



VERNACULAR ARCHITECTURE: INSIGHT FROM THE EGBEBELU FARMSTEAD IN SOUTHEASTERN NIGERIA

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Abstract

*Vernacular architecture is gradually becoming extinct due to modern influences, necessitating proper scholarly documentation for posterity where such structures remain. This paper examines vernacular buildings in the Egbebelu settlement located in Ugwogo-Nike, Enugu East Local Government Area of Enugu State in Southeastern Nigeria. While in-depth studies have been conducted on other geographical areas that comprise Ugwogo-Nike, to the best of the researchers, no such study has been undertaken on the Egbebelu settlement, particularly regarding its built environment, which still contains occupied traditional buildings. The paper explores the concept of vernacular shelter, delves into the typologies, and examines the materials utilized in their construction. The study employs a qualitative research design, and data were analyzed descriptively. Photographs of vernacular architecture are incorporated into the paper for enhanced illustration. The survey draws upon the Igbo concept of *aka aja aja n'ebute onu mmanu mmanu* (literally: it is the hands that cultivate that bring about an oily mouth), an underlying symbolism that informs the Egbebelu settlement vernacular architecture. The investigation reveals, among other findings, that all residential units in the study area exhibit shared visual or structural characteristics, which categorize them as rectangular and square house types. These structures primarily serve the dual purposes of providing temporary accommodation for agricultural workers during the cultivation season and facilitating the storage of agricultural produce during the harvest period.*

Keywords: Vernacular architecture, Egbebelu farmstead, Ugwogo-Nike, community, Southeastern Nigeria

Introduction

Vernacular architecture refers to the enclosure of a given space with structures constructed using materials sourced directly from the environment for the habitation of humans and animals, protecting from weather conditions. In corroborating the above, Ene-Orji (2022: 66) notes, "Traditional architecture has long been used as an index to measure humankind's state of development of their response to their environment, in terms of using available materials to afford protection over the elements, animals and fellow people." Aniakor (2002: 272) observes that as an "art of space, the built environment is thus architecturally planned to reflect important conceptual principles whose meanings lie in the organization of space elements in a family compound, village or town." Architecture is defined as the art or practice of designing and constructing buildings, and it remains a central social institution and the progenitor of all arts throughout human civilization (Aniakor, 1978).



The concept of vernacular architecture and arts is intrinsically linked to a people's worldview. This connection provides a valuable perspective on their habitation and survival strategies. African societies have historically maintained their architectural traditions derived from their cosmology. Furthermore, the shape of a dwelling can reveal more about a society than other aspects of material culture (Whiting and Ayers, 1968). This suggests that a house type can provide valuable evidence regarding people's ontology. For instance, among the Arochukwu Igbo, the interior of a house serves dual functions as both a living room and a burial chamber. According to Aniakor (2012: 276), this factor "endows it (the house) with spiritual authority and enhances the vitality of interior space, providing a channel through which a deceased occupant returns to the world of the ancestors." Lavenderjean (nd) also posits that traditional African architecture is "an architectural fashion that is designed based on local needs, availability of construction materials and reflecting local African traditions." As with most architectural traditions globally, African architecture has been subject to numerous external influences from the earliest periods for which evidence is available. Since the late 15th century, Western architecture has influenced coastal areas, resulting in the construction of many larger buildings, particularly in urban centers. Colonialism has exerted the most significant influence on traditional houses, leading to the widespread use of durable concrete, block, and zinc buildings. While traditional architecture is gradually becoming obsolete, there exists a settlement where its presence remains resistant to the influence of modernization and persists to the present day. Egbebelu Ugwoko Nike, Enugu, has maintained its traditional architectural practices.

Several studies have been conducted on Nike town and its communities (of which Egbebelu is a part) regarding aspects such as its distorted history, stream quality, nutritional status and periodontal disease, and the development of its natural lakes. However, to the knowledge of the researcher, no studies exist specifically on Egbebelu (see Ogochukwu & Nwagbara, 2014; Amalu & Ajake, 2019; Umeanoeto et al., 2019; Okwesili et al., 2023; Ugwumba, 2023). In light of this, the present study surveys vernacular architecture and examines and evaluates settlement patterns, house types, and building materials, employing a qualitative research approach to understand the built environment. This qualitative study explores the Igbo proverb "*aka aja aja n'ebute onu mmanu mmanu*," which can be interpreted as "hands smeared with sand lead to an oily mouth." This saying suggests that diligent work and cultivation result in bountiful harvests, allowing one to feed well. The concept emphasizes the connection between hard labour and the rewards it brings, particularly in the context of agricultural productivity. It also conveys the notion that diligence leads to reward and emphasizes that labor is a prerequisite for sustenance. This principle underpins the rationale for the construction of temporary dwellings in the Egbebelu farm settlement, which serve as accommodations during periods of cultivation and harvest for both familial and commercial purposes. The following questions form the basis of qualitative data analysis, which encompasses the range of processes and procedures whereby the researcher transitions from the collected qualitative data into some form of explanation, understanding, or interpretation of the subject of their investigation. These questions will be instrumental in comprehending the vernacular architecture of the Egbebelu settlement: What is the location of the Egbebelu settlement? What types of buildings are present in the settlement, and what are their purposes? Which building materials are utilized in their construction? What techniques have been adopted



for their construction? What are the sociopolitical and socio-economic functions of the settlements?

Overview of Vernacular Architecture

Vernacular architecture encompasses tribal rural settings and settlements that span centuries. Aripita and Bijay (2023:435) are of the view that architecture is indigenous to the location, sensitive to climate, built with materials, and arises from the culture of a place. It evolved over generations and is specific to the geographical location, and addresses the needs of the people. Vernacular architecture is broadly defined in three ways. First, "it consists of village/town settlements composed of individual house units and family compounds with their structural and conceptual layout" (Aniakor, 2005:109). Second, Prussin (1969) notes that it is a formal and graphic quantification of a culture's symbolic system, and third, as given by (Aniakor, 2005: 109) "it refers to giving processes of building technology in which building materials drawn from the immediate environment are transformed through their skillful manipulation into three-dimensional structures."

The art historian Chike Aniakor's reflections on vernacular architecture are highly informative. This analysis will draw extensively from these scholarly sources. Consequently, people's worldviews play a significant role in the conception of vernacular buildings in Africa. A pertinent example is the Fang people of northern Cameroon who migrated to Gabon through a north-south movement, more accurately described as an upstream and downstream movement, which they conceptualize as opposing each other in a manner analogous to the sky opposing the earth, the village space to the surrounding bushes, and men to women. In this context of binary opposition, the location of houses in Fang villages is conceived and constructed to reflect the notion of historic north and south migration. Specifically, men's buildings face women's in opposing directions. Another relevant example is the Igbo people's profound engagement with dualism, which is encapsulated in a saying that, when a thing stands, another thing stands beside it (*Ihe kwürü, ihe akwudobe ya*). This concept manifests in the space divisions that are conceived in a binary manner in vernacular architecture, where the men's section, called the Obi, contrasts with the women's section, which is separated by a wall at the side or behind.

Ecology plays a significant role in determining the materials with which vernacular architecture can be accomplished. Natural resources such as soil, vegetation, climate, and annual rainfall enable an understanding of the type of building materials to be used in construction. For example, wood, vegetal leaves, and grass are utilized for building construction in vernacular architecture.

There are, indeed, different types of houses in vernacular architecture, namely: the round/cone type, which consists of a circular ground floor plan, cylindrical walls, and a conical roof; the impluvial courtyard, formed when a rectangular floor plan is constructed with several rooms against the back wall, such that these rooms have an internal focus by overlooking a central impluvial courtyard; the rectangular wattle and daub, where palm sticks as frames are daubed with mud clay to reinforce them and the roofs are thatched with raffia, grass, and leaves; the rectangular house type, which has a rectilinear plan and rectangular walls surmounted by a gabled roof and



then stabilized by wooden posts and thatched with grass; and the square house type, which is a square base plan structure whose walls are surmounted by a pyramidal roof with low eaves (Aniakor, 2005).

Constructional techniques in vernacular architecture encompass a systematic process of house construction following the building methodologies of linear wood, post and beam, wet wall, wattle and daub, and Banco construction. Linear wood construction involves arranging mangrove poles in a linear vertical pattern to structurally enclose house walls, surmounted by a gable roof thatched with forest leaves or palm mats. Wattle and daub construction refers to the structure of the raffia pole framework on all four sides of what would constitute the four walls of a house, with poles positioned at the four corners for reinforcement and stabilization, surmounted by gable roof poles arranged in a vertical and horizontal format and covered with raffia palm, mat, or grass. As observed by Chukwu (2015:11),

Wattling involves the use of slim-size wooden poles of about 2 cm in diameter and length of wooden poles of about 6 cm for the exercise. In the process, the wattle was used to crisscross the length of the wooden poles right from the base to the uppermost level of the walling skeletal framework, providing approximately 2.5 cm spacing between one horizontal level and the other. Vertical wooden poles and slim horizontal wooden poles (wattle) were knotted or tied together at various points to produce a solid and compact skeletal framework. The gap between one vertical pole and the other, as well as gaps between one horizontal wattle and the other, were to accommodate balls of puddled mud that would normally be placed there to fill the gap, and flash up the skeletal framework of the building wall partition.

Post and beam construction involves the utilization of substantial forest posts for residential construction, which function as structural support for the horizontal poles on which the vertical wooden posts rest and are thatched with grass. It is noteworthy that post and beam construction techniques are frequently employed in the process of building technology for square and rectangular house types. Banco construction incorporates a mixture of vegetable material with clay to achieve latent structural quality and load-bearing capacity of the building, while wet-wall construction entails the puddling of mud in the rainy season, which is accumulated and stored for subsequent use in house construction. In this specific constructional technique, walls are erected from the foundation on a row-by-row basis until they attain the required height, with each row allowed to dry before the addition of the next row. The house wall is typically cylindrical. A conical roof is constructed on the ground before being elevated and secured. The roof is conical in shape with vertical rafters that are intercepted by rings of rope work that maintain the roof framework in position, terminating in the conical apex, and held in place by an internal basket (Aniakor, nd).

Following construction, both interior and exterior decorations are applied. These are categorized into three types: painted decorations, incised and molded decorations, and carved decorations, which demonstrate the synergy between art and architecture. Utilizing the Igbo decorative pattern as an illustrative example, decoration in painting relies exclusively on the use of earth colors and



plants as pigments to create *Uli* designs on the walls (See Fig. 1). For enhanced clarity, "*Uli* is the cultural heritage of the Igbo people of southeastern Nigeria. It is the art of body and wall paintings practiced in southeastern Nigeria by the Igbo women. In this study, the bodies were decorated with indigo dye obtained from several species of plants identified with the following botanical names: *Rothmania witfieldi*, *Rothmania hispiole*, *Rothmania cuspidata*, and *Rothmania urcelli*" (Ikwuemesi, 2011:5). Utilizing four colors (white, yellow, red, and black) derived from charcoal, talcum powder, white chalk, and camwood, they also adorned the walls of shrines and dwellings with symbols and motifs. While the body variant persists for approximately two weeks, the site-specific mural painting, such as the Mbari mud structure, is not enduring, as it deteriorates and collapses over time.

Beds and seating projections are typically constructed with mud and are categorized as molded decorations in vernacular architecture. Incised decoration involves the utilization of plates to imprint designs on walls before drying, while "carved decoration consists of house posts, carved stools and other related furnishings, carved doors and panels, and other towering carved posts" (Aniakor, 2005:12).



Fig. 1: Vernacular shelter painted with *Uli* symbols. © C.K. Ikwuemesi.

Ene-Orji (2022: 69) posits that "architectural symbolism is pertinent to all the physical, spiritual, psychic, metaphoric, linguistic, and artistic attributes that a building connotes or denotes, as well as cultural practices that have come to be associated with a house unit or architectural space, as a reflection of a people's worldview or belief system, hence as long as a man is alive, his *obi* exists as a symbolic representation of his person, family, and compound." This assertion suggests that vernacular architecture possesses inherent significance for male inhabitants. The Igbo people of southeastern Nigeria hold a strong belief in life after death. They "believe that their deceased only transit to the spiritual realm to dwell among their ancestors" (Asogwa & Odoh, 2021). To illustrate



this concept, the Arochukwu example is employed. In their belief system, obi symbolizes the rite of passage. It is within a man's obi that he is interred upon death to facilitate his joining of ancestors in the afterlife. This aligns with Rapoport's (1969) argument that vernacular architecture fundamentally expresses culture. Furthermore, the significance attributed to a man's obi (house) is reflected in the Igbo name, Obiefuna, which translates to "let the existence of the house not end." Consequently, it is the aspiration of a man to produce a male heir who will inherit his house upon his transition to the ancestral realm. According to Aniakor (nd), this concept encapsulates the historical continuity of man-made structures. Thus, the interplay of people's worldview, symbolic system, and ecology in the construction and decoration of houses is crucial to comprehending vernacular architecture, which serves as the rationale for the survey of vernacular architecture in the Egbebelu settlement of Ugwogo-Nike.

Egbebelu Farmstead

The Igbo people conceptualize their world through binary ideation. They posit that phenomena exist in two distinct forms. This binary ideation reflects an Igbo land tenure and dual system of social organization, which delineates the village settlement into compound land and outer farmland, as observed by Agujiobi (2018:178). Most Igbo communities operate within two domains, commonly referred to as *Uno* and *Agu*. *Uno* constitutes the primary residential district of the indigenous population, including traditional rulers and chieftains. This area serves as the locus for the entirety of the town's social activities. *Agu* represents a temporary settlement, typically established along the periphery of the main village, predominantly surrounded by vegetation. As agriculture is considered a primary occupation among the Igbo, farmers often construct settlements in the *Agu* where they reside and cultivate crops during the agricultural season. The *uno*, as an established settlement pattern, reinforces the concept of binary opposition in Igbo vernacular architecture. Over time, certain *Agu* settlements have evolved to attain the status of small towns or communities. Frequently, such locations are designated by names that combine the main residential district with *Agu* as either the prefix or suffix. Examples of such are Obinagu, Ndiagu, Agụ-Echara, Agụ-Ibagwa, Agụobowa, and Agụibeje, among others.

Social organization is defined as the manner in which human groups are socially structured for collective protection, identity, and social solidarity, as well as kinship, economics, rituals, and political associations (Aniakor, n.d.). Egbebelu's social organization is exclusively agricultural; the inhabitants establish residence there for farming purposes, rendering the location an agrarian settlement. Consequently, Egbebelu is not classified as a community but rather a temporary farm settlement—*Agu* of the Ugwogo-Nike people, situated along the Enugu-Nsukka expressway, approximately 20 miles from the primary community, Ugwogo. As Egbebelu does not possess the status of a small town, it is not recognized as a constituent of the community in Ugwogo-Nike; however, its architecture remains a significant subject of study, particularly for future reference. Egbebelu consists of approximately thirty buildings where natives reside temporarily during the agricultural season, as well as during the period of *garri* processing. *Garri* is a fine and coarse granular flour derived from cassava roots. It is the product obtained when cassava is fermented, dried, and ground (Vihi, et al., 2022). In *Things Fall Apart* the spatial organization of Okonkwo's homestead is described thus:



Okonkwo's prosperity was visible in his household. He had a large compound enclosed by a thick wall of red earth. His hut, or obi, stood immediately behind the only gate in the red walls. Each of his three wives had her hut, which together formed a half moon behind the obi. The Barn was built against one end of the red walls, and long stacks of yams stood out prosperously in it. At the opposite end of the compound was a shed for the goats, and each wife built a small attachment to hers for the hens. Near the barn was a small house, the medicine house or shrine, where Okonkwo kept the wooden symbols of his god and of his ancestral spirits. He worshipped them with sacrifices of kolanut, food and palm wine, and offered prayers to them on behalf of himself, his three wives and eight children" (Achebe, 1958: 11-12).

Ezeagu (2012) similarly asserts that the majority of Igbo dwellings were private and constructed alongside other structures within a family compound, typically enclosed by a substantial wall. The primary entrance was generally a gate. The principal materials utilized in the construction of Igbo houses include mud, timber, and raffia/palm stems, which are employed for the support of walls and roofs. There exists a variety of shapes and sizes of buildings and compounds, in which most structures are situated, as well as public buildings. While the aforementioned authors provide a clear description of traditional Igbo architecture in its general context, the houses found in Egbebelu exhibit a notable distinction. This divergence may be attributed to its nature as a settlement—a temporary residence for inhabitants who are predominantly engaged in agricultural pursuits. Broadly speaking, all the houses maintain a standardized condition and are arranged in linear formations, adjacent to one another. None of the houses is enclosed by fencing as described by Ezeagu (2012); however, the materials, techniques, and typologies, as will be subsequently examined, remain consistent.

The entrance to the Egbebelu community is narrow, and due to its sloping geographical location, it is challenging to observe the buildings while in transit, except for a few that are situated near the route, which require an observant eye to perceive. The buildings in Egbebelu are near one another (See Fig. 2). As a typical Igbo community, the buildings are distributed randomly in terms of their organization. The settlement also possesses a square, although it is not comparable to a typical Igbo square, which is usually spacious. The square in Egbebelu can accommodate approximately seventeen individuals during a social gathering. It also functions as a marketplace.



Fig. 2: Panoramic view of Egbebelu setting. Photo: Okoroafor.

In Igboland, the village square, *Otobo* or *Ilo*, serves as the meeting point for the indigenous population. It is a venue for social gatherings for the entire community. Village meetings, masquerade performances, maiden dances, wrestling matches, and traditional festivals such as the New Yam festival take place at the village square. Disputes and issues that involve the entire village are also resolved there. In some villages, the square serves a dual function of social gathering and marketplace. A passage in *Things Fall Apart* succinctly captures this thus: "The whole village turned out on the *Ilo*, men, women and children. They stood round in a huge circle leaving the centre of the playground free. The elders and grandees of the village sat on their stools brought there by their young sons or slaves. Okonkwo was among them. All others stood except those who came early enough to secure places on the few stands which had been built by placing smooth logs on forked pillars" (Achebe, 1958:37). to convene to discuss issues of security and other socio-political and socio-economic activities, the surrounding environment of Egbebelu square is consistently maintained in a clean state. Wooden chairs have been permanently affixed to the ground on all corners of the square. At the center is also another chair, utilized as a table. According to Okeke Anaegu (personal communication, 2022), during periods of leisure, the inhabitants engage in the *Eche* game while seated at a table on wooden chairs. The *Eche* game involves placing small stones in small apertures of a carved wooden board to acquire more stones than one's opponent to achieve victory. The game is played by two individuals.

House Types in Egbebelu Farmstead and their Building Materials

Aniakor (nd) observed that architecture is built in an environment which consists of various house units, arranged peculiarly across the landscape of a village or town. He notes that while house types may be regarded as the physical expression of their owners' social system, they are constructed within the constraints imposed by the obtainable building materials, the type of climate against which they afford protection and the financial resources available. He further states that in structural terms, a house type is the label that we use to identify an architectural style. In other words, a house type is a building form that occurs in large numbers within a locale, a village, and sub-region. House types are useful for identifying architectural styles and their distribution pattern.



Igbo traditional architecture has been summarized in five shapes, namely, square, rectangle, circle, cylinder and cone (Aniakor, 1978).

Buildings in Egbebelu are rectangular, except for one small square building without windows (See Fig. 3). Suffice to say that majority of the rectangular buildings are of the same shape, except in sizes and kitchen positions. *Okposi*, *Ukpi* or bamboo sticks are mainly used for the roofing and the roofing supports. It is to be noted that nearly all the buildings in Egbebelu have undergone roofing transformation. While some still maintain raffia and banana leaf roofs, others are roofed with Asbestos or waterproofs.



Fig.3: Square house type with wide entrance door for ventilation. Photo: Okoroafor.

The rainforests, which extend very much into the hinterland of the settlement, are an excellent source of assorted types of wood suitable for different uses in house construction. For example, *Ukpi* is used for the posts and beams that carry the buildings. Palm tree, aside from its economic value, also provides construction materials - timber, fronds and fibers. Bamboos are also used in building for roof construction.

The standard element of roof construction in Egbebelu is the forked post. It is generally made of *Ukpi* wood which is either driven into the ground or into the rectangular bases of the loam. Forked posts carry horizontal beams and purlin elongated eaves fixed near the walls or within them bring extra stability to the rampart. The spine of the roofing contains most of the forked post, since the roofing and the building walls slope towards the backrest and as such, adding an extra stability to the building (See Fig. 4).



Fig. 4: Showing a shelter wall that slopes towards the backrest. Photo: Okoroafor.

Purlins and ridge beams are typically constructed from robust trunks of slender trees, split trunks of thick trees, or solid bamboo. The ribs (*Ikpele*) of palm fronds also function as rafters when they are thick and as battens when they are thin. In cases where the roof is subjected to heavy layers of grass thatch, midribs are utilized for both rafters and battens and are positioned in close parallel courses. The battens are placed above and beneath the rafters and secured with cords fabricated from climbing plants. For roof thatching, palm fronds or grasses are employed through matting or close binding, although numerous buildings now utilize asbestos zinc roofing. For wall construction, red loam soil known as *Aja-urọ* is preferred and generally considered optimal. The construction methodology for walls is determined by the available earth characteristics, and due to the presence of suitable red earth in Egbebelu, it is utilized in house construction. Similar to other Igbo communities, two distinct methods of wall erection are employed. These methods involve either constructing a thick solid layer of processed loam or utilizing the wattle and daub technique. As there is no evidence of wattle and daub in the majority of deteriorating old buildings (Fig. 5), it is inferred that the former wet-wall method was employed. To render the wall non-load bearing, forked wood is utilized as beams to support the bamboo thatched roof (Fig. 6).



Fig.5 & 6: Falling old building and load bearing free wall showing fork wood carrying the roof. Photo: Okoroafor.

The walls, measuring approximately 6 to 7 feet in height, are organically connected to the roof but rarely directly support the purlins and rafters. This load is typically borne by forked posts anchored to the foundation base. The doors of the buildings are of simple design, primarily consisting of panel doors devoid of carved decorations, affixed to the door posts within the walls, and typically serve as the sole openings in the structures. Windows, where present, are constructed with two wood panels joined by a 'Z'-shaped wood component at the rear.

From a general perspective, as previously stated, buildings in Egbebelu are rectangular in shape, with size and veranda serving as the primary distinguishing features. In some instances, the veranda runs in close parallel to the building's façade, while in others, it is situated on either the left or right side (Figs.7 & 8). Some verandas serve as kitchens (Fig. 9). For structures lacking a veranda, the kitchen is located in the open space in front of the house.



Figs. 7 & 8: Building with veranda. Photo: Okoroafor.



Fig. 9: Veranda used as kitchen. Photo: Okoroafor.

Another distinguishing feature of the building is the location of the animal enclosures, such as the cattle or sheep kraal, goat pen, and chicken coop. These animal enclosures are typically constructed at the rear of the buildings (See Fig. 10).



Fig. 10: Animal house. Photo: Okoroafor.

An examination of the interior of one of the houses revealed two rooms. It was observed that loam is utilized to create a pavement that functions as both a sleeping and sitting surface. The pavement constructed for the bed is of sufficient size to accommodate two individuals (Fig. 11). Even with the loam pavements, the bed incorporates wooden forked pillars for structural support. The room is sufficiently spacious to accommodate visitors who come to purchase agricultural produce.



Fig.11: Room showing pavement as bed. Photo: Okoroafor.

A house within the entire settlement was observed that was not constructed with loam. It is situated near the periphery of the Egbebelu settlement. Instead, it was constructed entirely of bamboo. Upon inquiry, the resident owner, Mr. Agbo, stated, "The tedious nature of loam processing made me to use bamboo all-through and since I am also a carpenter by profession, the building did not take me much time" (personal communication, 2022). The rear of the structure is enclosed with bamboo, where he houses his livestock and stores agricultural produce. At the primary sides of the building are load-bearing forked wooden posts, each supporting the purlin that connects all the wooden elements used for the roofing. The veranda is the most expansive in the settlement and also serves as the kitchen area. As observed, the interior differs from the other buildings. It consists of a single hall without partitions or demarcations for separate rooms. The occupant suspends some of his garments on sticks attached to the bamboo structure and stores others inside locally woven baskets placed atop planks affixed to forked posts that he has installed in the ground (Fig. 12).



Fig. 12: Agbo's house made of bamboo sticks. Photo: Okoroafor, 2022

Conclusion

Vernacular architecture is rapidly disappearing in Igboland. While a limited number of villages, communities, and towns retain complete traditional architectural structures, others have been significantly influenced by modernization, as evidenced by the incorporation of locally sourced materials with foreign elements such as zinc, asbestos, and tarpaulin in their roofing. The Egbebelu farmstead in Ugwogo Nike, Enugu State, exemplifies the remnants of vernacular architecture in Igboland. This is due to the predominantly rectangular buildings in Egbebelu farmstead being roofed with asbestos, waterproof materials, and tarpaulin. Their walls are constructed of mud. The buildings in the settlement are arranged and constructed in a simple maze-like pattern, each facing the gap between adjacent structures, derived from the Igbo maxim *agbata obi mmadu bu nwanne ya* (one's neighbor is one's brother). It serves as a representative example of an agrarian settlement that has not yet fully discarded its vernacular structures and replaced them entirely with modern construction.

This study facilitates an understanding of vernacular architecture, constructed to provide shelter for farmers during the agricultural season. The vernacular architecture in the Egbebelu settlement demonstrates that "various factors of architectural planning offer considerable scope for understanding the Igbo world and its cultural environment" (Aniakor, 2002: 298). It is anticipated that this investigation will stimulate further research on vernacular architectures that remain extant in other regions of Igboland, considering that "indigenous shelter in Africa have been victims of the erosion of western-type modernization" as observed by Aniakor (2011: 86). In this study, no claim is made of presenting entirely novel ideas. Rather, the objective is to synthesize ideas from diverse sources within the context of our examination of the Egbebelu farmstead vernacular architecture.



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