

Main Title: Valuing What Already Exists

Title: Cultural Heritage Planning and Preservation in Yoruba Cities

Case study of Ile-Ife, Nigeria

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Synopsis

This paper examines how heritage places and spaces are protected and managed to enhance historical artifacts in Ile Ife, the 'Cradle of Humankind'. It suggests traditional historical planning tools as a re-vitalization planning strategy to preserve, manage and protect the sacred groves, monuments, traditional and religious landmarks that already exists.

1. Introduction

The term "Cultural heritage" by Hero Network (2010), refers primarily to the physical or "tangible cultural heritage" which includes monuments, groups of buildings and historic sites that are considered worthy of safeguarding for the future. The Article 1 of the World Heritage Convention (1998) defines the definition of terms as follows:

- Monuments: architectural works, works of monumental sculpture and painting, elements or structures of an archaeological nature, inscriptions, cave dwellings and combinations of features, which are of outstanding universal value from the point of view of history, art or science.

- Groups of buildings: groups of separate or connected buildings which, because of their architecture, their homogeneity or their place in the landscape, are of outstanding universal value from the point of view of history, art or science.
- Sites: works of man or the combined works of nature and man, and areas including shrines and archaeological sites which are of outstanding universal value from a historical, aesthetic, ethnological or anthropological point of view.

Places and objects may qualify as “heritage” because of their historic importance, because they are rare, they provide an opportunity for research, are particularly representative of a type, have aesthetic appeal, are evidence of creative or technical achievement, or have associations with social groups or significant people.

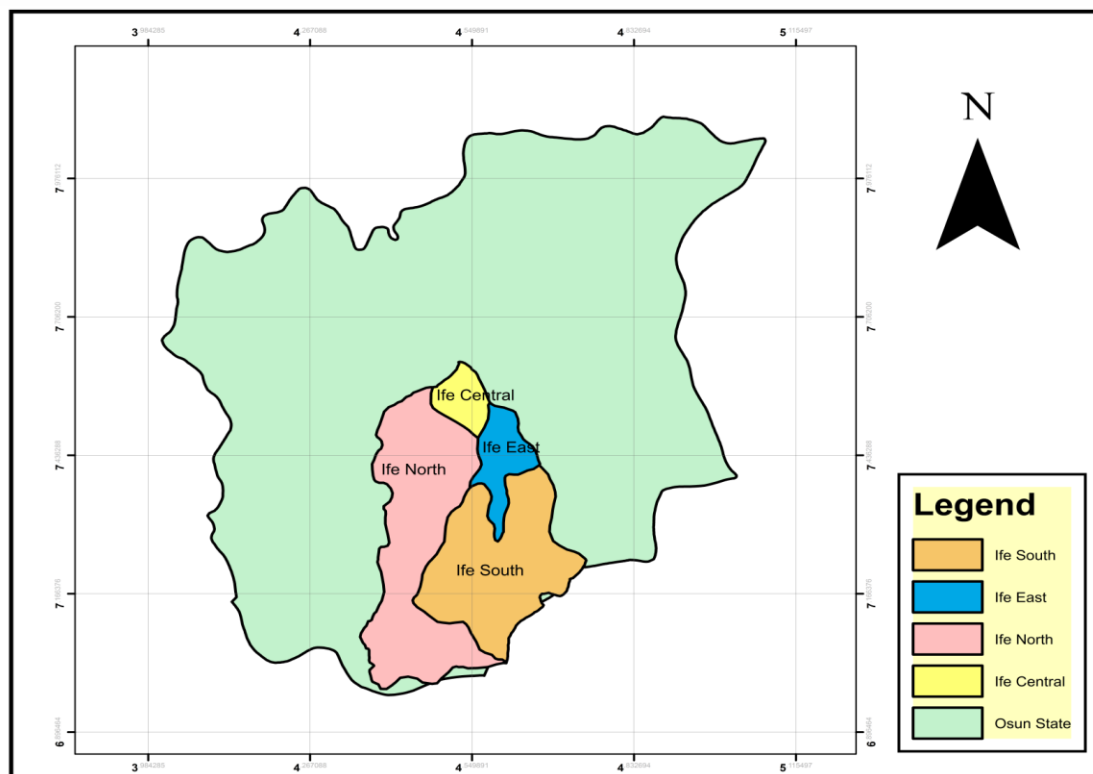


Figure 1: Ife Town in Osun State Context

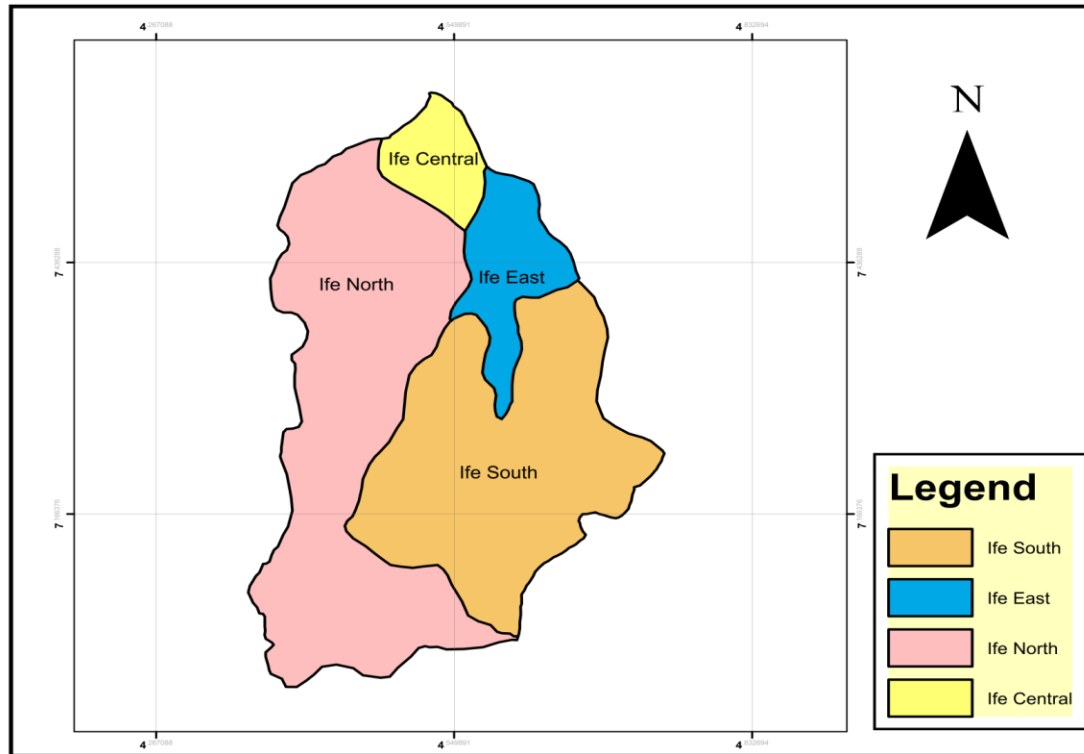


Figure 2: The Four Local Governments in Ile-Ife

Ile-Ife, also called Ife town, Osun state, southwestern Nigeria is one of the larger centres and probably the oldest town of the Yoruba people. It is considered by the Yoruba to be a holy city and the legendary birthplace of mankind and was held to have been founded by a son of the deity; Oduduwa. Ile-ife is located in the present day Osun State, Nigeria. Ife is about 218 kilometres northeast of Lagos. The town lies at the intersection of roads from Ibadan, Ilesha, and Ondo. Ile – Ife is located on longitude 4.60E and latitude 7.50N, with an elevation of about 275 metres above the sea level (Appolos, 2012). Physically, according to (Omotoso Eluyemi, 1986), the city of Ile – Ife is surrounded by a chain of seven hills namely Oke – Ora, Oke – Araromi, Oke – Owa, Oke – Pao, Oke – Ijugbe, Oke – Onigbin, and Oke – Obagbile. As a result of these hills, the town itself was built in a bowl – like physical layout which provides it with security.

Historical nodes of Ife comprises the traditional inner core with the Oba's (King's) palace, the Enuwa square, Ifa temple and the Ife city museum; the Obafemi Awolowo University (OAU formerly, University of Ife) campus, which constitutes a magnet for much of the town's labour force; the Mayfair-Sabo-Lagere commercial corridor; and the Sacred grooves or natural virgin forests that epitomize the tradition of the Ife indigenes. However, there are three clearly-

distinguishable locations where noticeable urbanizing development is taking place in Ile-Ife, each with its own unique characteristics. These are; the OAU Campus; the Mayfair-Sabo Commercial Spine; and the Inner Core. While these areas are distinct in themselves, they also are inter-related and likewise inter-dependent.

The Obafemi Awolowo University (OAU) campus epitomizes the best traditions in modern physical planning and architecture, in the West Africa region. The campus portrays good infrastructure and facilities planning and management, and general foresight. All roads (servicing the academic and administrative core area, students' halls of residence and staff quarters) are tarred; the whole campus is linked to the electrical grid (in addition to having its own independent power-generating plant); the Opa Dam is a local expedient for generating potable water to all nooks and crannies of the campus. (Osasona et al, 2009)

The Mayfair-Sabo Commercial Spine is the commercial nerve of the city. It is a 3-kilometre stretch along the Ibadan-Ilesa inter-urban road that passes through the centre of the town. What businesses had fitfully been practiced closer to the traditional core, had gradually migrated to this area for vibrancy. Today, not only has this been further entrenched, commercial activities have gradually spread, ribbon-like, along this axis: forward to Sabo (and beyond), towards the Ilesa end; backwards to Mayfair (towards the OAU campus), in the direction of Ibadan (Osasona et al, 2009). Small-scale as well as large-scale retail businesses are carried out in this zone. It also houses big investment houses (various banks, petroleum stations) and schools.

The Inner City Core is the traditional heart of the city. The city centre comprises the king's (*Ooni's*) palace, the Enuwa square, the Central mosque, the Oke mogun Shrine and other developments. In the early 1990s, the Enuwa square which was originally a place used for communal meeting; where the people gather and are addressed by the king from the storey building facing it has been transformed into a park with a full-size statue of Oduduwa at the centre of it. New constructions have also taken place and other buildings have also been modified from time to time; such as the Ife City Museum, the Ooni's palace and the Ifa temple amongst many others. The city core helps to conserve the cultural heritage of Ile-Ife.

Ile-Ife has undergone growth in various forms. It has grown from a small town with a legendary evolution into a city over the years and these changes has resulted in the following:

1. Encroachment- Some open spaces and sacred lands have been encroached upon, so also sacred lands. For instance, the ore groove which formerly covers about 5 hectares

in the past has been reduced to about 4 plots of land.

2. Religion and Western Education- Increase in people's western belief system and the influence of education has reduced participation in festivals, rituals and ifa followership. Also, the use of cognomen; commonly called '*oriki*' among the Yoruba people has been lost as many people now disregard the idea. The influx of foreign culture has depleted the traditional belief system. Now the greater percentage of people in the community practice Christianity or Islam and this has greatly reduced trust in the traditional culture and its practices.
3. No Proper Documentation- history has been lost due to lack of proper documentation and even where they exist, there are discrepancies from one place to the other.
4. No Proper Demarcation of heritage sites- the heritage places in the past were not fenced. In the ancient times, '*peregun*' as it is been called in Yoruba was used to fence heritage sites. Wherever '*peregun*' is used as demarcation, such place is identified as a sacred land. And due to lack of fence, these sites have been either encroached upon, misused by people who do not know about it and some materials even stolen from such places. It is in recent times that some of them are being fenced.
5. Loss of value of the heritages- much value is not placed on heritage sites anymore due to the influence of urbanization. Modern adventurous sites like cinemas, galleries, beaches have reduced visitation to heritage places.
6. Change in Architectural design in use- In the past, buildings were patterned after the Brazilian building style but now, the European style is being used. Courtyards was what was obtainable in the past and this fostered communal life, but now, the flat system is being operated and this has disintegrated communal life.

Time changes. Technology marches forward. Cultures differ from place to place. So also, rapid urban change is reforming the city and its ancient heritages. The cultural heritages which give the beauty of the past a place on the exhibition stage of the new world are gradually being wiped off, the forest reserves and farmlands which support the sustainability of a place and food security within its borders are being encroached upon, urban renewal schemes are taking over the city centres that used to be the heart of other activities and development. Hence, the need for heritage planning.

2. Methodology

Data for this study were elicited from two different sources that is primary and secondary sources. The primary sources include two set of satellite imagery covering the study area for 1986 and 2013. The imagery of 1986 was obtained from global land cover facility on path 190 and row 55 while that of 2013 was obtained from goggle earth. The imagery of 1986 and that of 2013 were subjected to unsupervised and supervised classification respectively using ILWIS (Integrated Land Water Information System) Software. Sample Sets were created on both images for proper assessment by the researchers. The sample sets created are; Bare Surface, Built-up Area, Marsh Land, Vegetation and water Body. The two maps show the level of growth of lfe.

The secondary sources of data include published and unpublished journals; and other related materials obtained from the Planning Board of the lfe East Local Government and the lfe city Museum.

3. Findings and Discussion

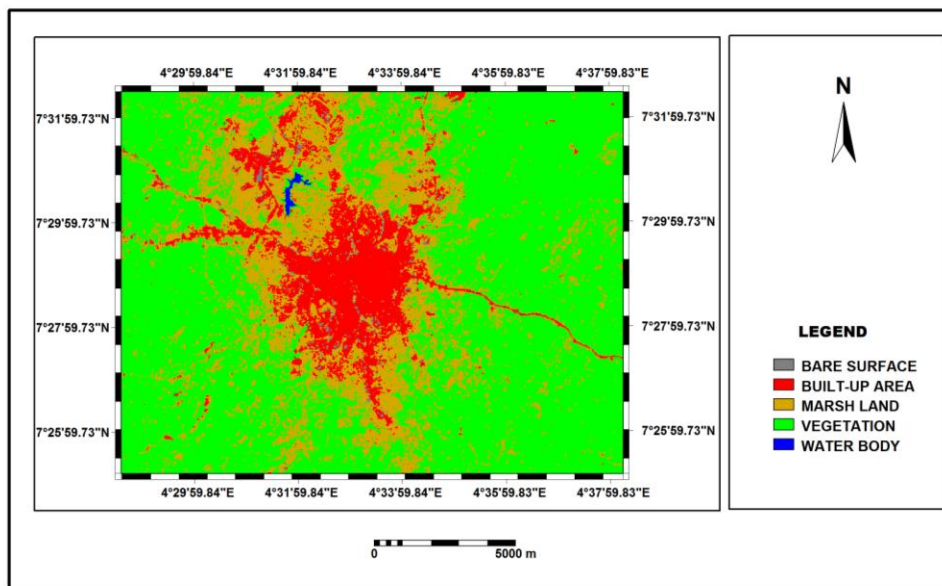


Figure 3: Classified Image of the study area, 1986

Source: Author (2013)

Table 1: Sample set for 1986

Sample Set	Area (Km ²)
Bare Surface	2.13
Built-up Area	25.13
Marsh Land	59.38
Vegetation	153.85
Water Body	0.03
Total	240.52

Source: Author (2013)

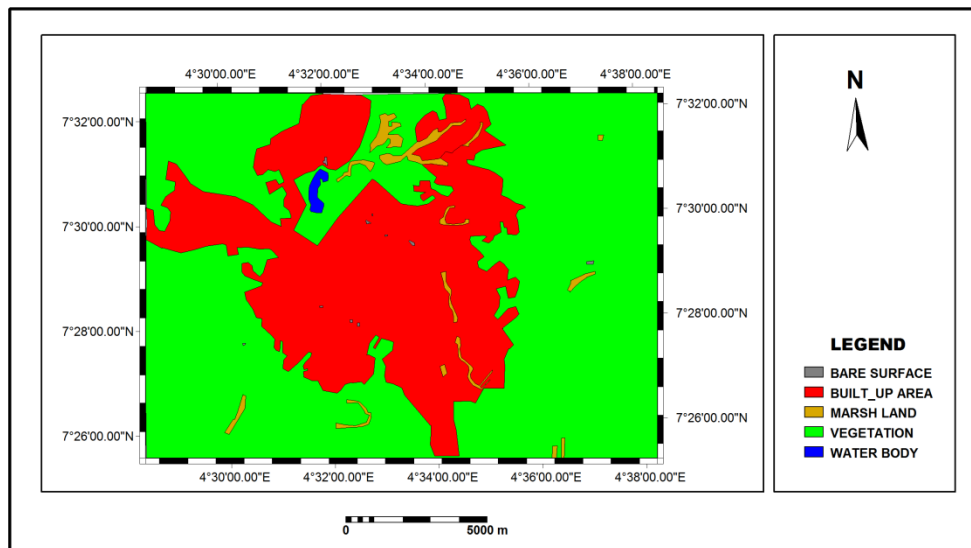


Figure 4: Classified Image of the Study Area, 2013

Source: Author (2013)

Table 2: Sample set for 2013

Sample Set	Area (Km ²)
Bare Surface	28.62
Built-up Area	77.74
Marsh Land	38.57
Vegetation	95.01
Water Body	0.58
Total	240.52

Source: Author (2013)

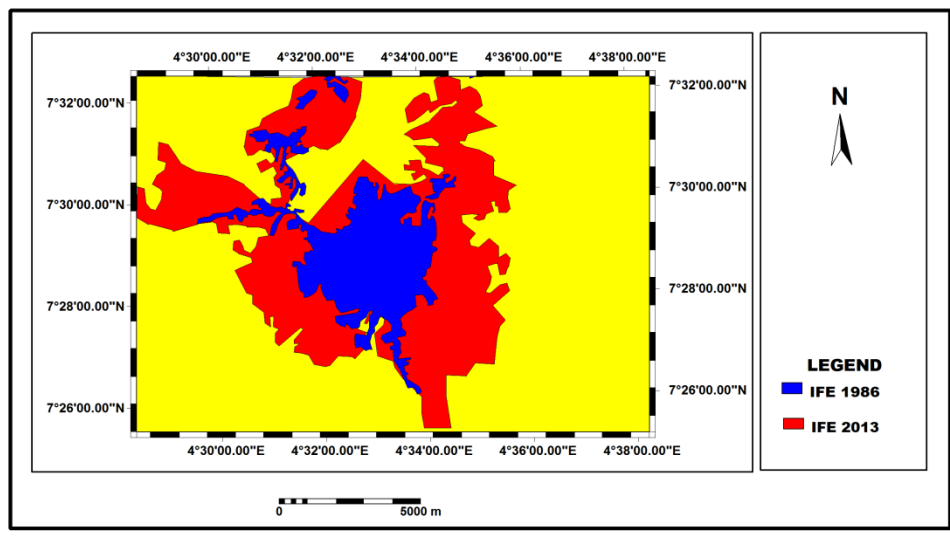


Figure 5: Classified Image of the Study Area in 1986 and 2013

Source: Author (2013)

Figure 3 and 4 shows the level of growth of Ife while figure 5 was used to show the changes that has occurred between 1986 and 2013 as pertains to the built up areas in Ile-Ife. The blue represents the extent of the built up areas in Ile-Ife as at 1986 and the red shows Ile-Ife in 2013. In the year 1986 the built-up area of Ife was 25.13Km² while that of 2013 is 77.74Km². Increase in development and human activities led to the decrease in vegetation and increase in bare surface/degraded land from 2.13Km² (1986) to 28.62 in 2013.

During a consultative forum with some elders and 'Emeseres' (palace guards), they identified some heritage sites in Ile-Ife and the maintenance strategies already put in place to preserve them. Festivals celebrated in Ile-Ife include the "Olojo" festival (Owner of the day) usually celebrated by the indigenes in honour of the revolutionary deity "Ogun- the god of Iron" and the 401 deities that resides in the ancient city of Ife; the "Edi" festival is celebrated once every year for a period of seven days, a period to discipline thieves, and the "Ifa Agbonmiregun" festival usually done first week of June, every year (where ifa priests from the whole world come together) with the aim to unite Ifa followership and also to integrate part of vibrant and prosperous community on peace.

Heritage sites in Ife total about 62 (Ife city Museum Records,2013); with several grooves, forests, shrines, temples and staff, some of which include; the Yemoo groove, Olokun groove,

Osara shrine, Yeyewara shrine, Igbo Irudi sacred forest, the ifa temple and the Oranmiyan staff. Traditional historical planning tools are employed to serve as a re-vitalization planning strategy to preserve, manage and protect the sacred groves, monuments, traditional and religious landmarks that already exists.

The management practices set in place to preserve these heritage sites include the following:

- Fencing: Fences have been built round many of the heritage sites to prevent encroachment of people and activities into such places. The Enuwa square (directly opposite the Ooni's palace) which has been re-modelled into a Park for example is now well fenced. Also, the Oke Mogun Shrine (south of the Ooni's palace) and the Ile Oduduwa (west of the Ooni's palace) has been fenced.
- Improved documentation: Emphasis is now being laid on documentation of the past history that were captured and properly retrieved, present day happenings, yearly celebrations and festivals. Also, the Ife museum Planning department acquires and preserves articles, journals and publications that captures Ile-Ife city cultural and physical planning activities for easy access in planning and for future references.
- The management of heritage sites by overseers and priests: To achieve this, priests were appointed over each of these heritage sites to manage and protect it. And it is these priests that organize festivals and celebrations that pertains to the heritage site they have been assigned to.
- Modification of sites and usage: A good example is the Enuwa square that used to be a communal meeting ground but which has now been transformed into a park to generate income. Even the Ogun Shrine that used to be just a symbolic tree (at the foot of which the rituals were performed), has been integrated in a refined way into the modern City Hall complex. The palace grounds and museum have not been left out: modifications and new construction (particularly of modernist structures) have taken place, and periodic face-lifts also (Osasona et al, 2009). This provides a good ground for tourism and helps to generate income for other developments
- Planning Guidance by regulating new development in the old town area to secure heritage sites from communal demands: New developments are controlled through planning rules so as to preserve the heritage sites in the old town area from encroachment due to urbanization. Modifications are made to the heritage sites and renovation allowed, but, new developments are not encouraged. This is evident in the areas surrounding the *Ile Oduduwa* and the *Ifa Temple* within the city core.

4. Recommendations and Conclusion

Education, awareness and enlightenment should be heightened so as to foster strong identity of citizens with their cultural heritage sites. The Museum as the repository of culture and tradition is in the best position to organize trainings to acquaint people of the community as well as indigenes both home and abroad with the heritage sites and the purposes they serve to help preserve the cultural values from one generation to the other. This can be achieved by organizing workshops and trainings within the local community, and increased publications from the Department of Planning, Research and Publications in the Museum.

Beautification attempts should be increased within the city core by the planning Authorities to encourage and also increase tourism. Gallerias, cinema houses, and more parks should be introduced to attract more people. Also, some heritage sites still lie open with no proper enclosure, one of which is the *Ifa* Temple and thus, the surrounding is unkept with animal feaces littering the area. So also, the entire landscape of the city core is characterized by buildings with old tattered brown roofed buildings and some dilapitating ones. Upgrading and renewal of these buildings will further help to promote a pleasing environment for visitors and likewise add value to the cultural heritages.

To further preserve the cultural heritages situated in Ile-ife, the traditional planning and management tools should be strengthened by the Planning authorities of the town and to curb the increasing effect of urbanization on heritage sites, encroachment into the city core should be prohibited; there should be increase in awareness and publicity of the cultural heritages in the town to inform indigenes, citizens of the country and foreigners of her cultural values to enhance tourism.

The sustainability of the environment is significant in guiding against the resultant effect of a gasping city and in doing this, valuation method comes to play. Valuation in the sense of evaluating the importance and benefits of these city centres and their existing landmarks, the forests and farms that are gradually been taken over by urban sprawl and the environmental hazards that results from improper management. It is worthy of note that rather than leaving these areas to degrade or be wiped off and forgotten due to gentrification effect, a number of benefits springs from the improvement and conservation of these regions such as income generation from tourism and celebration of ethnically symbolic ceremonies which attracts trade and developments and investors. The conservation of heritage places makes an important

contribution to environmental, social and economic sustainability and also helps in regional development.

Heritage landmarks need to be protected because they constitute valuable assets (cultural and environmental capital) within the community. Protecting the cultural identity and heritage of Ile Ife helps to:

- Preserve a sense of history for future generations,
- Enrich new developments,
- Promote community identity,
- Historic landmarks and
- Guide planning activities such as zoning, development control and conservation policies and these helps to shape the rapid expansion of the city.

“Historic preservation or conservation seeks to enhance, preserve and retain the symbols of the past” (Olufemi, 2001:390). Although expansion of the urban environment is inevitable but, in exploiting our environment, there is need to effectively conserve and safeguard it.

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