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Colonialism Induced Changes in the Aesthetics of Domestic Buildings in Yorubaland

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Abstract: Ornamentation and architectural elements on buildings are significant components of urbanization, doubling as sources of beauty in the cities. They however went through rapid changes with advent of colonization, the ensuing introduction of foreign aesthetic features and technologies to buildings, leading to the abandonment of indigenous forms. This paper takes readers through the changes in the aesthetics of domestic buildings, with colonization. It uses Ibadan and Osogbo: two of the longstanding regional administrative capitals in Western Nigeria, and citieswhich provide good contrast in research, for their exposure to global trends and interesting experiences with Europeans during the colonial era. The paper concludes that although the colonial induced architectural elements and ornamentation eroded many of the traditional practices, they tremendously improved the home grow aesthetics. They expanded the locations of ornamentation in buildings and enhanced the urban fabric in general.

Keywords: Colonialism, Changes, Aesthetics, Ornamentation, Domestic Buildings.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Aesthetics are the qualities that elate the mind and make things appeal to peoples' senses of beauty, resulting in pleasurable sensations. Advances in the embellishment of buildings and the locations of ornamentation are part of the indexes of urbanization. It is also an important aspect of the Yoruba cultural heritage that had been in existence since the time immemorial, but with significant changes induced by colonization.

The Study Area

Ibadan the first study area is an intersection town that started as a military camp for warriors from Ife, Ijebu and Oyo in 1829, and also refuges from the jihad war of 1830, (Okpako and Amole, 2005:72; Olaniyan (2000:1). Its link with many other Yoruba towns, aided the influx of people and the rapid expansion of the city. Udo (1994), cited in Olaniyan (2000:1-2) records that Ibadan from its inception at about 1829, became the largest urban centre in Nigeria. This as well as its accessibility to Lagos (the Nigerian colonial headquarters at the period), made it a suitable place for the European missionaries' evangelism as far back as the mid19th century. It was thus one of the earliest Nigerian cities to have the presence of the expatriates. The size of the city as well as its rapid growth in turn attracted the European administrators, which further aided its emergence as the headquarter of the Western province in 1946. This facilitated migration of expatriates, and increased the number of government buildings.

Osogbo is however relevant to this study, because it had been a significant economic, cultural and artistic centre since the pre-colonial days, which aided the richness as well as the varied nature of ornamentations in the town. The establishment of colonial administration in the town in 1905 also attracted administrative staff of all grades (Beier, 1960:61), as well as European artists and anthropologists like UlliBeier and Suzanne Wenger. The presence of these people facilitated foreign influences, which resulted in changes in the forms of ornamentation in the city, from where such changes spread to other parts of Yorubaland.

Research Methodology

Data were collected through both primary and secondary sources. The primary data were obtained through purposive physical survey of the intermediate zone of Osogbo. This are areas with colonization induced ornamentation, such as Sabo, Kola-Balogun, Ayetoro, Fagbewesa, Egbatedo, Alekuwodo, part of Odiolowo, and Popo, that developed between 1960 and 1975 (Egúnjobí, 1995; Okpako and Àmòlé, 2012). It also looked at

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areas with noticeable substantial colonial influence in Ibadan such as Kudeti, Yemetu, Mapo, Dugbe, Agodi, Jericho, Bodija, the University of Ibadan campus and the University College Hospital (U.C.H.). The forms which were generated through snowballing were purposively elicited.

II. AESTHETIC OF YORUBA BUILDINGS DURING THE PRE-COLONIAL ERA

Yoruba houses consisted of rectilinear single floor houses roofed with thatched leaves during the pre-colonial era (Osasona 2005:23-26). Fadipe (1970:98) establishes that rooms in the Yoruba domestic buildings had no windows prior to the European advent, to prevent heat, while ensuring privacy and security. Previous studies established that prior to the advent of colonial rule, ornamentations were the prerogatives of the gods and a status symbol bestowed on kings, thus wall embellishment were only found in shrines and palaces (Johnson, 1921:99); Lawal, 1974:314; and Aradeon, 1984:5). During this period, the Kings were the richest in Yoruba towns, with the most beautiful abodes, as the citizens and subordinated towns paid taxes and tributes to them. The kings also had control of all things in theirdomainand power to command the citizens to render services to them at no cost. This is in line with the belief that kings have the right to all things and people in their domains (*Oba balori on gbogbo*). Ojo (1966:156) emphasizes that ornamentation of houses by commoners in the pre-colonial era was seen as a rivalry and an insult to the rulers, stating how an artist who had his house ornamented in Oyo, was made to clean the decoration and do same on the palace wall. It could be deduced that only domestic houses owned by high chiefs used to be embellished in Yorubaland, though not as elaborately as the Oba's palace, while ornamentation of residential buildings was not extended to commoners.

III. MODERNISM INDUCED CHANGES IN THE AESTHETICS OF YORUBA DOMESTIC BUILDINGS

The main factor responsible for the changes in the aesthetics of Yoruba domestic buildings was the arrival of the early Europeans, comprising of the early Christian missionaries and Colonizers.

a. Influence of the Early Christian Missionaries on the Aesthetics of Yoruba Domestic Buildings

The Scramble for Africa by Europeans in pursuant of trade interests following the industrialization of European nations in the 18th century led to the exploration of Africa. With the settlement of the merchants came the Christian missionaries (Grenville and Fuller, 1962:33-45). The expansion of the aesthetics of buildings in Ibadan, Osogbo and many other Nigerian cities started with efforts of the early Christian missionaries between the early and the mid-19th century, more than a decade before the settlement of the colonial administrators. Fabunmi, (1970:7) however started that Christianity in Nigeria around 1472, and got to Ile-Ife in the first contact, before they were said to be chased away, later to resurfaced in 1843. The first sets of houses built by the expatriates in Yorubaland were churches, mission houses and schools, pioneered by the C.M.S. Abeokuta in 1842 and St David's Church, Ibadan in 1851 (Ojo, 1966:147; Oláòsebìkan, 2000:352). The first Christian missionary from the Church Missionary Society (C.M.S) is however documented to have arrived in Osogbo in the late 1851, during the reign of AtaojaFabode (Ajibade, 2002:126). The pioneer school in Osogbo was the All Saints School, built by the Church Missionary Society (C.M.S.) in 1905 (Fatade, 2000:10).Olasebikan (2000:352) corroborated by Burton (1860:73), documented that the Kudeti church was built of earth with thatched roof in the indigenous style, attributing the change of roofing materials to importation of forms at the time, and the need to reduce fire incidences (Ojo, 1966:152).

TheKudeti's second and new church with zinc roof was recorded to have been built in May 1854 (Olaosebikan, 2000:344). It was said to be in granite joined with cement mortal, leaving a natural texture in affinity with the first of such in Nigeria, built by Rev Henry Townsend in Abeokuta in 1842 (Ojo, 1966:147 and Olaosebikan, 2000:352). From then on, granite became the standard for building cathedrals, with the windows and main entrances vaulted or arched in Gothic or Romanesque styles. Erection of structure in stone was extended to many of the schools established between 1905 and 1929 (Adeoti, 2000:350-352), before it later spread to domestic buildings (Plate 1). The missionaries also discouraged the indigenous carved flushed wooden doors with images were alongside carved pillars as part of their iconoclasm, as they were seen as idolatrous.

b. Colonialism Incited Aesthetic Features in Domestic Buildings

Despite the early European traders and missionaries visitations on trade and religious missions since the 15th century, the colonialists only settled in Yorubaland in the 1800s (Obateru (2003:87). The study recalls the appointment of John Beecroft as a British consulate in 1847, marking the beginning of British influence and control over Yorubaland. Lagos became the colony of Britain in 1861, while Ibadan came under the British protectorate in 1893 (Olaniyan 2000:2). Colonization ushered in remarkable

changes in the governance, economic and the socio-cultural structure of many Yoruba towns, which led to the influx of new philosophical ideals and standards of judgment, hence modernism.

It is noteworthy that prior to the advent of colonial rule, ornamentations were the prerogatives of the gods and a status symbol bestowed on the kings, thus wall ornamentation were only found on shrines and palaces (Johnson, 1921:99; Lawal, 1974:314; and Aradeon, 1984:5). During this period, the Kings were the richest in Yoruba towns, with the most beautiful abodes, as the citizens and subordinated towns paid taxes and tributes to them. The kings also had control all of things in theirdomainand power to command the citizens to render services to them at no cost. This is in line with the belief that kings have the right to all things and people in their domains (*Oba balori on gbogbo*). Ojo (1966:156) emphasizes that ornamentation of houses by commoners in the pre-colonial era was seen as a rivalry and an insult to the rulers, stating how an artist who had his house decorated in Oyo, was made to clean the adornment and do same on the palace wall. It could be deduced that only domestic houses owned by high chiefs used to be embellished in Yorubaland, though not as elaborately as the Oba's palace, while the act was not extended to commoners.

Keays and Thomas (1965:122) observes that with the colonists usurping of the sovereignty of the kings sphere of influence, taxes went to the colonial government, who only authorized percentages as fixed salaries to the kings. This drastically reduced the power and wealth of the kings, and their monopoly of tastefully decorated traditional buildings. The colonists further humiliated, intimidated, and demoralized the kings by their high handedness and disrespect for the tradition, locking up, dethroning and publicly beating defiant kings (Ajayi, 2000:71-76). An example was the Aseyin of Iseyin, recorded by Aje (1984:8) to have been slapped, before being ordered by the colonial powers to be whipped publicly. Ojo (1966:69) however affirms 1858 as the beginning of the change of order, which started with forceful stoppage of the killing of the Yoruba kings' aids (*Abobaku*), after the demise of the Obas.

The elaborate ornamentation of walls and other parts of the domestic buildings was only possible after the undermining of the royal privileges and the associated removal of the concession of the rulers by the Europeans at the launch of the colonial rule. The ordinances made by the colonialist in 1914, finally sealed the compliance with the new set of rules, forcing power out of the kings. This however resulted in a great liberty in art and architecture, marking the beginning of the use of forms which were earlier reserves of the palaces and shrines, in residences of the rich masses.

In a twist, with colonization, economic superiority and class distinction changed from potentates to one time commoners, who from Lander (1830) account were merchants or ordinary men who became government hems men. Wealthy cocoa farmers later joined the prosperous rank, when the foreign crop became the one of the major commodities for export trade Okpako and Amole (2005:72). Only these people could afford to erect buildings with outstanding ornamentation and modern aesthetic features at the time. However, many of the expressively ornamented buildings in Ibadan and Osogbo at the early colonial era, belonged to high Chiefs, and wereall observed from the dates inscribed on their portals and facades to have been erected between 1935 and 1949. The colonial induced changes to the aesthetics of buildings are discussed below:

1. Replacement of Mud Walls with Adobe Sun Dried Bricks

Wet mud used in building walls during the pre-colonial period was replaced by the Europeans with evenly arranged adobe sun dried bricks joined with clay and grasses. Since the bricks are smoother and did not give way easily to dilapidations, they made possible even walls as decorative surfaces, instead of the undulating mud walls.

2. Introduction of Windows

Windows were introduced to buildings in the early colonial era. The early windows were documented to be small and placed very high up in buildings, close to the ceiling, a style still found in some buildings in the traditional areas of Ibadan, Osogbo and other Yoruba towns. Colonization however, ushered in a wide variation of large hinged windows, from the shuttered casement types to sash, jalousie, and sliding windows, both with glasses and wooden frames.

3. Introduction of Light Wooden Doors with Metal Hinges, Jambs and Glass Casement Doors

Europeans ushered in carved door with designed jambs (carved wooden frames, and metal hinged doors in assembled light wood ((*ilekunalugbagba*, in replacement of the abogunde type. After this came the prefabricated glass casement doors with metallic frames.

4. Corrugated Iron Sheets

Colonizers also brought in corrugated iron sheets with uniform linear decorative furors, in replacement of thatched roofs, giving domestic houses magnificent repetitive linear caps. The colonial induced roofs were moreover high pitched in replacement of the traditional circular design. This Osasonaand Hyland (2006:50) attributed to heat reduction. The hipped roofs (which were later made shallow), were between the 1920s and early 1950s fixed with dormers windows (a small window set on a sloping roof), as ornaments (Plate 2). Wavy textured slates were later introduced to special colonial buildings, with their serrated roofs held by rectangular pillars, which were introduced in replacement of the carved pillars that had been faulted by the early Europeans missionaries as idolatrous. This phase marked the beginning the use of the roof as an aesthetic surface.

5. Introduction of Cement

Permanence of structures was however achieved with the introduction of cement and concrete plastering to the Nigerian building scene. Cement also made more permanent and easier the execution of existing wall embossments in Yoruba culture with new inlaid and relief designs added. The introduction of cement by the Europeans further expanded the scope of ornamentation of buildings by enabling designed prefabricated blocks and concrete balustrades in assorted decorated designs, which further improved the aesthetics of buildings, while aiding ventilation and visibility (Plate 3).

6. Chimneys and Parapet Walls

Chimneys (or built-in roof top mantel pieces) were added as aesthetic elements to buildings of elites and the well offs, mimetic of the European culture of warming building with fire in extreme cold weathers (Plate 3). Buildings were also later decorated with paraphets (moulded ornamentation that projects from the top of buildings), which served as locations for decorative balustrades. An example is Chief Thomas Ajani's building, at No. 32 Egbatedo Street, Osogbo combining the use of parapet and chimney on its third floor (Plate 3).

7. Introduction of Double Floor Buildings

The Europeans also introduced double floor (one storey) buildings. The first in Ibadan was noted to be the Kudeti church (Makinde, 2012:40), in affinity with the one built by Henry Townsend in Marina road, Badagry, in 1842. The early storey buildings were initially without balconies, and the aesthetic features were the window types, their sizes and the placement arrangements.

8. Introduction of Corbels, Wooden Balustrades and Staircases

Later, windows were fixed with ornamental top covers, which were either in wooden form or a variety of aesthetically pleasing concrete corbels doubling as sun protectors. Wooden balustrades and staircases were later introduced in the 1920s, giving room for embellishment with turned wood, wood serrations (Plate 2), and open work wooden balusters, which were the earliest materials for balustrades. From this time storey buildings became emblems of success and social prestige.

9. Cement facilitated Aesthetics

Permanence of structures was however achieved with the introduction of cement and concrete plastering to the Nigerian building scene. Cement also made more permanent and easier the execution of existing wall embossments in Yoruba culture with new inlaid and relief designs added (Plate 4), as well as designed boundary demarcators (Plate 5). The introduction of cement by the Europeans further expanded the scope of beautification of buildings by enabling designed pre-fabricated blocks and concrete balustrades in assorted decorated designs, which further improved the aesthetics of buildings, while aiding ventilation and visibility.

10. Decorated Pediments, Cornices Arches and Pillars

The town council building popularly known as Mapo hall was a significant building erected by the colonial administrators in Ibadan, between 1925 and 1929. It is a massive and magnificent high rise building with impressive columns fashioned after the Greek Pantheon Acropolis. Apart from the striking columns, the aesthetic forms in the building include decorated pediments, cornices, and rows of reinforced concrete balustrades (Plate 6). Further embellishing it are imposing arched doors and windows with large skylight windows, bordered with embossed cubic motifs arranged in circular order. The front approach view are made aesthetically pleasing by layers of steps ending in a pair of spectacular monumental cement cast lions, in resting positions. Mapo hall has a tremendous influence on the aesthetic forms of domestic buildings in the city and environs. It is the pioneer in erection of monumental cement

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sculptures, reinforced concrete balustrades, ornamented pediments, colonial pillars, arches and multiple arched verandahs in buildings in the hinterland.

11. Introduction of Colonial Concrete Pillars

Many of the early colonial buildings were held with wooden pillars in the indigenous style. However the wooden pillars seen in building nowadays re not carved, probably because carvings were reserves of monarchs in the past, or because of the unpopularity of carvings by the time the buildings were erected, as wood carving had been faulted by the early European missionaries as idolatrous, The Europeans later introduced rectangular cast concrete pillars. The early rectangular concrete pillars were also utilized as spaces for ornamentation.

12. Introduction of Triple Floor Buildings

Related to the initiation of storey buildings was the double storied (triple floors) building, pioneered in 1845 by Petesi Andrew, built by Reverend Andrew Gollmer at No. 95 Odun-Ifa Street, IsaleEko, Lagos (Folami, 1982:13). It influenced the erection of several other replicas for aesthetic purposes in Lagos, Ibadan and other cities in the hinterland. Another of influential structure to the aesthetics of domestic buildings was Bower's tower, a 60 feet high and 11 feet square historical monument on Oke-Are in Sapati, Ibadan. This structure erected in 1936 has 45 double spiral staircases and 39 revolving steps inside. It was named after Captain Lister Bower, the first resident officer in Ibadan, who forced the Ibadan warlords to bow to the forced colonial rule. The spiral staircases inspires the structure's popular name 'Layipo', which Ajayi (2000:77) translates as 'honour turned round' in memory of men of honour and valour who turned round to become subordinates to foreign colonists

The design of the tower is also said to be metaphorical of the diplomatic maneuverings and unpredictability of the Oyo-Ibadan people. This is reflected in the saying 'Oyo sun s'ile, inu re lo'so' meaning if a typical indigene is seen sleeping, his actual position cannot be ascertained, as he could actually be sitting. It also informs the excerpt: 'Ibadan lo mo, oomoLayipo', (meaning: knowing Ibadan city is incomplete without the knowledge of the diplomatic guile of the people). Bowers tower must have inspired the use of spiral staircases in the storied buildings later.

Some of the early domestic buildings with outstanding ornamentation in Ibadan were asserted to be designed and supervised by foreign architects. Examples are AsipaAdebisi's building, a massive and magnificent domestic building at Idikan,Agbaje's buildingat Ayeye, Ibadan, as well as Chiefs Adeyemo and AbassAleshinloye's buildings, affirmed to be supervised by Carew, an expatriate building engineer at the early colonial period (Pa BashiruAdebisi oral com). These building were so unrivaled, that they incited a popular saying in Ibadan that: waiting till one is able to build matchless houses like that of Adebisi at Idikan or that of Agbaje at Ayeye is unwillingness to build at all. (Ai niilekoniki a ni a fekoiruileAdebisiidikantabitiAgbajeniAyeye.

13. Introduction Multi-floors Buildings

Alli (1993:20) notes the introduction multi-floors buildings and skyscrapers in the reigning European international style, by expatriate architects in the late colonial era and the 1960s. The style was known for its exclusion of all forms of decorations from buildings, leaving only those with additional functions such as glass windows and prefabricated blocks as aesthetic features. The University of Ibadan and University College hospital (U.C.H.) buildings utilized perforated blocks to advantage for beautification with addition of murals and artistic forms. The most impressive of the skyscrapers at the early times was the cocoa house built in Dugbe in 1965, and regarded as the tallest building in West Africa at the time.

14. Introduction of Synthetic Paints

Buildings improved further with the introduction of synthetic paints, which also came in variety of hues, encouraging highlighting of vital areas of buildings for aesthetics. Synthetic paints further made possible execution of murals in a wider variety of colours than the pre-colonial era.

15. Facilitation of Ornamentations of Domestic Buildings

Colonization facilitated the introduction of lots of new materials and forms into the ornamentation of buildings. Many of the colonially induced forms are physical additions put into place for functional purposes, with their arrangement or styles of execution directly or indirectly enhancing the buildings, making them to be breath taking. The aesthetic features of the government buildings and buildings of privileged Nigerian top civil servants became imitated in the domestic buildings erected from 1914 upwards, because of the link with modernity, wealth and social class. There were therefore changes in the ornamentation of the buildings, the locations of the ornamentations, as well as materials used for

embellishing buildings. The hipped roofs (which were later made shallow), were between the 1930s and 1950s fixed with dormers windows (a small window set on a sloping roof), as ornaments.

16. Introduction of Motifs and Imagery

The expatriates introduced a wide range of imagery to the existing forms during the colonial era, which were further helped by establishment of formal art schools as well as informal training in art, such as the 1962 organized Mbariworkshop in Ibadan, and later the Mbabi-Mbayo workshop in Osogbo. Late Susanne Wenger, a nationalized Australian artist, in conjunction with the Mbari-Mbayo workshop participants and her Sacred Art Movement in Osogbo, introduced a wide range of imagery to existing forms ornamenting buildings in 1950s, such as the wall relief in plate 4 and stucco screen in plate 5. The workshop participants, such as JimohBuraimoh, AdebisiAkanji, and AsiruOlatunde were employed in embellishing buildings with murals, metal repousse, decorative cement screen and mosaics, which spread from Osogbo to Ibadan and other parts of Nigerian. Examples can be seen in some public buildings in Osogbo and Ibadan such as the Cocoa dome (Plate 7), the radio Nigeria building, the premier Hotel Ibadan and many buildings in the University of Ibadan and Ile-Ife. Such artistic embellishments are also found in domestic buildings of many elites.

Traditional symbolic motifs such as lizards, wooden comb, crabs, snakes, fishes, mermaid, cowries, and adire motifs were replaced with icons from European culture. This generated motifs such as shields, (crusaders sign, arrows from the (British heraldry), and coats of arms (symbols of the imperial crown (Plate 8). Colonization also ushered in various floral motifs and other designs with the European cultural derivatives, such as knotted ribbons (symbolising celebrations), the heart shape (which is the European symbol love), and the pound sign (the British currency symbolising wealth). The newly introduced Christianity equally generated motifs such as crosses (symbolizing the sacrifices of Jesus Christ), dove (symbolising purity or holiness), opened books (representing the bible), as well as anthropomorphic motifs such as closed hands (in supplication), images of the head of European (representing Jesus Christ), and men holding daggers (epitomizing angels). Usage of these symbols continued in the Afro-Brazilian era, with many Afro-Brazilian balustrades and door ornamentations reflective of symbols derived from European culture. However, ornamentations in the colonial buildings were simple, with the complex designs starting off from Lagos, with the arrival of the Afro-Brazilian returnee slaves in the 1920s. Modern elements like quoins (designs connecting angular edges of walls) and simulated stucco clocks were also introduced to buildings for aesthetics.

IV. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The effect of colonization is not only in the variation of the aesthetically pleasing buildings, but also their embellishments and add-ons. The variation in the height of these buildings produce interesting rhythmic undulating graphical outlines, which prevent monotony and boredom, in contrast to the standard regular lines produced by the buildings of equal heights in the pre-colonial era. These combined with the assortment of interesting imagery around to ensure that there are no dull moments in the cities. The totalities of these buildings transform the cities into places of pride among equals across the globe. Nearly all the colonial inspired aesthetic features are still on today, with advancements made possible by globalization and new technologies, which this study consider as the end products of western education and colonization induced exposures.

With all the new advancements in place, the period between the arrival of the colonialists and the independence was known for total desertion of traditional makeup and adoption of new aesthetic ideals in buildings and the urban fabric. The colonial influence was well spread by the independence in 1960, whilea century after colonization; the colonial culture had almost totally eclipsed the indigenous culture, resulting in loss of cultural identities in the modern and postmodern buildings. Walls, roofs, pillars, and doors are built like European models, giving no feeling of being erected in Yorubaland, renowned for her rich artistic heritage since the pre-historic times. There is a need for ornamentation reflecting the background culture in buildings, while uniting art with architecture. The museum of traditional Nigerian Architecture (M.O.T.N.A) should expand beyond the existing one branch and have architectural photographic gallery in some of the major museums in Nigeria, to sensitize youths and architects on the rich heritage.

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INTERVIEW

1. Pa Bashiru Adebisi, 83 years old (Personal oral Communication, 4th June, 2016).

PLATES



PPlate 1: Stone textured adornment in Siin station road, Osogbo (Photo: F. AAbejide 2019.



PPlate 2: Dormer and openwork plank decoration inOke-Baale,Osogbo, 1944(Photo: F. Abejide, 2019).



Plate 3: Parapet and chimney at Thoma Àjàní's building, No. 32 EgbatedoStreet Osogbo (Photo: F. Abejide, 2019).



Plate 4: Wenger's wall relief (Photo: F, Abejide, 2019).



Plate 5: Wenger's screen stucco (Photo: F. Abejide, 2019).



Plate 6: Town council building in Ibadan, (popularly known as Mapo hall Photo: Ibadan Wikipedia).



Plate 7: Cocoa dome Ibadan (Photo:Abejide 2016)



Plate 8: Door with coat of arms enclosed in a sheild (Photo: F. Abejide, 2019).

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