

The Challenges of Continuity of Traditions: A Case of Hausa Earth Roof Construction in Northern Nigeria



Theophilus A. Shittu

Centre for Earthen Architecture, University of
Plymouth, United Kingdom

theophilus.shittu@plymouth.ac.uk

ABSTRACT

The Hausa are one of the major ethnic groups inhabiting northern Nigeria. They constitute about 40% of the Nigerian population. The traditional architecture of the Hausa is predominately of earthen material with adobe (tubali) technique commonly used. Among all the ethnic groups in Nigeria it is only in the Hausa land that earth construction is still practiced extensively in the rural areas. Significant earthen buildings are still being constructed in the urban centres particularly the informal urban settlements in Hausa land.

The Hausa traditional earthen architecture has a unique system of roofing called soro, made from reinforced earth. However, this unique traditional architectural feature is being threatened by excessive rainfall and heat which causes rapid expansion and contraction that leads to the failure of the roof structure and consequently the entire earth building. The excessive rainfall and sun radiation probably resulting from climate change associated with global warming. Consequently, many earth roofs are being replaced with corrugated iron sheets which are not only very costly but not as comfortable as those made from earthen materials.

This paper elucidates the construction technique of this unique Hausa earth roof. It also highlights the challenges and discusses possible solutions that may ensure the continuity and preservation of this unique technique. The implications of retaining this technique in the face of the global climate change are examined.

KEY WORDS :

Hausa, Earth Roofs (soro), Adobe (tubali), Challenges and Continuity