

Final Review Report ISVSej_12.03.13_Chidi
Compiled from Two Reviews

Please use this number to identify the revision.

Title of paper: **Architecture and Cultural Relevance: An Analysis of Mbari Houses**

General

This paper examines an issue related to how the 'socio-cultural' aspects are communicated through architecture. The paper is reasonably well written. However, it lacks clarity and has some issues that need to be resolved. To begin with, the term "cultural relevance" is confusing. If this term is to be used, it should be clarified. However, the abstract begins with a reference to 'cultural identity' and by saying that architecture is 'material culture', another term 'cultural relevance' does not make much sense.

Title: The title needs revision. Following title is suggested "Expression of Culture through Architecture: Insights from the Mbari Houses of Imo State, Nigeria". Current title does not indicate where the research is located. It also does not indicate the central issue examined clearly.

Language: Language is reasonably good. However, there are some issues of language in terms of grammar and sentence style. Write short and meaningful sentences and construct a narrative. Start a new paragraph when the idea being talked about changes. It is also necessary to construct a good flow of argument.

Formatting: This paper has major issues in formatting. First, download the ISVS e-journal template and copy paste the paper to the template. The abstract must be indented from both sides, and paragraphs must have the first line indented from the left. The lists must be indented from the left and left-justified. First line of every paragraph must be indented from the left by .5". Table titles must be 10 points. Do not place each author and year within separate brackets in citations. Use the standards. In the list of references, years must be within brackets. Remove the comma after the dot after the initials in the references. There should be no Vol. or pp.

Abstract

Abstract is reasonably well-written. The first paragraph must introduce the fact that architecture expresses culture. Indeed, it is part of culture, if one defines culture as both the material and non-material productions of people. Given this, the use the term 'cultural relevance' is problematic. Last sentence should thus be 'its relationship with culture'.

Second paragraph must be about the research methods and the third paragraph must be about the conclusions.

Current second paragraph does not explain the data collection methods well. To begin with, remove the word 'therefore'. However, it says that "this research applies a mixed method approach, combining case study and archival research methods for data collection". This is wrong. The term mixed method is used if both quantitative and qualitative methods are used. Case study and archival research do not represent quantitative and qualitative methods. Moreover, how the data was collected within the case study has not been explained. Instead, it talks about analysis. It says 'composition was analyzed using logical argumentation'. Under the methodology, the method of data collection must be explained. Please explain how the samples were chosen and how many case studies were examined. Be precise and clear.

The last paragraph does not offer clear conclusions. It says that 'cultural relevance is a vital determinant of form composition.' This does not make much sense. It also says that 'basic laws of proportion were applied'. These are obvious. Where are the conclusions related to culture and cultural identity that the abstract started with? Conclusions must be specific about the expressions of culture through the architecture of the Mbari houses. What do these proportions and composition mean uniquely related to Mbari culture?

Paper

1. **The introduction:** Introduction is not written well. Please combine the introduction, the background to the study and the problem statement without sub headings and construct a narrative argument ending with a statement about what exactly this study examines and then stating what the aims and objectives are. Currently, it begins by saying that architecture “legibly communicates sociocultural values and nuances through its built form”. This is not the issue. Start with the background to the issue of the Mbari houses having articulate expressive elements and then say that the issue is that they have not been adequately examined and understood.

After introducing the issue, say what exactly is examined. It seems that this paper examines the “architectural components of a Mbari house and their cultural relevance”. Strangely, this introduction does not say where this is being investigated in, (presumably in the Imo state of Nigeria). Please mention it here.

Please remove the contents of the first paragraph which should be part of the theoretical framework.

Here, end the introduction with the aims and objectives.

An introduction must introduce the issue as related to the title, and as claimed in the abstract. It must then say what this research examines, followed by the aims and objectives, and stop.

Currently, its aim is not clear although the aims and objectives are written as a paragraph. Please express the aim in one sentence and list the objectives below.

Please note that aims are noble, unmeasurable, long term, almost-impossible-to-fully-achieve expectations while the objectives are practical, measurable, short term, achievable intentions. Objectives must be always listed starting with ‘To’.

The introduction must end with them.

Current introduction ends without properly articulated aims and the objectives. The statements about “this will be achieved by” is irrelevant here. It belongs to research methods.
2. **Theoretical Framework:** This paper presents a reasonably good theoretical framework for the study. However, instead of talking about space straightaway, it should say which theoretical concepts relate to this study. Since the paper examines specific issues as related to ‘cultural identity and expressions of architecture’ (which is referred to as the cultural relevance), it should first offer a theoretical discussion about ‘expressions of architecture’, ‘space-form and culture’ and ‘cultural identity’ presenting their definitions first, employing theoretical interpretations. It should also discuss other theoretical notions relevant to this research such as ‘symbolism’ etc.

Currently, it has no introduction and its entry is abrupt. Please move the second paragraph to be the first. It provides a good introduction to the theoretical review.

On the positive side, this theoretical framework employs the authors’ voices with statements such as ‘according to Godman (1999), or Lawrence (2000) argues, instead of the authors making statements and putting references within brackets.

Please produce a more meaningful theoretical framework by articulating the meanings and relationships between “expressions of architecture”, ‘space-form and culture’ and ‘cultural identity’ and by referring to the outstanding theoreticians as having been identified currently such as Rapoport and Oliver as related to traditional architecture. However, please also refer to other theoreticians such as Susan Denyer. Define the terms first. What is written currently is inadequate. For example, it says “Many authors have summarized the fundamentals of architecture as; Form, Space, Humans and Human Experiences (Ching, 2023), (Imaah, 2010). Rapoport (1969, 1990, 2003)”. This is inadequate. It only mentions the names of the theoreticians and the years. What they have articulated are missing. Same happens in the statement “This research utilizes the Polythetic Classifications of Vernacular Design Attributes put forward by Rapoport (1990), in analyzing Mbari architecture.” Please discuss what these ‘Polythetic Classifications of Vernacular Design Attributes’ because they are being employed later for analysis. (it is later seen that they are listed under the review of literature, which is wrong)
3. **Review of Literature:** There is no proper review of literature in this paper. A research paper must have a review of literature which should discuss the major research that has examined **the issue** (not the case study) previously to show the status of current knowledge, and where the gaps of that knowledge exist. The issue here is the ‘expression of culture and cultural identity through architecture of the vernacular settlements.’ However, no research related to this issue is being critically reviewed, although the sub title exists and there is some theoretical discussion introducing the studies that have examined Mbari houses (the specific case study). This is not proper.

The review should critically examine previous research that has examined expression of culture and cultural identity through architecture of the vernacular settlements globally first, Nigeria afterwards and should finally discuss any research that exist related to the Mbari houses in Nigeria, not only or necessarily related to this issue, but related to architecture. Only at the end, discuss the research that examine this issue as related to Mbari houses.

Please see 'how to write a review of literature' in the ISVS e-journal web site and follow suit. Write in the present tense because it discusses current knowledge. Sum up at the end and show the status of current knowledge and where the gaps of that knowledge exist. 12-15 references are needed. Current writing is only mentioning research into Mbari houses: it is all about Mbari houses and does not establish the status of knowledge on this issue and where the gaps of that knowledge exist. The statement 'This paper examines Mbari houses purely as architecture,...' and the last paragraph belong to the 'theoretical framework' and should not be here. Table 1 also belongs to the theoretical framework.

What is written under the sub title "Mbari Monuments as Vernacular Architecture" and the Table 2 also belong to the theoretical framework at the end. Review of literature must be placed afterwards.

4. **Research Methodology:** This is not done well. To begin with, it must mention that it employs two methods of gathering data. Archival research (literature survey) and case study as a method. Within this, a number of data gathering techniques have been employed within the case studies but not mentioned. It mentions "interviews with knowledgeable stakeholders on the subject (especially as regards historical information), observation and photographic survey of the building" only under the Findings. This is not acceptable. Many issues exist.
 - a. It mentions 'Logical Argumentation' as a research method. This is not correct. It has been employed for analysis, and not gathering data.
 - b. How were the case studies done? Observations and recording? Measured drawings or what? These details must be presented. Currently, every statement says that it "enabled". What it enabled is not what is needed, but how the technique was accomplished to gather data.
- c. Case studies have been done but does not say where. Earlier, it said Imo state Nigeria, BUT HERE, NOTHING IS SAID. It mentions "Documents from archival fieldwork, at two National archives in Nigeria; National Archives Enugu and National Archives Ibadan".

Please list all the techniques and explain them. Present the data gathering techniques and tasks in detail: say when where and how. After saying that the research employs case study as a method, explain the basis upon which the case studies were chosen. For the archival research, say how they were chosen and how many. Please also list all the documents examined.

None of the techniques of data collection are properly listed and explained. Current descriptions are inadequate. What is needed is not either theory (although some theoretical explanations are useful) or what data was gathered but how the techniques were implemented. Say what was employed (Case studies) (Use present tense nevertheless) then the data gathering techniques. List them first and explain how each was carried out, with full details. They must be explained in such a way that another independent researcher can repeat them and see if they will get the same results. That is the test of science.

- d. **Case studies:** Before the findings, introduce the case studies where the actual research was conducted. Show the location of the buildings where the research was conducted and identify each one of them. There should be an introduction to the area and the culture of the communities. Maps of the area and a detailed maps of the locations of the case study buildings are needed.
- e. **Findings:** Findings are not presented well. Provide an introduction to the issue and data from all the techniques. Archival data must be listed. Interview data must be presented. Photographic survey results must be presented. Findings from the observations must be presented. Nothing exists.

Please list all the documents examined as archival records and say what data was taken from each. Please present the case study 01 and Case study 02 (not models) Is there a third case study? Confusing. Bring all the four images of a single case study into one page. Explain the house. Show the location. Provide data related to each house. Currently, only some images exist. This is not acceptable.

Then it presents the Table 3: Typical Models of Mbari Houses at different era, with source listed as author. This is not correct. Where did this information come from? Which research method produced this data? Author could not have known this by herself.

Fig. 12 shows a plan of Owerri, Amafor Okama Mbari House, where did this information come from? Is this another case study? Which research method? This is claimed to be related to the basic architectural composition of a typical Mbari house. This section has good material. However, it is written as an essay. Please acknowledge the sources of information extensively. It is written as if the author knows everything by himself. Two sources are constantly mentioned: (Cole, 1982) and (Dmochowski, 1990). Are these coming from archival research? Please declare these at the beginning of the discussion.

Analysis of the cultural aspects of the architectural components of the Mbari houses is done well. However, it is not clear as to how this was created or what they mean. First of all, it says "of an Mbari House" This is grammatically wrong but implies a house. This is confusing. In the Table 4 process and product characteristics are listed. However, where did this information come from? Which research method revealed the process?

Many items are not clear.

It lists for both the process and the product as follows.

Cultural relevance Cultural relevance (what does this mean?)

Local material - (How is material related to process and not the product?)

Local construction technique - Unclear what this means. Who put these in to these columns? On what basis?

Table 5 is also problematic.

Vernacular architecture has no designers by definition. However, it lists "Intention and purpose of Designers" as a process attribute.

Attributes do not make sense.

Mathematical analysis makes sense.

- f. **Discussion:** There is no discussion presenting the findings of this research comparing them with other research that may have examined the same issue. It should discuss the findings and their similarity or difference with other research and if different explain why
- g. **Conclusions:** Conclusions are problematic. Very poor. Conclusions must be related to the three objectives. Please list those attributes of Mbari houses as the conclusions and show what are the cultural relevance of the elements. This is what is claimed that this research will achieve.

Please respond to the aims and objectives of the research in specific terms.

Finally, discuss the strengths and weaknesses of this research.

References: References are not done well. Issues exist. Year must be within brackets. When there is more than one name, there should be '&' before the last name but no comma after the initials before that. No comma after the last initial of the last author too. Some of the page numbers are missing. Books require the place of publication and the publisher. Some references are incomplete without the places of publications. Do not use Vol. and pp. Pay attention to details and be consistent. Use the Harvard system as per the template. Follow the template to the last dot.

Final Decision: Major Revisions

Summary of the overall observations of the paper:

This is a potentially very valuable paper that could make a significant contribution to knowledge about the cultural meanings and values as expressed in the Mbari houses in the buildings in Nigeria. However, it needs major revisions to bring the argument to be cohesive supported by clear findings.

The abstract needs to be succinct but must have sufficient details to introduce the issue, the research methods and the specific conclusions, it is not written well; introduction, research methods as well as the conclusions are problematic. It should be succinct but must also have sufficient details.

Introduction needs to be presented articulating the issue. It should end with proper aims and objectives in keeping with the issue.

Introduce a proper theoretical framework using citations to major research defining the critical concepts such as 'culture', "cultural expressions" as well as 'symbolism' and other significant theoretical concepts establishing their relationships. Write a proper review of literature afterwards: do not refer to research related only to Mbari houses. Review the previous research related to this issue (not the Mbari houses only) to demonstrate the status of current knowledge and where the gaps of that knowledge exist. The research methodology must be organized well with the list of techniques employed to gather data and explanations of how each was carried out. Introduce the case study area and the case studies afterwards including the locations of the case study buildings. Present the detailed findings from each of the techniques and not just selected data for the 'objectives' as has been done. Many techniques have been mentioned but there are no findings.

A discussion should present the findings and discuss the similarities and differences of the findings with other research examining the same issue.

Finally, present only the specific conclusions arising from the findings substantiated by evidence presented under the sub title 'findings.' Conclusions must be derived and substantiated by data presented under the sub title 'Findings.' Be specific and relate to the objectives.

Re-examine and reproduce the references to be complete and compatible with the ISVS e-journal template.