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Factors Contributing to the Decline of Traditional Architectural Forms and Spaces in Ogoni Communities

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Abstract- ***The traditional architectural forms and spaces of Ogoni communities embody the cultural identity, social organization, and environmental adaptation of the people. However, these indigenous architectural traditions are increasingly being transformed by modernization and changing socio-economic conditions. This study assessed the factors contributing to the decline of traditional architectural forms and spaces in selected Ogoni communities of Rivers State, Nigeria. A mixed-methods research design was adopted, combining quantitative and qualitative approaches. Data were collected from 384 household heads using structured questionnaires, complemented by semi-structured interviews with traditional rulers, community elders, architects, and cultural heritage experts, as well as field observations and photographic documentation. Quantitative data were analysed using descriptive statistics and the Relative Importance Index (RII), while qualitative data were analysed thematically. The findings revealed that the availability of modern construction materials (Mean = 4.44; RII = 0.89), intergenerational preference for modern housing (Mean = 4.35; RII = 0.87), the desire for social status (Mean = 4.32; RII = 0.86), environmental challenges (Mean = 4.31; RII = 0.86), and urban migration (Mean = 4.27; RII = 0.85) were the most significant factors driving the decline of traditional architecture. Qualitative evidence further showed that modernization, Western cultural influence, and limited institutional support have encouraged the replacement of indigenous buildings with contemporary structures. Nevertheless, traditional communal spaces are increasingly being adapted into hybrid architectural forms that preserve their social functions while incorporating modern materials. The study concludes that the transformation of Ogoni architecture represents an adaptation to contemporary realities rather than a complete abandonment of indigenous traditions. It recommends strengthening heritage conservation policies, promoting the use of indigenous architectural principles in contemporary design, supporting traditional artisans, and increasing community awareness to ensure the preservation of Ogoni architectural heritage.***

Keywords: Traditional Architecture, Cultural Heritage, Modernization, Architectural Transformation, Ogoni Communities

I. INTRODUCTION

In architectural discourse, forms refer to the physical structures and appearances of buildings. These forms embody both function and symbolism, reflecting identity and social organization (Lawrence & Low, 1990). Within Ogoni communities, forms encompass family compounds, shrines, and communal halls, each of which carries embedded cultural values. Spaces are defined as the arrangements of built and unbuilt environments that facilitate human interaction. These spaces range from domestic courtyards to sacred areas and communal gathering grounds, often reflecting social hierarchies and cosmological beliefs (Ettang, 2018). Meanings denote the symbolic interpretations and cultural values attached to forms and spaces, reinforcing identity, belonging, and continuity (Woolley, 2015).

The traditional architectural forms and spaces of indigenous communities are integral to their cultural, historical, and socio-economic identity. For the Ogoni people, an ethnic group predominantly found in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria, their architectural styles have long been a reflection of their cultural values, beliefs, and community structures. Traditionally, Ogoni dwellings were constructed using locally sourced materials such as thatch, wood, mud, and palm fronds. These structures not only served functional roles but also embodied the communal living and spiritual practices central to the Ogoni way of life (Eke & Aniefiok, 2020).

The Ogoni people of Rivers State possess a rich cultural heritage, traditional governance structures, and a strong connection to land and ecology. Ogoni

architecture reflects kinship systems, spirituality, and ecological adaptation (Boele, Fabig & Wheeler, 2001). Built forms and spaces transmit cultural values and reinforce patterns of kinship, gender roles, and communal identity (Ettang, 2018). Compounds, communal spaces, and shrines embody ancestral reverence and cosmological understanding (Woolley, 2015). The use of traditional building materials such as mud, raffia, and thatch demonstrate adaptation to the local environment and supports cultural sustainability (Nwankwo, 2016). Scholars have similarly highlighted how indigenous architecture across Nigeria embodies cultural meaning. For instance, Igala architecture reflects worldview and social stratification (Owoicho, Idakwoji, Audu & Emusa, 2024). These parallels underscore that Ogoni architecture, like other indigenous traditions, is deeply embedded in cultural landscapes

However, over the past few decades, there has been a marked decline in the use of traditional architectural forms and spaces in Ogoni communities. This decline can be attributed to a variety of factors, including the impact of urbanization, industrialization, and the widespread adoption of Western architectural styles (Okeke, 2017). The growing dominance of modern construction materials such as concrete, steel, and glass has shifted the focus towards more standardized building designs, often neglecting the aesthetic and cultural significance of traditional architecture (Duru, 2019).

Moreover, socio-political and economic challenges, including the effects of oil exploration and environmental degradation in the Niger Delta region, have exacerbated the erosion of traditional practices (Adeleke & Dike, 2018). The extraction of oil has led to environmental destruction, which has further displaced communities and eroded the cultural and architectural heritage of the Ogoni people (Ijomah, 2017). Additionally, the migration of younger generations to urban areas for educational and economic opportunities has contributed to a loss of connection with traditional craftsmanship and knowledge (Nwachukwu & Ikpada, 2020).

This study aims to assess the factors contributing to the decline of traditional architectural forms and spaces in Ogoni communities. By identifying and examining these factors, this research will help inform efforts to preserve and revitalize indigenous architectural knowledge and practices. Understanding the interplay between modernity, socio-economic challenges, and cultural change is crucial for ensuring that the architectural heritage of the Ogoni people is not lost in the face of globalization and industrial development.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview of Nigerian Traditional Architectural Forms Nigeria's diverse ethnic and cultural composition is evident in the richness and variety of its traditional architectural forms. Traditional architecture in Nigeria extends beyond the construction of physical shelters to embody cultural values, spiritual beliefs, social organization, and environmental adaptation (Fadamiro, 2002; Denyer, 1978). Each ethnic group exhibits a distinct architectural heritage that encodes cosmological worldviews, kinship patterns, and environmental responses, collectively contributing to the broader corpus of African indigenous architecture. Igbo traditional architecture, for example, emphasizes the compound as a central organizing feature of social life. Igbo compounds, typically arranged around a central courtyard, are designed to accommodate extended families and reflect kinship ties, hierarchy, and gendered spaces (Nwafor, 2017). Buildings are commonly constructed with mud walls and thatched roofs, and are decorated with uli motifs that convey symbolic and aesthetic meanings (Odimuko, 2014). Shrines and sacred spaces, often located within or near compounds, reinforce spiritual connections and the community's belief system.

The Yoruba architectural tradition is distinguished by hierarchical spatial planning, reflecting the political and social organization of Yoruba society. Palaces, typically situated at the center of towns, are monumental structures featuring courtyards and elaborate decorations that symbolize authority and sacred kingship (Akinsemoyin, 2002). Residential compounds, known as agbo ile, also utilize courtyards as focal points for daily and ritual activities, underscoring the Yoruba philosophy of communalism (Falola and Genova, 2006). Ornamentation, carved doors, and symbolic motifs contribute to a rich semiotic system embedded within architectural forms.

In contrast, Hausa architecture in northern Nigeria is characterized by the use of sun-dried mud (tubali) and domed or vaulted roofing techniques. Hausa buildings, particularly in ancient cities such as Kano and Zaria, are renowned for their elaborate façade decorations, including geometric and arabesque motifs inspired by Islamic aesthetics (Prussin, 1995). City walls, mosques, and palaces exemplify a sophisticated architectural tradition that integrates indigenous building knowledge with Islamic cultural influences (Gardi, 1973). Among the Tiv people, architecture reflects a more decentralized social structure. Tiv compounds are often dispersed, with round huts (mbatim) arranged in patterns that mirror kinship relations and agricultural lifestyles (Gundu, 2011). The use of earth, wood, and thatch demonstrates ecological adaptation, while ritual spaces within compounds reinforce spiritual practices.

Ogoni architecture in the Niger Delta is closely linked to ritual and ecological contexts. Ogoni compounds are typically enclosed and organized to reflect kinship and lineage structures, with central courtyards serving as spaces for social interaction and ceremonies (Nwideeduh, 2015). Shrines dedicated to deities or ancestors are significant architectural features that reinforce the cosmological orientation of Ogoni settlements (Saro-Wiwa, 1992). The village square (bia-bii) functions as a focal point for festivals, communal meetings, and cultural performances, integrating architecture with communal identity and ritual life. Collectively, Nigerian traditional architectural forms reveal the interplay between environment, culture, and identity. Despite variations across ethnic groups, common features such as courtyards, compounds, shrines, and ornamentation reflect a shared cultural logic in which architecture serves both as functional shelter and as a symbolic repository of values (Denyer, 1978; Osasona, 2007).

Traditional Architectural Forms and Cultural Significance in Nigeria

Traditional architecture in Nigeria reflects the cultural values, environmental adaptation, and social organization of its diverse ethnic groups. Beyond providing shelter, indigenous buildings embody spiritual beliefs, kinship systems, and communal identity (Denyer, 1978; Fadamiro, 2002). Across major ethnic groups, including the Yoruba, Hausa, Igbo, Tiv, and Ogoni, architectural forms are characterized by compounds, courtyards, shrines, and communal spaces that support social interaction and cultural continuity. Although these forms vary according to ecological conditions and cultural traditions, they share a common emphasis on locally sourced materials, environmental responsiveness, and symbolic expression (Osasona, 2007).

Within Rivers State and the Niger Delta, architecture similarly reflects adaptation to diverse ecological settings. Riverine communities such as the Ijaw developed stilt houses suited to flood-prone environments, while upland groups including the Ikwerre and Ogoni organized family compounds around courtyards that served domestic, ceremonial, and governance functions (Alagoa, 2005). In Ogoni communities, compounds, shrines, village squares, and sacred groves constitute important elements of the cultural landscape, reinforcing kinship, spirituality, and communal governance.

Modernization and the Transformation of Indigenous Architecture

The transformation of indigenous architecture across Nigeria has largely been driven by colonialism, modernization, urbanization, and globalization. Colonial administration introduced Western planning concepts and construction materials that gradually displaced traditional building practices (Njoh, 2006). Following independence, modernization accelerated the adoption of cement blocks, reinforced concrete, corrugated roofing sheets, and imported architectural styles, which became symbols of progress, durability, and social status (Aradeon, 1981; Osasona, 2009).

Globalization has further influenced architectural preferences through urbanization, mass media, education, and increased exposure to international housing styles (King, 2004). Younger generations increasingly associate modern buildings with economic success, while traditional structures are often perceived as outdated. In the Niger Delta, these influences have altered settlement patterns, reduced communal living arrangements, and weakened traditional craftsmanship, although many communities continue to preserve aspects of indigenous spatial organization within contemporary housing forms.

Hybridization of Traditional and Modern Architecture
Rather than disappearing completely, indigenous architecture is increasingly undergoing hybridization, whereby traditional spatial concepts coexist with modern materials and construction technologies (Uduku, 2006). Across Nigeria, many contemporary buildings retain culturally significant features such as courtyards, compound layouts, verandas, and communal gathering spaces while incorporating cement, steel, and metal roofing (Falade, 2017).

Among the Ogoni, hybridization is evident in the replacement of mud walls and thatched roofs with cement block structures that nevertheless preserve communal layouts and symbolic spaces. Sacred structures, village squares, and compound organization continue to express cultural identity despite material transformation. This demonstrates that modernization has modified rather than completely displaced indigenous architectural traditions, reflecting an ongoing negotiation between cultural continuity and contemporary development (Comaroff & Comaroff, 2012).

Factors Contributing to the Decline of Traditional Architecture
Traditional architecture represents the accumulated knowledge of communities in responding to environmental conditions, cultural values, available resources, and socio-economic needs. It reflects indigenous building techniques, local craftsmanship, and settlement patterns that have evolved over generations to create sustainable and culturally meaningful built environments (Oliver, 1997; Rapoport, 1969). However, traditional architecture is increasingly threatened by rapid socio-economic transformation, technological advancement, environmental change, and globalization, leading to the gradual disappearance of vernacular buildings and indigenous construction knowledge.

One of the primary factors contributing to the decline of traditional architecture is urbanization and modernization. Rapid urban growth has increased the demand for contemporary housing and infrastructure, often resulting in the replacement of traditional settlements with modern developments. As communities expand and urban lifestyles become more dominant, indigenous buildings are frequently demolished or altered to accommodate new planning standards, changing household structures, and modern living requirements (Oliver, 2006). The migration of younger populations to urban centres has further accelerated the abandonment of traditional settlements, reducing opportunities for the maintenance and transmission of indigenous building knowledge.

Technological advancement and the adoption of modern construction materials have also contributed significantly to the decline of vernacular architecture. Industrial materials such as reinforced concrete, steel, cement blocks, and glass are widely perceived as more durable, cost-effective, and easier to maintain than traditional materials including earth, timber, bamboo, and thatch. Consequently, many homeowners increasingly favour modern construction techniques over indigenous building methods. While these innovations improve structural performance and construction efficiency, they often diminish local craftsmanship and reduce the application of climate-responsive design principles that characterize vernacular architecture (Douglas, 2006; Oliver, 2006).
Another significant driver is globalization and cultural homogenization. The increasing influence of global architectural styles, facilitated by mass media, international education, migration, and technological exchange, has encouraged the widespread adoption of standardized building forms. Modern architecture has increasingly become associated with prestige, economic advancement, and social status, while traditional buildings are frequently regarded as outdated or incompatible with contemporary lifestyles. This process has weakened regional architectural identity and contributed to the gradual loss of cultural diversity within the built environment (Oliver, 1997; UNESCO, 2021).

Changing socio-cultural values and lifestyles have further accelerated the decline of traditional architecture. Contemporary households increasingly prioritize privacy, convenience, and modern amenities over communal living arrangements that traditionally characterized indigenous settlements. Extended family compounds are gradually being replaced by nuclear family housing, reducing the functional relevance of traditional spatial layouts. These changing aspirations have weakened intergenerational

knowledge transfer and diminished appreciation for indigenous construction practices (Rapoport, 1969; Oliver, 2006).

Economic considerations also influence the replacement of traditional buildings. The scarcity of skilled artisans knowledgeable in indigenous construction techniques, coupled with the increasing cost of maintaining traditional structures, has made vernacular architecture less attractive to many property owners. Conversely, modern construction materials are readily available through established supply chains and often require less specialized labour, making contemporary buildings more economically appealing despite their reduced cultural significance (Douglas, 2006).

The decline of traditional architecture is further exacerbated by weak institutional support and inadequate heritage conservation policies. In many developing countries, urban development policies emphasize modernization and infrastructure expansion while giving limited attention to the conservation of vernacular settlements. Building regulations frequently favour conventional construction methods, whereas financial incentives and technical support for preserving traditional buildings remain inadequate. UNESCO (2021) emphasizes that sustainable urban development requires integrating cultural heritage conservation into planning policies to ensure that modernization does not occur at the expense of local identity and historic urban landscapes.

Environmental factors also contribute to the deterioration and eventual loss of traditional architecture. Climate change, flooding, erosion, humidity, biological decay, and natural weathering accelerate the degradation of buildings constructed with earth, timber, and other organic materials. In many cases, inadequate maintenance and the absence of adaptive reuse strategies further accelerate structural deterioration, resulting in abandonment or demolition. Douglas (2006) argues that adaptive reuse and continuous maintenance are essential strategies for prolonging the functional life of traditional buildings while preserving their cultural significance.
In West Africa, the architectural transformation associated with modernization reflects broader historical and socio-economic processes. Uduku (2006) notes that colonial planning systems and post-independence modernization introduced architectural models that increasingly displaced indigenous building traditions with internationally influenced designs. Although contemporary architecture has improved access to modern infrastructure and construction technologies, it has also contributed to the erosion of local architectural identity and traditional building knowledge.

Overall, the decline of traditional architecture is driven by the combined effects of urbanization, modernization, globalization, socio-cultural transformation, economic pressures, environmental degradation, and inadequate conservation policies. These interconnected factors continue to threaten the survival of vernacular architecture and the cultural heritage it represents. Addressing these challenges requires integrated conservation strategies that promote adaptive reuse, strengthen heritage protection policies, encourage community participation, and incorporate indigenous architectural principles into contemporary planning and sustainable development

III. METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a mixed-methods research design, combining quantitative and qualitative approaches to investigate the factors contributing to the decline of traditional architecture in Ogoni communities, Rivers State. The study was conducted across selected communities in Eleme, Gokana, Khana, and Tai Local Government Areas. Primary data were collected through structured questionnaires administered to household heads, complemented by semi-structured interviews with traditional rulers, community elders, architects, and cultural heritage experts, as well as field observations and photographic documentation of traditional buildings. A total of 384 household heads were selected using a multistage sampling technique involving the purposive selection of communities with surviving traditional architectural features, followed by stratified random sampling of respondents. Quantitative data were analysed using descriptive statistics and the Relative Importance Index (RII) in SPSS to rank the factors influencing architectural decline, while qualitative data were analysed thematically to complement and explain the survey

findings. The integration of both data sources enhanced the validity and comprehensiveness of the study (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Factors Contributing to the Decline of Traditional Architectural Forms in Ogoni Communities

This section presents an analysis of respondents' perceptions regarding the factors contributing to the decline of traditional architectural forms in Ogoni communities. The factors examined span economic pressures, urban migration, generational preferences, Western cultural influence, availability of modern construction materials, environmental challenges, government policies, and institutional support mechanisms. Using mean item scores and the Relative Importance Index (RII), the analysis evaluates the relative weight of each factor in explaining the observed shift from traditional architectural forms to contemporary building styles.

The survey responses in Table 4 indicate that multiple socio-economic, cultural, technological, environmental, and policy factors are contributing significantly to the decline of traditional architectural forms in Ogoni communities.

The statement that modern economic pressures show a moderate influence on the decline is supported by a mean score of 3.49. While 34.4% of respondents agreed and 28.9% strongly agreed with the statement that economic pressures compel families to adopt contemporary building materials, a notable portion (30.4%) disagreed. This suggests that economic considerations are relevant but may be mediated by other factors such as family priorities or resource availability.

Table 4.5: Factors Contributing to the Decline of Traditional Architectural Forms

Factors Contributing to the Decline of Traditional Architectural Forms	SA	A	U	D	SD	Mean	RII
Modern economic pressures have forced families to adopt contemporary building materials instead of traditional materials.	16 (6.3%)	77 (30.4%)	0 (0.0%)	87 (34.4%)	73 (28.9%)	3.49	0.70
Migration to urban areas has reduced the number of people maintaining traditional compound structures.	0 (0.0%)	42 (16.6%)	0 (0.0%)	100 (39.5%)	111 (43.9%)	4.27	0.85
The desire to display social status encourages the adoption of modern architectural styles over traditional ones.	0(0.0%)	24 (9.5%)	0 (0.0%)	124 (49.0%)	105 (41.5%)	4.32	0.86
Inter-generational preference for modern houses over ancestral designs contributes to the decline of traditional architecture.	0 (0.0%)	15 (5.9%)	0 (0.0%)	135 (53.4%)	103 (40.7%)	4.35	0.87
Influence of Western lifestyles has reduced interest in traditional communal compounds.	5 (2.0%)	30 (11.9%)	0 (0.0%)	112 (44.3%)	106 (41.9%)	4.12	0.82
Availability of modern construction materials (cement, metal roofing, glass windows) has replaced traditional materials like mud, thatch, and timber.	0 (0.0%)	11 (4.3%)	0 (0.0%)	120 (47.4%)	122 (48.2%)	4.44	0.89
Environmental challenges such as erosion, flooding, or soil degradation discourage the use of traditional building methods.	0 (0.0%)	19 (7.5%)	0 (0.0%)	135 (53.4%)	99 (39.1%)	4.31	0.86

Government housing policies and urban planning regulations favor modern construction over traditional forms.	14 (5.5%)	31 (12.3%)	0 (0.0%)	103 (40.7%)	105 (41.5%)	4.00	0.80
Lack of institutional support or incentives for preserving traditional architectural styles contributes to their decline.	0 (0.0%)	60 (23.7%)	0 (0.0%)	105 (41.5%)	88 (34.8%)	4.11	0.82

Source: Field Survey, 2026

The statement that migration to urban areas strongly influences the decline is reflected in a mean score of 4.27. A majority of respondents (83.4%, combining "agree" and "strongly agree") agreed that urban migration reduces the number of people who maintain traditional compounds, highlighting the impact of population movement and urbanization on the erosion of traditional building practices. The statement that the desire to display social status drives the adoption of modern architectural styles also emerged as a significant factor, with a mean score of 4.32. With 90.5% of respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing that aspirations for economic success and social prestige influence building preferences, it is evident that social visibility motivates a shift away from ancestral forms.

The statement that intergenerational preference for modern houses contributes to the decline is strongly supported, evidenced by a mean of 4.35. Over 94% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, indicating that younger generations' inclination toward contemporary designs is a key driver in the gradual disappearance of traditional architectural forms. The statement that the influence of Western lifestyles reduces interest in traditional communal compounds also shows a notable impact, with a mean of 4.12. Approximately 86% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with this statement, reflecting the penetration of global lifestyles into local architectural preferences.

The statement that availability of modern construction materials is the most influential factor is supported by a mean score of 4.44, with nearly all respondents (95.6%) agreeing or strongly agreeing. The statement that access to cement, metal roofing, and glass has replaced traditional materials such as mud, thatch, and timber clearly demonstrates a shift toward contemporary building forms. The statement that environmental challenges such as erosion, flooding, and soil degradation discourage traditional building methods was also significant, with a mean of 4.31. Over 92% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, indicating that ecological constraints directly affect the sustainability of ancestral architectural practices.

The statement that government housing policies and urban planning regulations favour modern construction showed a moderate influence, with a mean of 4.00. A combined 82.2% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, highlighting policy support for modern forms and the reduced prevalence of traditional structures. The statement that lack of institutional support or incentives contributes to the decline was similarly important, with a mean score of 4.11. Over 76% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that the absence of formal initiatives to preserve traditional architecture accelerates its decline.

The findings indicate that the decline of traditional architectural forms in Ogoni communities is complex and influenced by multiple factors. Modern construction materials, technological advancements, inter-generational preferences, socio-economic pressures, environmental challenges, and policy decisions all interact to shape this trend. Among these, the availability of modern materials, shifting generational preferences, and aspirations for social status are particularly significant. Environmental constraints and urban migration further exacerbate the decline, while limited institutional support and policy emphasis on modernization reinforce the ongoing transformation.

In summary, the findings demonstrate that Ogoni architecture is experiencing a gradual transformation, reflecting broader socio-cultural, economic, and technological shifts. These changes collectively

contribute to the erosion of traditional architectural identity.

Qualitative Findings

The findings show that socio-economic pressures have a strong impact on housing choices in Ogoni communities. Respondents said that more families now choose concrete houses because they last longer and look modern. One participant explained,

"Many families now prefer concrete houses because they last longer and are considered modern. Traditional mud houses require constant maintenance, and it is expensive to repair them frequently."

Another highlighted the role of social aspiration, stating,
"The younger generation wants to show that they are doing well financially. They build big, modern houses to demonstrate success. Traditional houses no longer carry the same social value."

These comments suggest that both financial ability and the wish to be seen by others are leading to fewer traditional houses.

Urban migration is also a major reason why traditional compounds are falling into disrepair. Respondents said that young people who move to cities for school or work rarely come back to look after family homes. One respondent noted,

"Most of our youths move to cities for work or school. They rarely return to rebuild or maintain the family compounds here. This makes the old compounds deteriorate over time."

Another added:
"When people leave for the city, they adopt what they see in urban areas. They bring back modern ideas, materials, and styles, replacing traditional designs."

This shows that migration not only takes away those who care for traditional compounds but also brings in new building styles that replace older ones.

Social status and prestige are also important reasons why people choose modern houses. Respondents said that modern homes are seen as signs of success and respect in the community. One participant stated,

"Modern houses are seen as a sign of prestige. Families want their homes to impress visitors and neighbours. Traditional compounds are now viewed as old-fashioned."

Another commented,
"Even if the family has enough land, they choose modern styles because they want to compete socially. Everyone wants to be seen as 'up-to-date."

These comments show that wanting social recognition leads people to prefer modern housing.

Intergenerational differences also play a role in the decline of traditional architecture. Respondents pointed out that younger people see mud and thatch houses as uncomfortable and old-fashioned. One remarked,

"People don't like living in mud or thatch houses. They feel it is uncomfortable and not modern. Most prefer cement houses with metal roofs and modern designs."

Another stated,
"Some older people still prefer traditional compounds because of the cultural significance, but the young ones are not interested. They associate tradition with poverty or backwardness."

These insights show that younger generations are moving away from traditional housing styles.

Western culture also shapes how people in Ogoni choose their homes. Respondents noticed that seeing modern homes in the media changes what people want locally. One participant explained,

"Western lifestyles emphasize privacy and large, separated rooms. This is different from our traditional open compounds where everyone interacts. Now people want houses that reflect those Western ideas."

These comments show that global lifestyles are now influencing local building styles.

The easy access to modern building materials and technology is another big factor. Respondents said materials like cement, metal roofing, and glass are convenient, last long, and are easy to get. One participant stated,

"Materials like cement, metal roofing, and glass are easy to use and widely available. Builders prefer them because they are durable and require less maintenance."

Another added,
"It is almost impossible to find skilled artisans for traditional mud or thatch construction. Modern materials have replaced them naturally."

These stories suggest that new technology and materials make it easier for people to choose modern architecture.

Environmental factors also affect the decline of traditional buildings. Respondents pointed out risks like erosion, flooding, and unstable soil. One participant explained,

"Yes, erosion and flooding make mud houses risky. Cement houses are safer and can withstand heavy rains. People avoid traditional structures because of these risks."

Another noted,
"Soil in some areas is no longer suitable for mud foundations. It's easier to build with concrete than try to maintain old methods."

These comments confirm that environmental problems directly impact how long traditional building methods can last.

Finally, government policies and support also shape how people build their homes. Respondents said that urban planning laws and the lack of incentives are causing traditional architecture to decline. One participant remarked,

"Urban planning laws often require concrete structures for safety. There are no incentives to preserve traditional compounds."

Another added,
"If the government supported traditional building styles or trained artisans, more people might maintain them. Right now, there is no encouragement."

These insights show that gaps in policy and limited support from institutions are speeding up the move to modern housing.

The images in Plate 4.4 provide empirical evidence of the transformation of traditional Ogoni communal spaces resulting from modernization and changing social practices. The photographs and architectural layout illustrate a shift from the traditional open square, where chiefs, elders, and community members gathered under a tree for meetings and decision-making, to a more formalized community facility comprising an enclosed hall and supporting rooms. This physical transformation reflects the changes identified in the survey responses regarding the gradual modification of traditional spatial arrangements while retaining their communal functions.

Traditionally, the open square served as the symbolic and functional centre of community life. The large open area, often shaded by a tree, provided a natural setting where elders addressed community members, disputes were resolved, cultural discussions were held, and collective decisions were made. The space encouraged direct interaction and reinforced the traditional values of openness, equality, and communal participation. However, the contemporary structure shown in the plate demonstrates how modernization has introduced new architectural responses to these same social needs.

The newly constructed hall represents an adaptation of the traditional gathering space rather than a complete replacement of its cultural function. The floor plan shows a large open hall designed for community meetings, supported by office spaces that provide administrative functions. This indicates a transition from informal leadership spaces under trees to more organized institutional spaces where chiefs, elders, and community representatives can address residents in a controlled and structured environment. The arrangement suggests the incorporation of modern

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expectations of comfort, privacy, record keeping, and formal community administration.

The images therefore corroborate the survey findings that traditional Ogoni architecture is experiencing a shift from purely indigenous spatial forms towards hybrid architectural expressions that combine cultural continuity with modern requirements. Although the physical appearance of the space has changed, its underlying purpose remains consistent: providing a central location for community engagement, leadership communication, and collective decision-making. The transformation demonstrates that modernization has altered the form of communal spaces while preserving their social meaning and importance within Ogoni society.

Plate 4.1: Open Town Square

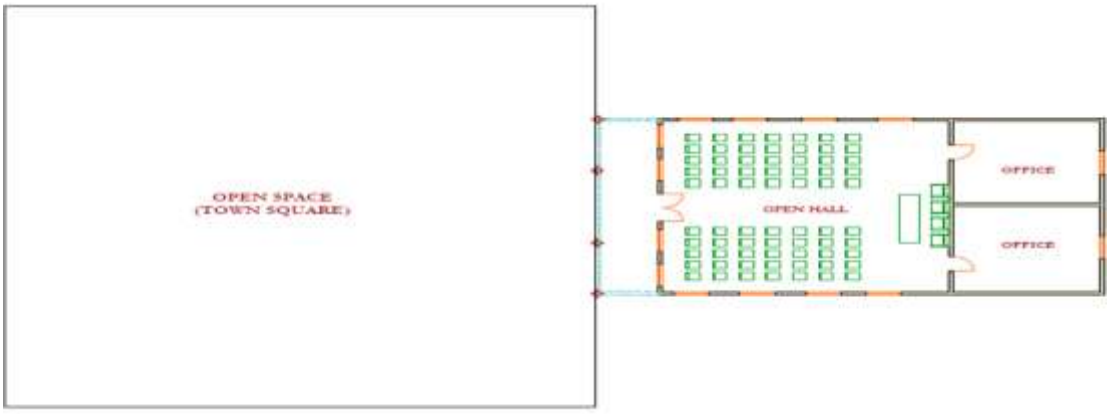

Plate 4.8: A modern Square (Floor Plan)

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Plate 4.9: Elevation to the Floor plan

The pictorial evidence in Plate 4.10 below also provides visual corroboration of the quantitative findings obtained from the Likert-scale questionnaire on distinctive architectural forms and cultural values in Ogoni communities. While respondents strongly agreed that traditional Ogoni architecture is characterized by distinctive features such as central courtyards, indigenous materials, symbolic motifs, and communal spatial organization, the visual data reveal an ongoing transformation shaped by modernization.

V. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The findings indicate that the decline of traditional architectural forms in Ogoni communities is driven by interconnected socio-cultural, technological, environmental, and institutional factors. The most influential factors were the availability of modern construction materials, changing generational preferences, the pursuit of social status, environmental challenges, and urban migration. The qualitative findings support the survey results by showing that modernization has reshaped housing preferences and building practices. The availability of modern construction materials emerged as the strongest factor influencing the decline of traditional architecture. Respondents noted that materials such as cement, concrete, and metal roofing are more durable, readily available, and require less maintenance than traditional materials. This finding supports Oliver (2006), who argued that technological advancement has accelerated the replacement of vernacular building methods.

Intergenerational preference for modern housing and the desire for social status also significantly contribute to the transformation of Ogoni architecture. Younger generations increasingly associate modern houses with progress and prestige, while traditional buildings are often viewed as outdated. This agrees with Rapoport (1969) and Asquith and Vellinga (2006), who observed that changing cultural values and globalization influence housing preferences and architectural identity. Environmental challenges and urban migration further accelerate the decline of traditional forms. Respondents explained that flooding, erosion, and poor soil conditions make traditional construction less sustainable, while migration reduces the number of people maintaining ancestral compounds and introduces urban architectural styles into rural communities. These findings are consistent with Oliver (2006) and Njoh (2006), who identified environmental change and urbanization as major drivers of the decline of indigenous architecture.

The influence of Western lifestyles, limited institutional support, and government housing policies also contributed to the decline, suggesting that modernization is reinforced by changing cultural values and policy environments that favour contemporary construction. Although economic pressure recorded the lowest influence, it remains a contributing factor when combined with broader technological and social changes. The qualitative evidence and visual observations further show that traditional communal spaces are not disappearing entirely but are being adapted into modern forms that

retain their social functions. This suggests that Ogoni architecture is undergoing a process of transformation rather than complete abandonment, with indigenous cultural values increasingly expressed through hybrid architectural forms.

VI. CONCLUSION

The study concludes that the decline of traditional architectural forms and spaces in Ogoni communities is the result of multiple interconnected socio-cultural, technological, environmental, economic, and institutional factors rather than a single cause. The widespread availability of modern construction materials, changing preferences among younger generations, the desire for social prestige, urban migration, environmental challenges, and policy frameworks that favour contemporary construction have collectively accelerated the replacement of indigenous architectural forms. Although economic pressures contribute to this transformation, they are less influential than technological change and evolving cultural aspirations. The qualitative findings further demonstrate that traditional compounds and communal spaces are not disappearing entirely but are being reinterpreted through hybrid architectural forms that combine modern materials with selected indigenous spatial concepts. This suggests that the transformation of Ogoni architecture reflects an adaptation to contemporary social and environmental realities rather than a complete rejection of cultural identity. However, the continued loss of traditional building techniques, indigenous materials, and ancestral spatial arrangements poses a significant threat to the preservation of Ogoni cultural heritage. The study therefore emphasizes the need to integrate indigenous architectural principles into contemporary design, strengthen heritage conservation policies, support traditional artisans, and promote community awareness of the cultural significance of Ogoni architecture. Such measures will help ensure that modernization and development proceed without eroding the architectural identity, historical continuity, and cultural values embedded in the traditional built environment of Ogoni communities.

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