



# Cambridge International AS & A Level

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GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES & RESEARCH

9239/11

Paper 1 Written Examination

October/November 2020

INSERT

1 hour 30 minutes

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## INFORMATION

- This insert contains all the resources referred to in the questions.
- You may annotate this insert and use the blank spaces for planning. **Do not write your answers** on the insert.



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This document has 4 pages. Blank pages are indicated.

The following documents consider issues related to architectural priorities. Read them **both** in order to answer **all** the questions on the paper.

**Document 1:** adapted from *The Evolution of Traditional Yoruba Architecture*, an article by Adams Adeosun, published in 2017 in 'This Is Africa', a leading forum for African opinion, arts and music. The author is a Nigerian writer and a student of architecture.

Universally, architecture is dependent on culture: the way of life of a people. Even though factors such as climate, materials and methods do directly influence building practices, they should always come second to culture.

Traditional Yoruba architecture clearly reflected the family. The traditional Yoruba man was a polygamist and his lifestyle strongly influenced the design of his building. Construction was not done professionally until much later. In the past, whenever a Yoruba man decided to build a house, he began by informing his friends, who gathered their wives and children at the building site on a fixed date. While the actual construction work fell to the men, the women and children were in charge of the catering and house finishing.

The courtyard design is the root architecture of the Yoruba people, inspired by a culture of honouring family. To accommodate an extended family, the house would be a rectangular, open-plan compound, with one entrance gate and rooms opening onto one or more courtyards, connected by roofed walkways. A segment of the compound would belong to a branch of the family, or a wife and her children. This system allowed for much personal contact, which contributed to the unity of the family community, connecting and gossiping in the courtyard.

Traditionally, architecture followed a process of trial and error. The way doors and windows vary in size – especially in places like the Osun shrine in Osogbo – is proof that measurements were achieved by instinct rather than knowledge. The standardisation of Yoruba architecture started when European missionaries arrived. It progressed when ex-slaves returned home from Brazil with a newfound style and reached a peak after Portland cement became popular.

In 1842, Reverend Henry Townsend laid the foundation of the White House in Badagry. This was the first two-storey building in Nigeria and marked the point at which Yoruba traditional architecture started modernising. In 1914, Eburn House, built by a Sierra Leonean, became the first three-storey building in Lagos. It was built in a 16th century Italian style. Soon after, multi-storeyed structures became the new symbol of wealth. Even owners of single-storey houses began to prepare them to add another storey. When the owner could not afford more than one floor, he decked his house and hoped to complete it later.

Ancient Yoruba houses still stand. Some of these old structures have become relics of a family's history. Others have had a makeover – traditional walls covered roughly with mortar and thatched roofs replaced by corrugated iron sheets. Our history is crumbling. The root architecture of the Yoruba people is fast disappearing. Ancient houses are being torn down and modern buildings grow in their place.

The world is a global village now and local culture is losing its influence on Nigerian architecture. Marketplaces are giving way to malls. The ancient courtyard buildings that spoke of family wealth in the not-so-distant past now indicate poverty. The nouveau riche want Caribbean-style mansions. Even old palaces are replaced by ultra-modern government houses. Cultural identity has been stripped from the architecture of Yorubaland.

The architecture of the ancient Yoruba of Southwest Nigeria was a communal activity. The house was a public statement of ideological, economic and social position. It is sad that it is disappearing. If we wish to retain our culture and history, we must defend our own architectural traditions.

**Document 2:** adapted from *Approaches to Architecture in Africa*, an article written by Mariam Kamara on her professional blog in 2014. Mariam Kamara is the founder and Principal of the architectural practice Atelier Masōmī (Niger). Atelier Masōmī focuses on innovative solutions in architecture and design, while exploring new adaptations to local techniques. She is also a founding member of 'united4design', a global collective of architects working on projects in the USA, Afghanistan and Niger.

We Africans should find our own unique, modern architecture, new ways to move forward. I am still looking for the clue myself. How do you make appropriate architecture in Africa? What is contemporary African architecture? What should it aim to accomplish? Obviously, different architects have different approaches.

One approach is to copy or adapt the architecture of western countries. Most of our urban environment is like this, so we all know what it looks like.

A second approach relates architecture to local climate, materials, and, sometimes, culture. In my opinion, when architecture responds to climate, the result often “belongs”, is comfortable and pleasurable and has traditional characteristics. I suspect similar problems usually lead to similar solutions. For instance, we know that in a desert climate, openings should be smaller, glass kept to a minimum and ventilation is key. So, today or 200 years ago, the same requirements lead to similar architecture, appropriate for the climate.

Designing with local materials is environmentally-friendly and climate-responsive. It is also economically responsible, producing affordable architecture for more people. Unfortunately, in urban areas, few projects use local materials. In many African countries, steel and concrete symbolise higher status, achievement and economic prosperity, but most importantly, modernity. Local materials are only used by people who can't afford the fancy western-inspired ones.

Responding to culture, other projects focus on designing spaces for people's lifestyles. Some also make cultural links by including local imagery, arts or craft; taking inspiration from a local cloth pattern or carved statues for instance.

There is a third, recent, very exciting approach. Some architects believe the way forward for African architecture is through a unique, modern identity. These architects are not looking back to our ancestral roots and trying to copy what was there. Instead, they are looking to the future, solving problems logically, innovating brilliantly to do so. They are thinking outside the box.

Kunlé Adeyemi is one of these forward-thinkers. He built a floating school in the Makoko “slum” of Lagos, Nigeria. It was designed to avoid problems caused by frequently rising water-levels in the settlement. He used readily-available, cheap materials with a daring concept. He simply solved a problem logically, using his experience and knowledge, and not worrying about tradition.

Another modern African architect is Francis Kéré from Burkina Faso. He uses local materials, incorporates local crafts, gives work to locals and provides training, increasing local knowledge. Kéré experiments boldly with locally available materials, new forms and techniques. His architecture works culturally, climatically, materially and economically. It builds on what exists, and looks for more effective ways of solving problems. It is not sentimental, it looks forward to what is possible.

These two architects show us that we can be modern yet African. They create solutions that are not artificially “African”! Their solutions fit perfectly in the area they design for. Their projects in Africa are often humble and simply try to solve the problems they see, without trying hard to be “cool” (but they turn out really cool, anyway...!)

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