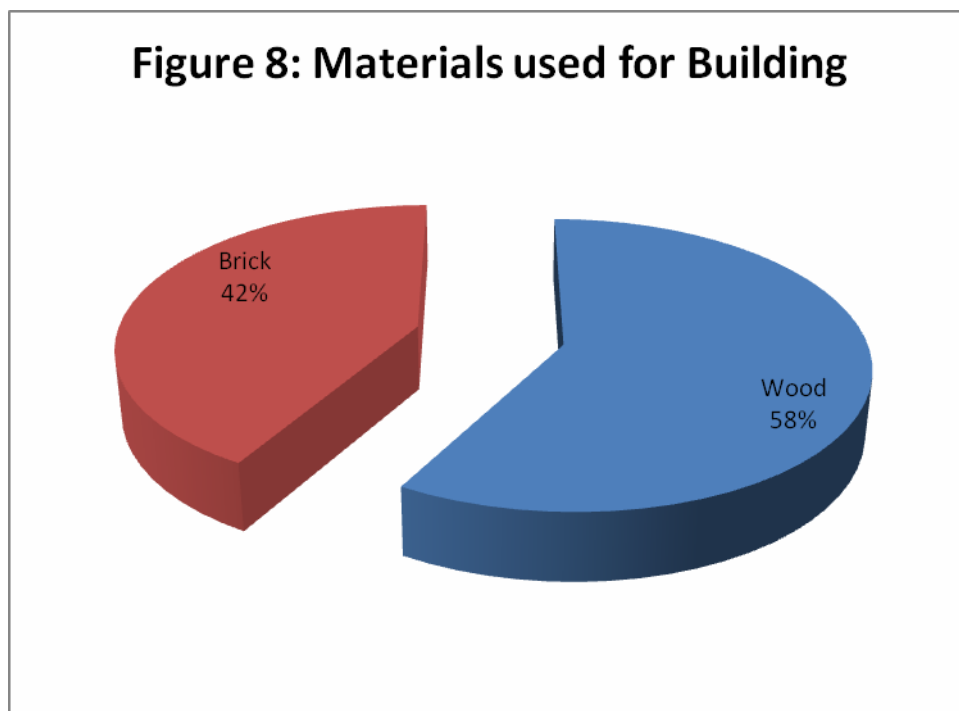
Source: Authors' field work, 2010

Infrastructural Traits

The level of provision of infrastructural facilities in these buildings could be rated to be above average. For instance, table 2 shows that 75.0% of the buildings were enjoying electricity supply while 25.0% did not. It was noted that those without electricity supply now had enjoyed it in the past before it was vandalized. 66.7% of the buildings have water being supplied to them while 33.3% did not enjoy connection to the pipe borne water supply source. The buildings all have toilet / bathroom facilities. 91.7% of the sampled buildings have these facilities located outside the buildings while 8.3% has the facilities within the house. It is also worthy of note that all the buildings have parking spaces. The reason advanced for this was that they were located and erected before the city expansion.



Source: Authors' field work, 2010



Source: Authors’ field work, 2010

Table 2: Infrastructure Traits

Electricity	Percentage
Available	75
Not Available	25
Water	
Available	66.7
Not Available	33.3
Toilet Facility	
Toilet facility within the building	8.3
Toilet Facility outside the Building	91.7

Source: Authors’ field work, 2010

Conservation of Buildings

From the study, it was revealed that greater percentage (75.0%) of the sampled population agreed that the buildings should be conserved while 25.0% disagreed. It appears that those that disagreed said so for religious reasons. Some reasons were suggested for advocating conservation. The respondents were requested to agree or disagree with the list of suggested reasons. These suggested reasons are presented in Table 3

Table 3: Rated reasons for Conservation

Reasons for Conservation	Agree (%)	Disagree (%)	Ranking
We need to conserve for aesthetic	83.3	16.7	2
Cultural heritage	75.0	25.0	3
Tourism	66.7	33.3	4
Religion	50.0	50.0	6
Architecture styles	83.3	16.7	2
Income generation	58.3	41.7	5
Education	91.7	8.3	1

Source: Authors’ field work, 2010

The summary from the reasons for conservation as presented in Table 3 shows that conservation will enhance educational values, this ranks first with 91.7% respondents, followed by two tied reasons namely conservation promotes aesthetics 83.3% and architectural style 83.3%. This is closely followed by improvement in cultural heritage 75%. Others are enhancement of tourism 66.7% as the fourth position and followed by promotion of income generation 58.3% and lastly by religion reasons 50%. These findings show that people are aware of the merits of conservation and they have different taste for it.

It is not just enough to conserve these buildings; there is the need to maintain the conserved buildings. As a result, respondents were requested to suggest the agency to be responsible for the maintenance of the buildings and the average cost of maintenance annually. The greatest percentage (33.3%) of the respondents suggested that the Federal Government should be responsible for the maintenance of the buildings, there is a tie on the number that suggested State Government, family and religious bodies which is 16.7% each also those that suggested Local Government and individuals are 8.3% each.

On the amount required to maintain the buildings, greatest percentage of the sampled population (41.7%) said ₦50,001 – ₦100,000 will be required to maintain their buildings annually while 33.3% said their own buildings will require over ₦100,000 and 25.0% said the building will require less than ₦50,000 for maintenance. This clearly showed variation in the maintenance estimates and this will properly require a more detailed evaluation by the professionals

Conclusions

A city's image lies not in the quality or masses of its buildings but in the totality of the social, cultural, economic, political and deterministic factors which produce and shape its form (Akinyoyenu, 2007). Definite identity or image which could be traded or marketed to improve the cities finances through cultural tourism is lacking in Nigeria. In light of the above, this study can be concluded by saying that conservation of historic buildings is essential as it helps to preserve the cultural heritage thereby serves as source of fund to government. It will also encourage the use of local building raw materials and will reduce the monotonous look of the cities as there will be presence of some old but good looking buildings and not only new buildings with only foreign architecture.

Recommendations

Based on the findings from the field work as highlighted above, the following major recommendations are made:

1. Government should make the rehabilitation of these buildings a priority. Fund for doing this could be realized through establishment of National Trust Fund for Historic Preservation so that it can be sustained. Sources of this fund could be local and international.
2. The Federal Government Gazette of 23rd September, 1979 in Act No. 77 that established the National Commission for Museums and Monuments should be fully implemented. This is because full implementation of these will help a lot in not only identifying buildings to be conserved but also actual conservation and maintenance of the identified buildings.
3. Historic buildings should be conserved as they can serve as tourist centre to generate money to government both from local and international tourists. The buildings could also add value to education especially those in the building professions like architects, engineers, town planners and others. Conservation of historic buildings will protect the local and cultural legacies such that both the present generation and those yet unborn will appreciate and tell the history and culture of their forefathers.
4. Non-Governmental Organisations should hold enlightenment programmes for both governments at all levels and the populace on importance of building conservation as a means of preserving cultural heritage. This can be done through radio, television and print media

5. The professionals in the building industry should change their orientation and value these buildings especially in the area of durability of the traditional materials that were used to erect them and appreciate the durability of the materials used and the workmanship.

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