

ANGLICANISM AND ARCHITECTURE IN OYO TOWN

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ABSTRACT: *Oyo Empire was a powerful Yoruba polity in what is today southwestern Nigeria. Internal conflicts led to collapse of the kingdom in the 1830s. The nineteenth century was marked as a period of unrest in the region. Christian missionaries played an important role in the Colonial history of Nigeria and particularly in the signing of the treaty to end wars in the Yoruba States. However, spread of Christianity was sustained through education that led to widespread missionary Schools and Churches. Although Anglicanism had reached Oyo by 1853 that saw to the construction of church and school, the CMS training institute started in Abeokuta same year. The training institute was later relocated to Lagos between 1868-1896. A notable event was when the CMS institution was transplanted from Lagos to Oyo in 1889. By 1942, the proprietorship of the college was transferred to the Church of Nigeria (Anglican Communion). During this period, missionary structures were put up on the college site known as 'Oke-Ebo'. This paper utilizing a mixed method approach will study the Anglican culture and how it is reflected in their architecture. The study focuses on the significance of the Anglican culture and heritage from structures in Oke-Ebo during the 19th century and how it influenced the furtherance of Christianity in Oyo through the construction of Church structures that have stood the test of time. Finally, the paper highlights the need for the preservation of these monumental structures as part of Oyo's architectural heritage.*

KEYWORDS: Oyo Empire, Anglicanism, architecture, C.M.S

INTRODUCTION

Anglicanism has been in existence in Nigeria since 1830's through the discovery of the Niger that led to the influx of missionaries. The presence of the missionaries in the Yoruba land brought about education, civilization and above all Christianization of the Yoruba people to the extent of having a 'Yoruba Mission'. The influx of the missionaries was due to the revival that engulfed Britain and birthed the Church Missionary Society in 1799. The full aim of the mission was to convert heathens to Christianity (Ogunkoya,1979). 1841 expedition included missionaries who came to examine the possibilities of evangelising on the river. This led to the exploring visit of the first missionary Rev Henry Townsend in 1843 and his final arrival in 17 January 1845. His final arrival with helpers that included Rev Samuel Ajayi Crowther was the beginning of the mission in Abeokuta where they were welcomed with open hands by Sagbua, Alake of Abeokuta.

There is no way one can explore Anglicanism in Oyo without looking back to how it was established in Nigeria. Abeokuta was the birthplace of Anglicanism through the earlier missionaries. Their arrival brought about the need to build and build did they with the materials and expertise that was available at the time. One of the first structures to be built by the missionaries was a house and a chapel of thatched roof which was latter replaced by wooden structures. These buildings started the history and ideology of architecture within the confines of the Anglican mission in Yorubaland. The main assignment of the missionaries was to 'preach the word' and to do this they needed to build shelter that will enable them attain their goal. To this end came the building of a school that was used to teach the children and catechumen. Ten years later, by 1855 a training institute was conceived in Abeokuta to assist in satisfying the hunger for learning and desire to be taught. This led to the construction of two buildings at Ikija to kick start the CMS training Institutions properly.

Earlier Constructions

Earlier constructions started in Abeokuta initially by the missionaries and later by the students. The missionaries were allocated a three acre land to construct their residential quarter, a church and a school. Ogunkoya, (1978) recorded that part of the duties of every student involved mud digging, mud tampering, stone breaking, carrying wood and thatch from places far and near. The students were responsible for the building of the mud walls and putting thatch on the roof. Under the supervision of the missionaries, students of the institute initially at Abeokuta carried out construction works. The trouble at Abeokuta resulted in the mission relocating to Lagos in 1968. The CMS training institute was built on Breadfruit street Lagos at St Pauls Parsonage. The house was hastily completed and occupied immediately. The Construction in Lagos was a storey building in which the students lived in the ground floor and used the larger rooms as classes. Lagos brought about the introduction of bricks into building construction as well as painting. Ogunkoya (1973) recorded that bricks were carried from wharf to building sites. This indicate that bricks were initially imported into the country in the nineteenth century and show how building construction improved from mud construction to the utilization of bricks. By 1875 suitable buildings were erected on Odunlami Street to accommodate the activities of the CMS training institution. The necessary move to Oyo *Alaafin* meant that new constructions needed to be erected in the new location of the CMS training institute and by extension erection of more places of worship within the town. The first was a temporary quarters that consisted of three small bedrooms, a verandah in front and a room at the end to be used as a classroom and dinning. Thus the construction and design that indicates spaces and their uses was a characteristic of the construction of the Church Mission Society.

Construction and Establishment at Oyo

In 1853, Rev, and Mrs David Hinderer brought CMS to Oyo in March 1853 and he started the first formal school in St Mary Iyalamu Oyo. The first storey building in Oyo is the one in Iyalamu occupied by the missionaries. Rev Hinderer established in Oyo for three purposes. To establish friendly relationship with the king of the Yorubas in the person of the *Alaafin* of Oyo, to plant a preaching post and to start a formal education. St Mary became the first church in Oyo.



Fig 1: The first storey building in Oyo, built in 1854 to serve as the Church personage. (Photo by author)



Fig 2: St Mary's Anglican Church, Iyalamu, Oyo – The first Church in Oyo with a new church being built around it. (Photo by author)

Although St. Micheal Cathedral, Esiele became the mother church due to rapid growth influenced by the establishment of St Andrews, St. Mary was the first CMS Church.

Anglicanism was further established and strengthened at Oyo through the establishment of the training institution by the Church Mission Society. Although the Institution started in 1896, Christianity through Anglicanism had been earlier introduced. The presence of Rev Samuel Johnson (a native missionary) on ground to accept Melville Jones (later Bishop Melville Jones) on his arrival in 1896 attest to the existence of the church in Oyo. Interestingly, Rev Samuel Johnson was a product of the Church Mission Society Training institute and passed through Mr Bulher (One of the earlier principals of the institute in Abeokuta). The goal of the society was to train young native men as agents, school masters, scripture readers, catechists, priests and bishops. Students who successfully complete their training were sent as luminaries into the hinterland after graduation to help their fellow men. Samuel Johnson would have been drafted to Oyo after his training to pastor the church and possibly see to the affairs that will contribute to the expansion of Anglicanism in Yorubaland. Within his compound was a thatched roof cottage built for the schoolmaster that initially housed the principal of the new training institute in Oyo.

By 1896, more structural development was undertaken by the Church Mission Society towards the furtherance of the gospel through Anglicanism as well as to meet with the requirements for training the young men. The new building construction began at the site today occupied by Ajayi Crowther University. The site at the time was the new location of the Church Mission Society training Institute. Whilst building at the temporary site, they came across the ruined wall of the Mission House occupied by a German missionary to Oyo between 1858-1860. This missionary could have been Mr. S. Hardesty, who was associated with the Hinderer team visit to Oyo in 1856 from Kudeti, Ibadan. The mission house was situated on a fifteen and half acre of land. The size of the land was five times the size the institute started with at Abeokuta thus providing the needed space to build. According to Smalley (1967:103), a church building should never, in fact, be a detached edifice, standing in splendid isolation from its surroundings. If possible it should be related to a complex of buildings, such as offices, halls, kitchens, and classrooms, of which it is one part. In this way it can testify to a Christian concern for the whole man, body and mind as well as spirit. This ideology reflected at the institute as the principal's house, two blocks of 10 bedroom student hostel, quarters for Nigerian tutor, a big dining room and a classroom were built.

By 1897, some of the buildings though incomplete, a student hostel, the principal's house and the chapel were completed for occupation and training commenced on April 24th. In comparison to how far the institution has come with space allocation and construction, the spaces at Oyo were much expansive and comfortable. These buildings were constructed in mud and it is recorded that the roof on one of the hostel block (St John) was lifted by the storm (Ogunkoya, 1973). Ogunkoya claimed the staff were novice at the time in building in mud and did not hold the roof in place with a wall plate. The account highlights the fact that the missionaries and their students built by themselves utilizing the DIY (Do it Yourself) structure. This is not a coincidence as it had been the tradition of the training institute and also coupled with the fact that the indigenes

were not friendly at the time. Involving them or seeking any form of assistance was therefore impossible.



Fig 3: St Andrews Chapel, constructed in 1897 presently in restored condition (Photo by author)



Fig 4: The St Andrew's Chapel door showing age old hinges and door handles since 1897. (Photo by author)

From 1897 onward, the Church Mission Society activities started influencing various parts of Oyo such as Akinmorin, Awe, and Jobele. This resulted in the construction of a church in Awe that was opened for worship in May 1897. The students though few were involved in making the blocks and possibly participating in erecting the walls a consistent tradition from Abeokuta days. By 1920, Anglicanism in Oyo had progressed to the point where there was increased interest in the boy wanting to be trained within the Church Mission Society training institute (by this time christened St Andrew's College). The increase in converts needed more men to satisfy the growing spiritual hunger. The institute that produces the men also required expansion thus resulting in the proposed new buildings within the school premises. To this end, more classrooms, student dormitory, assembly hall, common room, library and a new chapel, were proposed. A concrete tank to collect and preserve pipe borne water was another feature of construction in the Anglican setting. Landscape architecture was not left out of the setting as

paths were laid with ornamental flowers and edges to the credit of Mrs. Burton the principal's wife.

1926 report of the principal indicated that a large building consisting of classrooms and dining room for the theological hall, a small block consisting of kitchen and bathrooms, a classroom for normal students, a house for married tutor and several small buildings were built. The buildings were financed by the Education department through taxpayers and not only by the Church Mission Society London. Thus Anglicanism could be said to be subtly sponsored by the colonial government. This contribution saw to the maintenance of the buildings as well as the students.

1927 witnessed another advancement in the spread of Anglican influence in Oyo. The *Alaafin* granted the school their request to extend their fifteen and half (15.5) acre by additional sixty-five (65) to become eighty acre. However the report of 1927 by the principal indicated that the land total became ninety-four (94) acre. Account for the remaining fourteen (14) acre is yet to be confirmed. It is important to mention at this point that the land was on lease for 99 years. Thus indicating that there is a likelihood of the lease not being renewed and the land returned to the *Alaafin*. *Alaafin's* protection and friendly attitude also contributed to the furtherance of Anglicanism in Oyo. This is evident in the fact that *Alaafin* only charges one shilling for the lease if demanded for old friendship sake.

Architecture for Anglicanism in Oyo

The goal of Church Mission Society in Africa is the mission to preach the word and civilize the people by turning them away from heathen practices (Ogunkoya, 1977) To do this the established churches alongside schools to teach the children. The first architectural structure for Anglicanism in Oyo is a church construction in 1853. The construction was initiated through the presence of the early missionaries in the person of Revd. and Mrs. David Hinderer. Revd. and Mrs. Hinderer initially visited to Oyo in 1852 and settled at Ibadan to proceed to Oyo town in 1856. By 3rd May 1856, they visited the *Alaafin* as a sign of respect during their maiden pastoral journey to the town via *Ijaye*. In 1852, Lady Mary visited *Isale* Oyo where she established a cottage in the marshy and swampy area of *Iyalamu*. The cottage was to later be used as both a church and dispensary. As a philanthropist, Lady Mary cared for the sick especially children and used the opportunity to preach the gospel. This became the humble beginning of the church at *Iyalamu*. During Revd. Hinderer's visit to Oyo in 1956, the church was formerly christened St Mary's after Lady Mary tireless evangelical work. The first formal school was also started at the same compound at *Iyalamu*. As stated earlier, Revd. Hinderer came to Oyo to establish friendly relationship with the kings of the Yoruba's the *Alaafin* of Oyo, to plant a preaching post and start a formal education.

With the financial support from the Church Mission Society, Lady Mary built the first storey building to serve as the church parsonage in 1854. This building later served as the house for all the parish ministers such as Agent, Catechist, Pastor or Reverend in the church till date. The storey building was the first of its kind in the whole of Oyo. Anglicanism did not only bring about construction of churches and schools but introduced new type of structures to Oyo. The storey building became a building by which the eyes of Oyo people were opened to new ways

they could build houses. There are still some 'copied' ones around although many of them are now dilapidated. St Mary's paved the way for the rest of Anglican structures in Oyo. Next to be constructed was the St Micheal's C.M.S Church *Agunpopo/Esiele* by Mr Melin The church has been reconstructed to become a cathedral. St Micheal's had a rapid growth due to the influence of St Andrews and became the mother church many years later. The establishment of the institute in Oyo in 1896 by the Church Mission Society further aided the establishment and construction of churches and schools. The institute became the first college to be established in southern Nigeria (Omosini, 1979). St Mark's Church *Origbendele* was next in line out of the thirty five churches and numerous schools to be constructed in Oyo.

It is interesting to note at this point that the architecture of Anglican churches are influenced by what Anglicanism stands for. Smalley (1967) also stated that the Anglican Church is a combination of both the catholic and the reformed with its doctrine based on the historic Christian church as indicated in the scriptures of the early creed. He emphasised that the distinctive reformation that differentiates the Anglican from the Catholic should be reflected in their architecture. His ideology however further needs to bear in mind the culture of the host community that is likely to further influence the architecture (Musodza, 2009).

Indigenization of Church Architecture

Church architecture refers to the shape and style in which Churches are built. History has shown that churches are built in different sizes and shapes. In many cases, the taste of the serving priest reflects on the church architecture. However, financial capability and available material also plays a part in church construction. As a result indigenization of church architecture becomes paramount during construction. Hammond (1960:9) suggests that, if a church is to be built, it should be a building that will speak. It should speak of meanings and values of the interpreted belief continuously. And if it speaks of the wrong values, it will go on destroying the beliefs. Hammond's argument suggests that church building reflects the belief of the group it represents and it is true that by looking at a church building one is bound to get some meaning or value of that piece of architecture. Thus a church needs to communicate what it stands for, as a place for worship in the language the local community will understand. Byekwaso (1987) also suggests that churches conveyed meaning and values not intended to those the churches were designed. Hence such structures deny and fail to manifest the doctrine preached from its pulpit thus obscuring the essential meaning and its place within the community.

Traditionally all Christian churches were built from East to West. For Christians, of all the points of the compass, the most sacred is East, pointing in the direction of the holy city of Jerusalem.

The high altar is always placed at the East end of the church, side altars are also placed on East walls and the congregation faces East to pray. As well as being oriented towards Jerusalem, Christian churches were traditionally built from East to West because the sun rises in the East and sets in the West. The sun rising in the East was associated with dawn on Easter Day, when Christ rose from the dead. (Booth, 2010:2). This philosophy reflects in the design of St. Mary's Church, Iyalamu and St. Andrew's Church and they both face the East. An Exception is the St.

Michael's Church, Esiele as it is discovered to face the North.

Booth (2010) also stated that the East and West windows in a church are the most important; the East because they let in the morning sun, which symbolizes God as the Light of the World, and the West because the dying sun reminds us of the day of Judgement. The North side of the church is dark and traditionally represented the devil, and the South side is sunny, representing the Holy Spirit. The East windows of Anglican Churches is usually a prominent feature of the Church building as it is often times made of beautiful stained glass (small pieces of glass arranged to form patterns or pictures) depicting pictures of a saint in the Bible or a significant story. The use of stained glass windows in churches gained popularity during the mid-12th century. The two-fold purpose was to create a "heavenly light" that symbolized the presence of God in the church and to serve as a "Poor man's Bible," to teach Biblical stories to those who were illiterate. The use of stained glass fell out of favor during the Reformation, but was revived in the mid-19th century when the Gothic style once again became popular in Europe and in the United States. The three east windows of the St. Andrews Chapel feature a picture of 'The good Shepherd' at the center, flanked on the left by the picture of Bishop Samuel Ajayi Crowther, and on the right by the picture of Rt. Rev. F. Melville Jones. These two people played important roles in the development of Christianity and education in Nigeria and Oyo in particular. The Good Shepherd, is one of the 19th century paintings by German Artist Bernhard Plockhorst reproduced in many Churches all over the world.



Fig 5: The East windows of St. Andrew's Chapel, Oke-Ebo. (Photo by author)

Pointed arches, which is a defining characteristics of Gothic Architecture and featured from 12th century cathedral and churches were also prominently featured in most Anglican Churches in Oyo although it is observed that recently constructed Churches have jettisoned the idea of pointed arches. It has totally disappeared from the windows of the old St. Michael's Church during renovation and was not featured in the design of the new cathedral.

Fig 6: St. Michael's church Esiele showing the old church and the new cathedral. (Photo by author)

It is important to state that in the Diocese of Oyo, churches were constructed using pise (rammed



earth) and later finished with cement plaster. Rammed earth was the construction material commonly used by the people hence the church does not feel like a foreign space within the community. As a result, it will not be out of place for the indigenous people to use the space as a place of worship and connect with their creator. Although the missionaries built the earlier churches, indigenes after undergoing training in the C.M.S institute were allowed to take charge of church construction and administration.

CONCLUSION

Countless number of churches with beautiful architectural designs beautifies the skyline of Oyo and by extension Nigeria attest to the silent but profound testimony of the influence of Anglicanism on architecture. It further attests to the importance of the Church Mission Society in

Nigeria without which there might be no music or education. It is noteworthy to also state that Anglicanism further contributed to the spread of education and the ideology of unity within the country. Today from the humble beginning in 1853, there are 35 Anglican churches, --schools established in Oyo till date.

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