

Threats and Challenges in the Conservation of the British Colonial Era's Religious Built Heritage in Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

Even though the protection of colonial-era buildings as part of the modern heritage is now viewed more positively as significant layers of urban fabric, the conservation state of colonial-era's built heritage has received scant research attention. There are major challenges especially for the preservation of religious buildings erected in the former European colonial territories in the non-Western world. This paper is the outcome of an ongoing fieldwork-based research, which aims to identify, locate and survey the conservation state of mosques and churches built during the British colonial era in Yorubaland (Nigeria). This research adopts mixed methods approach, employing physical observations and semi-structured interviews with heritage professionals to examine the current conservation state of the surveyed buildings and the mechanics of their upkeep and maintenance. The analysis of the fieldwork data initiates a discussion on the challenges and threats to their protection, which ranges from minor interventions on the original fabric to major modifications and demolitions. The deficiencies in institutional conservation know-how are revealed, relating in part to the constraints within the current management structure and in part to the lack of expertise required for addressing the emerging material and structural problems in theoretically and technically appropriate ways.