



THE CURIOUS CASE OF CASA DO FERNANDEZ

CHALLENGES OF HERITAGE MANAGEMENT IN NIGERIA

Photo on cover: Casa do Fernandez or Ilojo Bar in the 1950s
(Photographer: Gillian Godwin-Hopwood)

To Igoni

The Curious Case of Casa do Fernandez

Challenges of Heritage Management in Nigeria

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Content

Introduction	4
Chapter 1. Methodology		
§ 1. A critical approach of heritage	6
§ 2. Borrowed toolkits	.....	9
§ 3. The concept of heritage-scape	.....	10
§ 4. Limitations	.....	14
§ 5. An explorational trilogy	.....	16
Chapter 2. History		
§ 1. Nineteenth century Lagos	.....	17
§ 2. What the books say	.....	22
§ 3. Secrets in the margins	.....	25
§ 4. An unexpected tale of emancipation	.....	29
§ 5. The Rodrigues Guedes brothers	.....	33
§ 6. Fifteen years in Lagos	.....	36
§ 7. Flux and reflux to Galicia	.....	39
§ 8. Afro-Brazilian hands	.....	43
§ 9. A punishment house?	.....	46
§ 10. A family house	.....	51
Chapter 3. The making of a monument		
§ 1. Colonial times	.....	53
§ 2. Dreams of a museum	.....	56
§ 3. A myth was born	.....	59
§ 4. A crumbling monument	.....	60
§ 5. The final effort	.....	63
§ 6. A quarrelling family	.....	66
§ 7. Bulldozers move in	.....	69
Chapter 4. Heritage		
§ 1. The story of the angel	.....	73
§ 2. The result of a stalemate	.....	76
§ 3. A penal solution	.....	78
§ 4. Whose heritage?	.....	82
§ 5. A heritage-scape on Tinubu Square	.....	87
Conclusion	.....	93
Word of thanks	.....	96
Bibliography	.....	98

Φ

Consulted archives

Physical archives

acronym

Archives National Museum, Lagos

ANM

Kenneth Dike Library, University of Ibadan, Ibadan

KDB

National Archives, Ibadan

NAI

Land Registry, Lagos

LRL

Registry Holy Cross Cathedral, Lagos

HCC

Digital archives

acronym

African Newspapers READEX Database
Restricted access ASC Leiden

RX

Biblioteca Dixital de Galicia
<http://biblioteca.galiciiana.gal>

BDG

National Archives UK, Public Records Office
http://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/results/r?_q=FO+84

PRO



The statuette of the parapet of Casa do Fernandez in 2016. (Photographer: Ayò Akínwándé)

Φ

Introduction

The lone statuette on the parapet used to rise high above Tinubu Square, its white glazed ceramic reflecting the tropical sunlight. Every time I passed by the iconic building on one of Lagos Island's busiest squares, I used to stand still amidst the honking danfo buses and passing hawkers to look up. Even in its dilapidated state, Casa do Fernandez was impressive. With its high arched windows and wrought iron balconies it was a prime example of Brazilian architecture, built by Afro-Brazilians who had returned from slavery and settled in Lagos in the second half of the nineteenth century.

It was my favourite building in the megalopolis of Lagos where I had lived since 2012, not just because of the elegance of its eclectic architecture, but also because of the history of emancipation attached to it. When people came to visit, I would always take them on a sightseeing tour past Casa do Fernandez and tell the story of the formerly enslaved Africans who had returned from Brazil to the motherland and transformed Lagos' looks with their architecture and craftsmanship.

Until on Sunday 11 September 2016, a bulldozer came.

In a single day it razed the historical building to the ground. This happened even though Casa do Fernandez, also known as Ilojo Bar, had been listed as a National Monument since 1956 and was therefore protected under Nigeria's heritage law.¹

The next time I visited the site, only a moon landscape of rubble was left of the monument. Even the baroquish consoles that had supported the balconies looking onto the square had been sold in the streets.²

The demolition of Casa do Fernandez was condemned as illegal by both the Nigerian Federal Government and the National Commission for Museums and Monuments (NCMM).³ But its status as a national monument under the NCMM Act of 2004 had not been able to protect it from the bulldozers.⁴ How could this have happened?

This is the moment I started looking into the case of Casa do Fernandez. The first thing I discovered was how little was known about the history of this building that used to fill me with awe. The year it was built seemed to vary from publication to publication. And nobody seemed to know anything about this Fernandez' family that returned from Brazil and who according to many accounts were the first owners of the house.

How come there is so little knowledge about the history of a building declared a National Monument over sixty years ago? Could that be one of the reasons behind the monument's devastating end? Or are there legal issues at play when it comes to protecting such monuments in Nigeria?

These are the questions I hope to answer in this thesis in which Casa do Fernandez will serve as a case study. A curious case, as it happens, that will turn out to be younger and younger in age as this investigation progresses. The overarching research question is: what are the challenges preserving built heritage in Nigeria?

1 Murray, K.C., 'A list of sites, buildings and other antiquities declared to be monuments under the Antiquities Act from February 1956 to December 1964', in: *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria* (December 1967), Murray, K.C., 'A list of sites, buildings and other antiquities declared to be monuments under the Antiquities Act from February 1956 to December 1964', in: *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria*, 4: 1 (December 1967), 161-175, 161-175, 164.

2 Tubosun, K, 'Visiting the Demolition Site, Update on the demolition of Ìlójò Bar/Ọláiyá House', in *ktravula.com*, <http://www.ktravula.com/2016/09/update-on-the-demolition-of-ilojo-bar/> accessed on 7 December 2020.

3 'FG Vows to Punish Collaborators in the Demolition of 'Ilojo Bar' – a National Monument in Lagos', in *www.bellanaija.com* (January 13, 2017) <https://www.bellanaija.com/2017/01/fg-vows-to-punish-collaborators-in-the-demolition-of-ilojo-bar-a-national-monument-in-lagos/> accessed on 7 December 2020.

4 National Commission For Museums and Monuments Act, *Laws of the Federation of Nigeria 2004*.



Director General Abba Tijani of the NCMM at the signing of the MOU with the Olaiya family at the National Museum, Lagos, 15 January 2021. (photographer: Femke van Zeijl)

Ch 1. Methodology

§ 1.1. A critical approach of heritage

*'To have Brazilian architecture in Lagos, where the dominant culture is Yoruba, shows we respect the culture of other nations.'*⁵

With these words the Director General of the NCMM early 2021 described the value of national monument Casa do Fernandez.

It is interesting that the head of the federal institution in charge of Nigeria's heritage management defined a building constructed by Lagosians that has been iconic in Nigeria's biggest city for over a century as part of another nation's culture. It shows how one's definition of heritage is not necessarily connected to actual space and time. It also poses questions about the perception of heritage in general and this monument in particular. How come a Nigerian sees a local monument as Brazilian, setting it aside and therefore also excluding it from the dominant Yoruba culture? And

⁵ Director General Abba Tijani of the National Commission for Museums and Monuments in his speech at the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding between the Commission and the Olaiya family (National Museum, Lagos, 15 January 2021).

what would the otherness implied in this statement do to the public's perception of the monument?

For this thesis I am not just interested in the past, but even more in how the present has been interacting with that past. The academic discipline that explores this, is heritage studies. It is a relatively young interdisciplinary research field that grew with the institutionalisation and professionalisation of heritage protection and preservation in the West. This came with issues of definition: what, exactly, is heritage and why, and to whom? The academic field of heritage studies aims to address such issues by connecting today's views of yesterday's phenomena, be it material or immaterial.

In 1985 American geographer and historian David Lowenthal published *The Past is a Foreign Country*.⁶ He is often credited as having introduced heritage studies as a discipline in its own right and his book has long been a key text to anyone researching this domain.⁷ Already upon appearance other scholars pointed out the biases in Lowenthal's examples and views, which were steeped in Western culture as if it were the norm.⁸ Since then, criticism of the original elaboration of heritage studies has grown.

Among those critics are archeologist Innocent Pikirayi and anthropologist Peter R. Schmidt. They first describe the field of archeology in Africa as follows:

*'a discipline brought about by European colonization, archaeology was and remains a practice situated in the context of the conquered and dispossessed, who subsequently feature as "ethnographic subjects" or tribes or ethnic groups largely unconnected from pasts constructed by archaeologists.'*⁹

Then they go on to show that heritage and its management have been characterised by the same kind of top down Eurocentric approach. In the same vein, American heritage researcher Tim Winters notices a 'growing unease in Asia about the applicability of philosophies and practices of cultural conservation imported from the west'.¹⁰

The communis opinio among these academics is that not just the definition of heritage, but also the ways to preserve and protect it need to be adapted in order to better correspond with local situations. And though none of these researchers offers a one-size-fits-all solution, all of them advocate a more community based approach to heritage studies, both in the field of archaeology and

6 For this thesis I used the revised 2015 edition: Lowenthal, D., *The past is a foreign country - revisited* (Cambridge 2015).

7 Sørensen, M.L.S., and Carman, J.(ed.), *Heritage Studies, Methods and Approaches* (London and New York 2005). 18.

8 Vann Woodward, C., 'Review: The Past is a Foreign Country by David Lowenthal', in: *History and Theory* (October 1987), 26:3, 346-352, 347.

9 Schmidt, P.R., and Pikirayi, I. (ed.), *Community Archaeology and Heritage in Africa: Decolonizing Practice* (New York 2016), 1.

10 Winter, T., 'Beyond Eurocentrism? Heritage conservation and the politics of difference International Journal of Heritage Studies', in: *International Journal of Heritage Studies* (2012) 1-15.

history. To quote historian Iain Robertson: 'heritage from below'.¹¹

This new approach to heritage studies, the 2.0 version if you will, has been coined critical heritage studies (CHS). This field emphasises cultural heritage as 'a political, cultural, and social phenomenon'¹². As such, the outcome is not a petrified idea of what heritage is or should be, but a multi-faceted response that changes with time and perspective.

What draws me to this perspective, also called 'new heritage studies', is that it provides a more emancipatory approach to heritage. According to Kynan Gentry and Laurajane Smith traditional heritage studies did not pay enough attention to power structures and how they influence knowledge and the construction of ideas of heritage.¹³ Without wanting to do so, this consolidated existing imbalances.

In the African context, this blind spot has reinforced colonial perceptions of historical value and importance long after independence. In trying to combat these, one's research automatically begets an activist undertone, one I am not at all averse to. It is a logical consequence of what Nigerian heritage researcher John Kelechi Ugwuanyi describes as the common ground of CHS with decolonialism: '[Both imply] struggles against the global time and space politics that privileges Euro-America as the centre of knowledge production.'¹⁴

The definition of heritage as something old that is aesthetically pleasing and tangible is also refuted by CHS. Laurajane Smith shows how even the definition of something tangible is a mindset.¹⁵ Therefore she defines heritage as 'intangible expressions, ways "of knowing and seeing" that inform and give meaning to the material world' a view her colleagues Pikirayi and Schmidt agree with.¹⁶

What then, in the context of this research, is heritage? I will concretise Smith's definition by interpreting it as the stories that have been told and are being told about Casa do Fernandez over the years, by researchers, professionals in heritage management and most importantly the people living in and around the building. Because, as Robertson put it: '[Heritage] is about people, collectivity and individuals, and about their sense of inheritance from the past and the uses to which this sense of inheritance is put.'¹⁷ These stories have been told in countless different ways, orally and in architectural surveys, dissertations, government reports and official documents.

11 Robertson, I.J.M., *Heritage from Below* (London and New York, 2012).

12 Gentry, K, and Smith, L., 'Critical heritage studies and the legacies of the late-twentieth century heritage canon', in: *International Journal of Heritage Studies* (2009), 1.

13 Gentry and Smith, 'Critical heritage studies', 6.

14 Ugwuanyi, J.K., 'Time-space politics and heritagisation in Africa: understanding where to begin decolonisation', in: *International Journal of Heritage Studies* (2020), 1.

15 Smith, L., *The Uses of Heritage* (New York 2006), 54.

16 Schmidt, and Pikirayi, *Community Archaeology*, 6.

17 Robertson, *Heritage from Below*, 1.

§ 1.2. Borrowed toolkits

As the methodology of critical heritage studies is interdisciplinary, so are the methods it uses. In their 2005 handbook for heritage studies Sørensen and Carman identify three categories of methods: 'textual/discourse analysis; methods for investigating people's attitudes and behaviour; and methods for exploring the material qualities of heritage.'¹⁸

In the course of my research I will use all three in varying degrees. I will interview stakeholders, from the owners of the property to the civil servants charged with protecting it. More than fact findings missions, these interviews are ethnographic, in the sense that through them I try to analyse and better understand the different attitudes towards Casa do Fernandez.

I will also dig into the archives, from the Land Registry in Lagos to the Herbert Macaulay Papers in Ibadan to the colonial correspondence of the consul of the Lagos Colony to the Secretary of State in London. This I undertake not only to find out the long lost facts behind Casa do Fernandez, but also to form an idea of the values hidden in these texts concerning this heritage and what it presented. I will do so by applying critical discourse analyses to both the written and the spoken word.

Last I will explore the 'material qualities' of this heritage by analysing building style, construction of the house and special artefacts – in particular the statuette on the rooftop that turned out to tell its own remarkable story. For this part, I have to lean on the knowledge of colleagues in architecture and art history and historical renovation specialists.

In the course of this research I borrow from toolkits of all kinds of fields, but the narrative of this research is a historical one. In its essence, every story is a history. Moreover history and heritage are closely related, as Duri states: 'both history and heritage are approaches for the study of the past. They are complementary and overlapping in the sense that they can derive content about the past from each other.'¹⁹

The recent and not so recent history of Casa do Fernandez provide a logical framework in which to address all these issues. It makes sense to let the tale of the building also known as Ilojo Bar, Angel House or Olaiya House,²⁰ serve as a case study for this research.

18 Sørensen, M.L.S., and Carman, J.(ed.), *Heritage Studies, Methods and Approaches* (London and New York 2005), 2.

19 Duri, F.P.T, 'Synergy and Dissonance between History and Heritage: Problematizing Heroism and the National Heroes' Acre in the Context of Zimbabwe's Liberation War', in: Mawere, M. and Mubaya, T.R. (ed.), *Colonial Heritage, Memory and Sustainability in Africa: Challenges, Opportunities and Prospects* (Bamenda 2016), ch.13, 317.

20 Until the 1930's the building was known as Casa do Fernandez. After that, for reasons I explain later, it became most commonly referred to as Ilojo Bar, but also Olaiya House or Angel House. To avoid confusion, I will use the

§ 1.3. The concept of heritage-scape

There is one concept I should highlight in more detail in the context of my research because I will use it in the final phase to find an alternative way to present what once was the National Monument on Tinubu Square as heritage to the public. This is the relatively new concept of the heritage-scape. First clearly described in the field of heritage studies by anthropologist Mary-Catherine E. Garden in 2004²¹ it attempts to acknowledge heritage sites as 'both tangible places, that is, bounded physical space, and cultural constructs – unique and highly experiential social spaces'.²²

Garden states that all sites of heritage are landscapes, and as such do not just exist as a location on their own, but also – and even more so – in context with their surroundings. Such an interpretation will lead to a more integrated image of a heritage site within the space where it exists.²³ It seems obvious, but this context is all too often forgotten when defining a site as heritage.

Defined as a landscape, a heritage-scape comes alive, it becomes 'a protean space, “not so much artefact as in process of change”'.²⁴ Or to quote Garden's colleague anthropologist Michael A. Di Giovine: 'the concept of the heritage-scape articulates the phenomena that the meanings of heritage sites are not fixed, but negotiated and change in significance over time.'²⁵

Di Giovine worked in the tourism sector and witnessed how travel organisations, tour guides but also some academics, often presented heritage 'as a monolithic and unchangeable thing, so as to stake claim to a particular group's ideological narrative (...) obscuring other stakeholders' meanings and uses'.²⁶ This, we will see, has happened in the case of Casa do Fernandez, where the rigid definition as strictly Afro-Brazilian heritage detached the site of its cultural meaning to other groups in society and sowed the seeds of the eventual demise of the National Monument. I intend to show how a wider, more fluid interpretation of it as heritage-scape would have included more groups in society in its narrative, if not in its preservation.

Looking at a site as heritage-scape also enables a shift in interpretation from the tangible to the

name Casa do Fernandez when I cover its existence until the 1930's, and then switch to the name Ilojo Bar, which was already used for it when it was declared a monument and therefore shows up in the documents from that time. I will only use Olaiya House or Angel House sparingly in the context where it is logical to do so.

21 Garden, M, E, *The Heritagescape: Exploring the Phenomenon of the Heritage Site*, unpublished Ph.D. thesis Cambridge University (Cambridge, 2004).

22 Garden, M.E., 'The Heritagescape: Looking at heritage sites' in: Sørensen, M.L.S., and Carman, J.(ed.), *Heritage Studies, Methods and Approaches* (London and New York 2005), 271-291, 271.

23 Garden, 'The Heritagescape', 271.

24 Garden, 'The Heritagescape', 273.

25 Di Giovine, M.A., 'The Heritage-scape: Origins, Theoretical Interventions, and Critical Reception of a Model for Understanding UNESCO's World Heritage Program', in: *Via. Tourism Review* 13 (2018) 6.

26 Di Giovine, 'The Heritage-scape', 6.

less tangible forms of heritage, as Varanasi based geographer Rana P. B. Singh explains.²⁷ In the Indian context, he argues, the word often translated as heritage, *dharohara*, is even better translated as heritage-scape. That concept more accurately covers the 'deep [and spiritual] geography' connected with these sites in their cultural context in India.²⁸ Singh opposes this interpretation to the orientation of the West on built heritage, which often leads to 'monument-centric colonial efforts at restoration'.²⁹ Rather than disavowing the value of restoring efforts all together, I read Singh's interpretation as a plea for the inclusion of non-material aspects of heritage in the heritage-scape.

It should hardly be a surprise that the definition of Casa do Fernandez as heritage also stems from colonial times. My research will show that the two British antiquities officers who stood at the cradle of the building as a National Monument were also immortalising their own Western biases – and in the process showing up my own.

Already in the 1970s sociologist and anthropologist Dennison Nash exposed tourism as a form of imperialism, a means of giving a site a significance adapted to an audience of outsiders.³⁰ And Nigerian researcher Ugwuanyi defined most twentieth century heritage discourse in the colonial context as 'created by the imperial powers to serve colonial interests'.³¹ This makes redefining a heritage site in its very essence a possible act of decolonisation.

But how to systematically define something as widely interpretable and changeable as a heritage-scape? Any templated approach runs the risk of stripping the site of its meaning 'based on a process of evaluating how their unique attributes fit into a standardized (...) set of criteria', as Di Giovine describes has often been the case in the formation of UNESCO world heritage sites.³²

Here I turn to anthropologist Mary-Catherine E. Garden's approach. She aims to analyse heritage sites in a way that offers 'room for a variety of perspectives and interpretations and (is) able to identify and account for the role of change'.³³ She distinguishes three guiding principles: **boundaries**, **cohesion** and **visibility**. In this methodology they have no hierarchy, but the key component is 'the relationship and interplay of these three principles together'.³⁴

With boundaries, Garden means that the 'fencing-off, demarcating or acknowledgement of the landscape of heritage' in both the physical and the psychological sense need to be understood to be able to define a heritage-scape. Central to the second principle, cohesion, is the idea 'that all

27 Singh, R.P.B., 'Heritagescape, Urban Planning and Strategies: Studies from India', in: *Liveable, healthy, prosperous Cities for everyone. / Real Corp 2010 proceedings 2010 = Tagungsband 2010* (Vienna, 18-20 May 2010), 10.

28 Di Giovine, 'The Heritage-scape', 5.

29 Singh, 'Heritagescape', 8.

30 Nash, D., 'Tourism as a Form of Imperialism', in: Valene Smith (ed.), *Hosts and Guests* (Philadelphia, 1977), 37-52.

31 Ugwuanyi, J.K., 'Time-space politics', 12.

32 Di Giovine, 'The Heritage-scape', 4.

33 Garden, 'The Heritagescape', 274.

34 Garden, 'The Heritagescape', 275.

components – visible and invisible – of a site are interconnected' and that those connections need to be recognised, not implying that these components have to be similar.³⁵

The third guiding principle, that of visibility, is the one that in my opinion introduces the most depth into the interpretation of the heritage-scape, because Garden means it to include not only visibility, but also invisibility. Where the tangible visible components of a site are easy enough to assess by a mere visit, the intangible ones take time and effort to access. They include written and oral sources and anything that can give an idea of the meaning that was attached to the site at a particular point in time from a particular perspective.³⁶ These continue to give meaning to a site even after the visible expression of it has disappeared, as is the case for a demolished building like Casa do Fernandez.

Before I can apply these principles of the heritage-scape to the National Monument that is the subject of my thesis, I will have to uncover all these invisible sources: history, narrative, oral stories and other meanings connected to Casa do Fernandez. This explains why the guiding principles come up only near the end, bringing all the other components of this study together.

At that point, I hope that this research has illustrated Garden's exemplification of heritage sites and has done justice to its implications:

*'Heritage sites (...) do not exist as a single coherent entity. Rather, they are the result of often quite different, heterogeneous elements and, importantly, processes that over time create dynamic and changing landscapes.'*³⁷

35 Garden, 'The Heritagescape', 275.

36 Garden, 'The Heritagescape', 275-278.

37 Garden, 'The Heritagescape', 277.

§ 1.4. Limitations

In the course of my research I ran into several constraints collecting data. Some of those limitations had to do with the pandemic and measures related to it, others with the time frame I had to do my research in and some were financial.

Because I live in Lagos I was able to do fieldwork on location in spite of Covid-19 related travel restrictions. However, the social distancing guidelines of the Nigerian Centre for Disease Control did limit the possibilities of gathering with more people.³⁸ I would have liked to do group interviews with Lagosians of different backgrounds, from indigenes to Nigerians of Brazilian descent to people living and working around Tinubu Square to explore their views and knowledge of Casa do Fernandez in particular and Nigeria's Afro-Brazilian heritage in general. But that was impossible in view of the NCDC guidelines.

Instead, I used the individual interviews I had with respondents that represented these groups to form an idea of such attitudes. These open-ended interviews were both a method to gather factual information and a way to assess perceptions of heritage. Since complex questions rarely have straightforward answers, as archaeologist Marie Louise Stig Sørensen notes, the latter requires a lot of reading in between the lines.³⁹ Once the Covid restrictions no longer form an impediment, a possible follow up to this research would be conducting such group sessions to check if my deductions based on interpreting those individual interviews correspond with the attitudes and views of bigger groups in society.

Another obstacle I ran into was the limited or non accessibility of some of the archives in the first quarter of 2021. The most dramatic case was the one at the Federal High Court on Lagos Island, a five minute walk from the site of Casa do Fernandez. On October 21, 2020, in the violent aftermath of street protests against police brutality in Nigeria, this building had been set ablaze and partly went up in flames. Amongst the historical records kept there were nineteenth century files from the time Lagos was a British colony. I had hoped to find information in them about Casa do Fernandez. According to the Lagos State Chief Judge not all documents were lost, but the remaining archival material is not yet accessible to researchers.

Also I had the intention to visit the Lagos Chamber of Commerce, but was informed the public was not allowed access due to Covid related regulations. Even though I have been forewarned by

38 NCDC, *Guideline on Social Distancing* (2021), accessed on 22 May 2021, https://covid19.ncdc.gov.ng/media/files/Social_Distancing_Guide_2_pGU7xcC.pdf.

39 Stig Sørensen, M.L., 'Between the lines and in the margins: interviewing people about attitudes to heritage and identity', in: Stig Sørensen, M.L. and Carman, J. (ed.), *Heritage Studies: Methods and Approaches* (London and New York 2009), 164-177, 165.



The partly burnt Federal High Court building in January 2021. (Photograph: Femke van Zeijl)

other researchers that a lot of its documents of the colonial era have been lost, it would be worthwhile to look into the archives to see if anything related to Casa do Fernandez turns up. In the course of this research however, I was not able to do so.

Pivotal to my historical research would be the Lands Bureau where all the titles and deeds of Lagos land matters since 1861 are kept. Even though this government institution offered limited service because of Covid restrictions as well, accessing its records turned out to be challenging for a different reason.

Officially the Lands Bureau charges 3,750 naira (about 8 euros) for a single search of its records.⁴⁰ But when I first visited, the amount quoted to me was tenfold. Repeated visits were equally unsuccessful. A letter to the Permanent Secretary from my internship organisation asking for discounted access for research purposes has not been answered until today. In the end, I had to resort to hiring a law firm to put in the searches on my behalf at normal prices. Even then, I was forced to restrict my searches for budgetary reasons (I identified over 40 documents related to the piece of land Casa do Fernandez was eventually built on, and I am sure there will be more). I do think I have been able to obtain the most relevant documents, but a better funded researcher would be advised to go back to the Land Registry and continue the search.

A big impediment in doing so is that even though many of the documents have been digitised, it is not possible for the public to search the Registry by address or name of the owner, only by the title of the deed. Practically, that means you have to state the number of the deed, the page number it was written on and the volume that page finds itself in, typically things you would only know when you have actually laid eyes on the actual document already.

This restriction is, I imagine, a choice. If that is the case and there are no technical barriers to searching for other terms than the exact title of deed, Nigerian heritage organisations or academic institutions might consider lobbying for a broader access with wider search possibilities for research purposes.

Despite these limitations I have been able to gather more than enough data to tell a well documented story about Casa do Fernandez, one that I hope will encourage other researchers to dive into the subject of this particular example of Nigerian heritage as well as other ones.

40 Accessed on <https://landsbureau.lagosstate.gov.ng/schedule-of-fees/>.

§ 1.5. An explorational trilogy

This research will pursue three different but connected paths that logically follow the directions my mind took me in when I posed myself the initial question: what went wrong in the case of Casa do Fernandez?

I will explore the history of the building in the second chapter of this thesis. Primary sources, from indentures of the colonial Land Registry to 1910's scribblings of Nigeria's most famous surveyor, will show how the monument's genesis is quite different from the story that has been told since it gained its special status. I will also use secondary sources and oral history to fill out the narrative to try and build a more well-rounded story about the monument.

In chapter three of this case study I will take a closer look at the making of Casa do Fernandez as a monument. Why was the building declared a National Monument in 1956, what did that imply, and what happened since? What were the legal provisions that applied to such built heritage in Nigeria? And how come its special status in the end was not able to save it from the sledge hammers?

The final chapter ties the research together by using the findings presented in the preceding chapters in order to be able to conclude this thesis with answers to the main research question: what are the challenges for the preservation of built heritage in Nigeria? This is where my research will be treading into the field of heritage studies, to quote Lowenthal to 'survey the past not only through lenses of memory and history but also through present-day perspectives'.⁴¹

This last step is imperative, because I hope not to just contribute to a better understanding of what went wrong in the case of Casa do Fernandez, but also to help figure out how to prevent such destruction of heritage sites in the future. By now, the illegal demolition of Casa do Fernandez has become 'an ugly reference point in heritage management' – in recent words of the same Director General of Nigeria's NCMM.⁴² It is important to go beyond that and make it the stepping stone for more effective heritage management in the future.

41 Lowenthal, *The past*.

42 DG NCMM speech (National Museum, Lagos, 15 January 2021).

Ch 2. History

§ 2.1. Nineteenth century Lagos

Before looking at the story of Casa do Fernandez itself, it makes sense to paint a historic picture of the city it was built in. By the second half of the nineteenth century Lagos had become a cosmopolitan trade hub, as Kirstin Mann describes in her book on Lagos' history. What had once been an island fishing community had started changing and growing with the advent of the Trans-Atlantic slave trade.⁴³

Lagosians initially shipped people across the lagoon to sell at the nearby Europeans slave ports in Ouidah and Badagry on what was at the time known as the Slave Coast.⁴⁴ By the late eighteenth century Lagos had become an important hub itself.⁴⁵ During the transatlantic slave trade about a million people were shipped from Ouidah, making that coastal city in current day Benin Republic the largest exporter of human beings on the Bight of Benin. Lagos however would become the second largest port of export.⁴⁶

The obas (traditional kings), his chiefs and other rulers in the area profited most from the trade, enabling them to buy arms, canoes and more people to sell to the Europeans.⁴⁷ It also introduced strangers in the small kingdom, when by the end of the eighteenth century Oba Akinshemoyin invited Portuguese and Brazilian slave traders to settle in the city.⁴⁸ It was not until the abolition of the international slave trade by Brazil in 1850 that the Lagos population truly saw a change.⁴⁹ This was caused by the influx of Africans returning from the Americas.

Out of ten Africans leaving the Bight of Benin between 1601 and 1867, six were taken to Bahia in Brazil.^{50,51} After the Brazilian abolition of slave trade in 1850, and of slavery in 1888, many of those Africans decided to return to their homeland (see illustration 1 on page 18).^{52,53}

43 Mann, K., *Slavery and the Birth of an African City: Lagos, 1760–1900* (Bloomington and Indianapolis, 2007), 36.

44 Mann, *Slavery*, 35.

45 Eltis, D. and Richardson, D. (ed.), *Routes to Slavery: Direction, Ethnicity and Mortality in the Transatlantic Slave Trade* (London 1997) 16.

46 Eltis, *Routes*, 22.

47 Mann, *Slavery*, 4.

48 Smith, R., 'The Lagos Consulate, 1851-1861: An Outline', in: *The Journal of African History* (Cambridge, 1974) 15:3, 393-416, 395.

49 Mann, *Slavery*, 12.

50 Mann, *Slavery*, 32.

51 Eltis, *Routes*, 20.

52 Carneiro da Cunha, M., *Negros, estrangeiros: Os escravos libertos e sua volta a África* (São Paulo 2012), 249.

53 There had been an earlier wave of returnees from Brazil in the 1830s after the Malê rebellion in Salvador de Bahia, but they had mostly settled in Ouidah. For the course of this thesis I only highlight the later migration to Lagos, but the overall nineteenth century returnee movement from Brazil is well documented by Lisa Earl Castillo: Earl

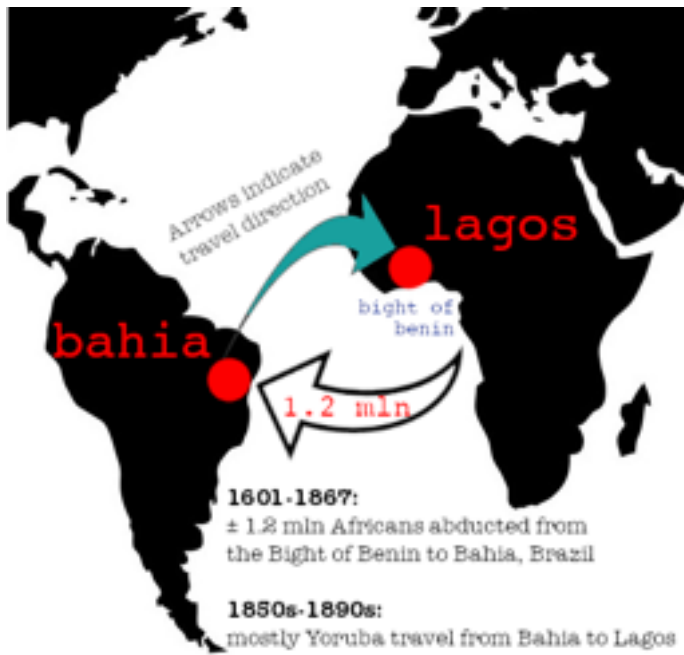


Illustration 1. Transatlantic movements:
white arrow represents Africans shipped to Brazil,
the blue one returnees who came to Lagos.

Home here should not be taken literally. To the heterogeneous group of returnees, 'home was more a general idea of Africa, not necessarily connected to the exact location of their roots'.⁵⁴

Rather they chose their destination for practical reasons. The returnees tended to favour coastal towns, not just because of the trade opportunities they offered, but also because they feared the risk of re-enslavement in the areas more inland.⁵⁵

Lagos had all of that and more. In 1861 the British had seized the city under the guise of the fight against the thriving slave trade in the kingdom. And even though the

British had ulterior motives – they saw economic opportunities in the trade in cotton and at a later point palm oil⁵⁶ – their newly found abolitionist position on slavery assured the returnees they would not to be taken captive again. This attracted not only people returning from Brazil, but also from Cuba and Sierra Leone.⁵⁷ In Lagos society these groups would become known as Agudas (Afro-Brazilians and Cubans) and Saros (Sierra Leoneans). These relatively well educated newcomers would change the face of Lagos.⁵⁸

Once the Afro-Brazilians had discovered Lagos' attraction, the Aguda community in the city grew fast. In the year Benjamin Campbell was appointed Consul to Lagos in 1853, the Brit counted about 130 families of returnees from Brazil. In 1889 the total number of Afro-Brazilians in Lagos had jumped to five thousand, which was one in every seven residents.⁵⁹

Castillo, L., 'Mapping the nineteenth-century Brazilian returnee movement: Demographics, life stories and the question of slavery', in *Atlantic Studies*, 13:1, 25-52.

54 A. Quayson, 'City of Youth and Mellow Elusiveness: Accra's Cosmopolitan Constellations', in B. Robbins and P. Lemos Horta (ed.), *Cosmopolitanisms* (New York 2017) 215-229, 224.

55 Amos, A.M., 'The amaras and Agudas: The Afro-Brazilian returnee community in Nigeria in the nineteenth century', in N. Afolabi, *The Yorubas in Brazil, Brazilians in Yorubaland* (Durham 2017) 65-111, 65.

56 Mbaeyi, P.M., Lagos and the British, 1871-1874, in: *Ikenga* (January 1972), 1:1, 27-42, 27.

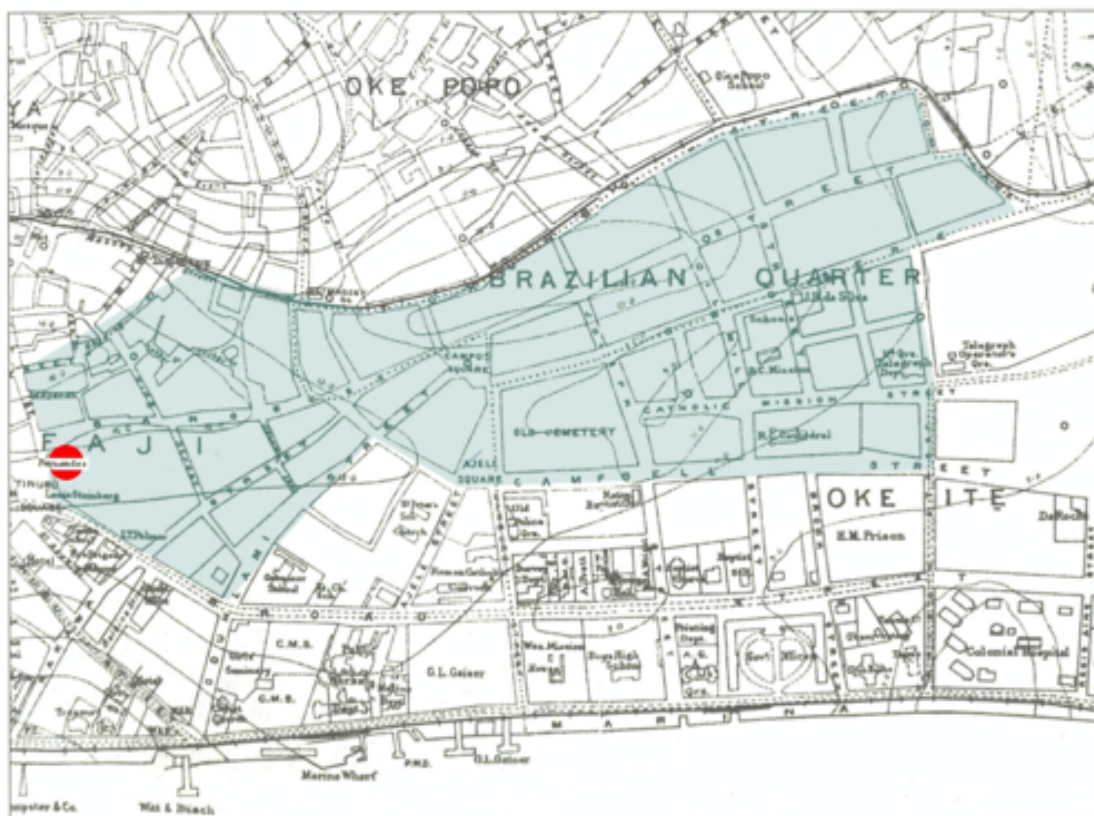
57 Castillo, 'Mapping', 34.

58 The returnees to Lagos were not the first Africans returning from Brazil. This movement started in the early nineteenth century after the Malê rebellion in Bahia in 1835. Those returnees had settled mostly in Ouida. O. Ojo, 'Afro-Brazilians in Lagos: Atlantic commerce, kinship and trans-nationalism', in Kwah, *Back to Africa*, 232-260, 236.

59 Ojo O., 'Amazing Struggle: Dasalu, global Yoruba Networks, and the fight against slavery, 1851-1856, in: *Atlantic Studies* (2015), 21:1, 5-25, 14.

Campbell favoured the returnees over the native population, hoping the former would provide him with a base of support. He saw the mostly Yoruba speaking returnees as a go-between for the British and the local Yoruba ⁶⁰ and facilitated the settlement of the returnees in Lagos in various ways.⁶¹

The returnees themselves also figured they had a 'civilising' role to play, if the words of Joaquim Nicolas de Brito are anything to go by. On 4 August 1851 this returnee explained in a letter why he and his fellow travellers wanted to return to Africa. That was not just to go back to their homeland, but also 'because the natives of that place have had for many years been desirous to acquire European Civilization.'⁶² The perceived superiority complex of the returnees was ill received by the locals: didn't the newcomers remember that they were the ones who had been enslaved in the first place?⁶³



Map of the Brazilian Quarter in Lagos in 1908 The red dot indicates the location of Casa do Fernandez. (Source: The National Archives, TNA/CO/7000/Lagos 31/1908, UK copy)

60 Paris, M., 'African returnees from Brazil and Cuba in nineteenth century Lagos', in Afolabi, N. and Falola, T., *The Yoruba in Brazil, Brazilians in Yorubaland* (Durham 2017) 111-126, 119.

61 Castillo, 'Mapping', 36.

62 Lima e Souza, M., *Entre Margens: O retorno a Africa de libertos de Brazil 1830-1870*, post-graduate dissertation Fluminense Federal University (Rio de Janeiro, 2008) 245.

63 Ojo-Ade, F., 'Afro-Brazilians in Lagos: Atlantic commerce, kinship and trans-nationalism', K.K. Prah (ed.), *Back to Africa: Afro-Brazilian Returnees and their Communities* (Cape Town 2009) 274-301, 222.

The native population saw themselves as the rightly owners and inhabitants of the land, and the returnees as mere settlers. Campbell's favouritism did not go down well and created an animosity between the groups that I have noticed tinges of until today.⁶⁴

Governor Campbell designated a special area on Lagos Island for the settlement of the returnees, which further separated the newcomers from the local population. What until today is known as the Brazilian Quarter, or Popo Aguda, quickly distinguished itself in its cleanliness and wealth. Nineteenth century visitors to Lagos remarked on the superior sanitary conditions and affluence of the Brazilian Quarter, a sharp contrast to the northwest area of the island where the indigenes lived.⁶⁵

As in other African ports where the repatriates had settled, like Ouidah and Porto Novo, they had built their houses after the image of the places they had left in Brazil, with brightly painted facades and paned windows framed by cast mouldings.⁶⁶ The professions the Afro-Brazilian returnees brought back with them from exile enabled the construction: while the women were bakers, laundresses and dressmakers, most of the men were craftsmen skilled in carpentry, painting, black-smithery or building.⁶⁷



The sobrado de Madalina in Recife, Brazil, a typical example of this colonial Portuguese building style.
(Source: Wikimedia Commons, photographer: Paulo Camelo)

The first structures the Agudas built were modest one storey houses, but they quickly started adding floors. Later still some of the Brazilians who had made their fortune in trade or construction built proper sobrados, the multi-storeyed town houses that you also find in former Portuguese colonies like Angola and Brazil. The contrast between the local traditional mud houses and the richly decorated Brazilian villas could not have been greater,⁶⁸ which only fed the antagonism of the locals against the returnees⁶⁹

64 In open interviews I had with Lagos indigenes and Brazilian descendants on Lagos Island, the remnants of this dissent shine through in little ways, for example when they refer to the other with lightly pejorative terms such as 'those people' or 'the natives', even though these same people when asked straightforwardly would deny there is any discordance between the groups.

65 Lindsay, L. A., 'To return to the bosom of their fatherland: Brazilian immigrants in nineteenth-century Lagos' in: *Slavery & Abolition* (1994) 15:1, 22-50, 35.

66 Verger, P., *Flux et reflux de la traite des nègres entre le Golfe de Bénin et Bahia de Todos os Santos du XVII au XIXe siècle* (Paris, 1968), 14.

67 A.B. Laotan, *The Torch Bearers or Old Brazilian Colony in Lagos* (Lagos, 31 January 1943) 6.

68 Amos, 'The Amaros', 78.

69 Baker, P., *Urbanization and political change: The politics of Lagos, 1917-1967* (Berkeley, 1974) 24-25.

By the end of the century, a change in colonial policy led to a rapprochement between the two groups. When the British decided to govern the colony more directly, they no longer needed the returnees as their allies. It cost the returnees the privileges that had given them their elite status, but it also brought them closer to the Yoruba population. From the last decade of the nineteenth century the Agudas and Saros started mixing and mingling with their Yoruba neighbours, getting active in local political and cultural life.⁷⁰

Meanwhile the trade opportunities in timber and, more importantly, palm oil – the Industrial Revolution in Europe creating an unquenchable thirst for this machine lubricant – had drawn another group of newcomers to Lagos after 1850: European businessmen who were involved in 'legitimate' commerce. By 'legitimate' I mean the international trade that did not involve the by then illegal slave trade. I realise that, as Robin Law points out, this is a problematic Eurocentric term, as the trade in human beings once was also 'legitimate'.⁷¹ In this context I use it to distinguish these European traders from the slave traders who had established their businesses in Lagos earlier.

The arrival of these 'legitimate' traders was a sign of expanded economic opportunities, opportunities that small scale traders like the returnees who had come to Lagos with a little money to invest also benefited from.⁷² Most of the Europeans came and went, so the actual number of European residents in Lagos was not high: by 1881 the Lagos Island population had grown to 38,000, of which a mere 11 were Europeans.⁷³ But the European influence on Lagos life had nothing to do with numbers.

The educated Saro and Aguda tended to adhere to the European values they had brought back with them⁷⁴ and adopted European habits. So the Lagos elite visited classical concerts and the opera together,⁷⁵ went to the Holy Cross Cathedral (built and financed by returnees) or Shitta Bey Mosque (ibidem) and sent their children to British finishing schools.⁷⁶ And after ornate European funerals they buried their dead in polished French coffins.⁷⁷

In this cosmopolitan, booming city once stood a house, right on the western edge of the Brazilian Quarter. This was the house people called Casa do Fernandez.

70 Amos, A.M., 'The amaros and Agudas: The Afro-Brazilian returnee community in Nigeria in the nineteenth century', in N. Afolabi, *The Yorubas in Brazil, Brazilians in Yorubaland* (Durham 2017) 65-111, 98.

71 Meant is here the trade that did not involve the by then illegal slave trade. As Robin Law points out this is a problematic Eurocentric term since the trade in slave once was also 'legitimate', but since the term is so widely used in this context I will do so as well. Law, R. (ed.), *From slave trade to 'legitimate' commerce: The commercial transition in nineteenth-century West Africa* (Cambridge, 1995), 26.

72 Mann, K, 'The struggle for labor at Lagos', in: Law, *From Slave Trade*, 144-171, 164.

73 Echeruo, M.J.C., *Victorian Lagos: Aspects of Nineteenth Century Lagos Life* (1977), 37.

74 Echeruo, 35.

75 Echeruo, 31.

76 Echeruo, 43.

77 Echeruo, 31.

§ 2.2. What the books say

Casa do Fernandez, or Ilojo Bar in most modern time publications, is mentioned here and there in academic literature, but mostly briefly and in the context of noteworthy Brazilian-style buildings in Lagos or West-Africa or as a listed national monument in Nigeria.⁷⁸ Rarely did I find more elaborate descriptions of the building. Architect William Murray Jack who worked at the Public Works Department in Nigeria in the 1950s describes it a bit more detailed as 'one of the oldest and most interesting houses in Lagos', 'reminiscent of a Venetian palace'. He also remarks that the varying window patterns in the facade suggest it was built in two stages.⁷⁹

He does not dare to assign a year to the building, as he notes it is hard to determine the dates of erection of these Brazilian houses, 'since few records were kept and the plans were mostly transmitted from memory'.⁸⁰

Others are less hesitant to put a date on the building on Tinubu Square. The earliest year I have found is quoted by Adédoyin Tẹ́riba in his dissertation on Afro-Brazilian architecture in Nigeria.⁸¹ He writes that Casa do Fernandez was built in 1846. Because of that very early date – remember the returnees did not start coming to Lagos in large numbers until the 1850s – he goes on to label it the oldest Lagosian home built by the Agudas.

What does he base that far-reaching conclusion on? Tẹ́riba mentions two publications as the source of this information, one from 1994⁸² and one from 1999.⁸³ Looking at those publications, the latter does not mention where the information came from, leaving only the 1994 dissertation of Marjorie Moji Dolapo Alonge as the source for dating Casa do Fernandez so early.

Alonge wrote an important pamphlet advocating the preservation of Nigeria's Afro-Brazilian architecture. In four case studies she covers examples of that style, one of which is Casa do Fernandez. She bases her information about the provenance and year of build of the house on the same person, Mr Omojala Olaiya.⁸⁴ In two subsequent interviews this Olaiya family member told her all she wanted to know about the monument, which she then presented as fact.

78 Aig-Imoukhuede, F., *A Handbook of Nigerian Culture* (1992), 73 / Ogeye, O.O., 'Towards an Architectural Identity: Learning from the Communication Method of Contemporary Nigerian Art' in: *International Journal of Architecture, Arts and Applications* (2019), 5:2, 37-41, 39 / Lawanson and Adejumo, *Integrating Heritage Sites Into Contemporary Urban Areas - The Case Of The Lagos Metropolis* (Lagos, 2012), 8

79 Jack, W.M., 'Old houses of Lagos', in: *Nigeria: A Quarterly Magazine of General Interest* (1955) 46, 96-177, 110.

80 Jack, 'Old houses of Lagos', 108.

81 Tẹ́riba, A., *Afro-Brazilian Architecture in Southwest Colonial Nigeria (1890s-1940s)*, Phd thesis Princeton University (June 2017), Volume I, 80.

82 Alonge, M., *Afro-Brazilian Architecture in Lagos State: A Case for Conservation*, Phd thesis University of Newcastle upon Tyne (Newcastle, 1994), 263.

83 Akinyeye, A.O., *Eko: Landmarks of Lagos, Nigeria* (Lagos, 1999), 61-62.

84 Alonge, *Afro-Brazilian Architecture*, appendix 3c.

It is audacious to base a claim on one single oral source, especially one who tells such colourful stories, without double-checking. The one 'fact' that Alonge brings in to corroborate the early year of built, is the architectural style of Casa do Fernandez. According to her it is built in the Gothic-Revival style, which she claims implies it was built 'before the Afro-Brazilian style had become established'.⁸⁵

The most cited year I came across online is 1855, which seems to stem from the Wikipedia entry about Ilojo Bar⁸⁶ that seems to base itself on a 2002 publication on tourism in Nigeria.⁸⁷ I have not been able to find that publication, so I cannot tell what the source of that information is. Its prevalence in popular media suggests that the mention of the year 1855 is the outcome of a quick Google search by the respective authors.

This pattern I have seen both in academic and mass media publications, when information is copied from the internet that subsequently lives on in other writings. It makes it hard to identify the original source, because it has been omitted or lost sight of.

The quote that the building is 161 years old also turns up here and there.⁸⁸ That appears to be based on an online article in Nigerian newspaper The Nation published in 2016 that mentions it 'standing for 161 years', which refers to the same year of 1855.⁸⁹ And for the sake of full disclosure I should also mention that I myself once wrote in a New York Times article that Casa do Fernandez was 'built in the mid-19th century'.⁹⁰

John Godwin, the British architect who at different points in time was involved in efforts to preserve Casa do Fernandez, is more careful with the house's age. Godwin and his photographer wife Gillian Hopwood published a photo book in 2015, a reflection of their many decades in Lagos. In that book they prudently put the year of built at 'circa 1880'.⁹¹

Unfortunately they don't reveal what they base that on, but in a report at the National Museum I did find an indication.⁹² It says: 'from a file of copy correspondence which came to Prof Godwin's hand some years ago the following information can be obtained.' This is followed by a list of

85 Alonge, *Afro-Brazilian Architecture*, 264.

86 Ilojo Bar, in: *Wikipedia*, accessed on 2 May 2021, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ilojo_Bar#cite_note-OkpokoOkpoko2002-3

87 I have not been able to find this source, but on Wikipedia the reference is: Okpoko A.I. and Okpoko, A.I., *Tourism in Nigeria* (2002).

88 Sawyer, L., *Plotting the Prevalent but Undertheorised Residential Areas of Lagos: Conceptualising a Process of Urbanisation Through Grounded Theory and Comparison* (2016) 41 / Gant, K., *Eko o ni Baje (May Lagos Be Indestructible): Lens-based Representations of Transformation in Lagos, Nigeria, 1990-2001* (Austin, 2017), 158.

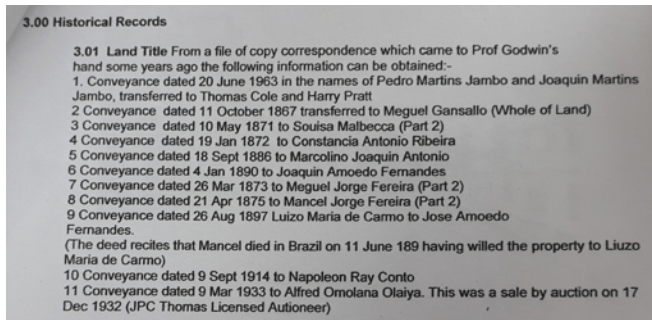
89 No author, '161-year-old Ilojo Bar demolished', in: *thenationonlineng.net* (13 September 2016), accessed on 2 May 2021, <https://thenationonlineng.net/161-year-old-ilojo-bar-demolished/>.

90 Van Zeijl, F., 'Running Deep: The Roots of a Juju Superstar', in: *New York Times* (25 October 2015), accessed online on 19 February 2021, <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/10/25/travel/nigerian-music-king-sunny-ade.html>.

91 Hopwood, G. and Godwin, W.J.G., *A Photographers Odyssey: Lagos Island 1954-2014* (Lagos, 2015), 62.

92 ANM, *National Commission for Museums and Monuments, Saving Our Heritage. The Ilojo Bar National Monument* (no year) 2.

conveyances from 1863 till 1933. On that list, for the first time, the name Fernandez turns up: in 1890. Which is in fact the most recent year of built I have chanced upon in the publications. I cannot establish though if this is based upon this list of deeds, because the article in question does not mention a source for this information.⁹³



*Godwin's list of deeds with missing titles in the publication at the archives of the National Museum in Lagos.*⁵⁰

Godwin seems to have been the only one who ever looked into what the historical records might reveal about the origin of the national monument. The eleven documents and multitude of names he listed certainly offer a foothold for further research. If only he had mentioned the titles of the deeds! That would have enabled searching for them in the Land Registry. But Godwin limits the information to names and dates, terms that are unsearchable at the Lands Bureau at the moment. I have contacted the sympathetic nonagenarian, but he was not able to retrieve the source of his information either. This incomplete find did give direction to my research though: the many indentures connected to the plot Casa do Fernandez once stood on might give away some of its secrets.

So much for the building's age. What about its provenance?

There are few publications that try to answer that question. Most popular media stick with a generic 'built by returnees from Brazil' or 'owned by and Afro-Brazilian family' or something similar. Alonge's is the only academic publication that looks a bit further into Casa do Fernandez' history and the identity of its first owner.

The story she tells – which Teriba repeats⁹⁴ – is based on that same oral source, Mr Omojala Olaiya. This is what she writes based on her interviews with him:

*'The Fernandez House was built in 1846 to serve both as a residence and as a 'punishment house' for slaves. The original owner was a slave merchant called Fernandez who was of Afro-Brazilian descent.'*⁹⁵

If there is any truth in this, or if the story is different, is what I will investigate in the coming paragraphs.

93 Akande, A, '19th Century Conflagrations and the Architectural Landscape of Lagos', in: *Lagos Journal of Architecture* (July 2015), 1.

94 Teriba, *Afro-Brazilian*, 80.

95 Alonge, *Afro-Brazilian Architecture*, 263.

§ 2.3. Secrets in the margins

The experts I contacted raised their eye brows when I suggested the earliest years mentioned for the building of Casa do Fernandez. They found it unlikely. According to historian Lisa Earl Castillo, an authority on the Brazilian returnee movement, the returnees did not start out building such monumental behemoths, but began with more modest structures. It was not until the last decades of the nineteenth century they had gained enough wealth to build bigger and more boastful houses.⁹⁶

What then about Alonge's analysis that Casa do Fernandez' was built in Gothic-Revival style 'before the Afro-Brazilian style was established'? Carla Rabelo Costa of Brazil's National Historic and Artistic Heritage Institute IPHAN does not share her analysis. According to this architect specialised in Brazilian style architecture, the monument shows all the characteristics of the eclectic architecture that came en vogue in Brazil in the second half of the century. And judging the building elements, she rather puts the year of built near the end of the nineteenth, even early twentieth century.⁹⁷

Time for a visit to the Land Registry. Challenging though it was, in the end I did manage to dig up several relevant documents connected to the plot on the corner of Tinubu Square and Bamgbose Street. Their secrets turned out to be hidden in the margins, where the colonial registrar often sketched a map of the plot being sold.

Looking at those sketches, the first thing to note is that for a long time the corner of Tinubu Square and Bamgbose Street, the land Casa do Fernandez stood on, consisted of several plots owned by different people. That realisation offers the beginning of this riddle's solution: the era of construction of Casa do Fernandez could likely be traced to the moment the entire piece of land fell into the hands of the same person.

As it happens, this person turned out to be Mr Fernandez. And he acquired the whole of it much later than any of the publications fathomed. I will show this by listing the relevant deeds I found in the Registry and the people involved, from the earliest mention of the name Fernandez of 1890 till when he sells it again in 1914.

This list will be accompanied by an illustration comparing the maps in the margins with the ground floor map of the measured drawing of Casa do Fernandez from 2012, thus making visible how I reached my conclusions (see illustration 2 on page 26).

96 From a phone interview with Lisa Earl Castillo on 2 October 2020.

97 From a phone interview with Carla Rabelo Costa on 26 May 2021.

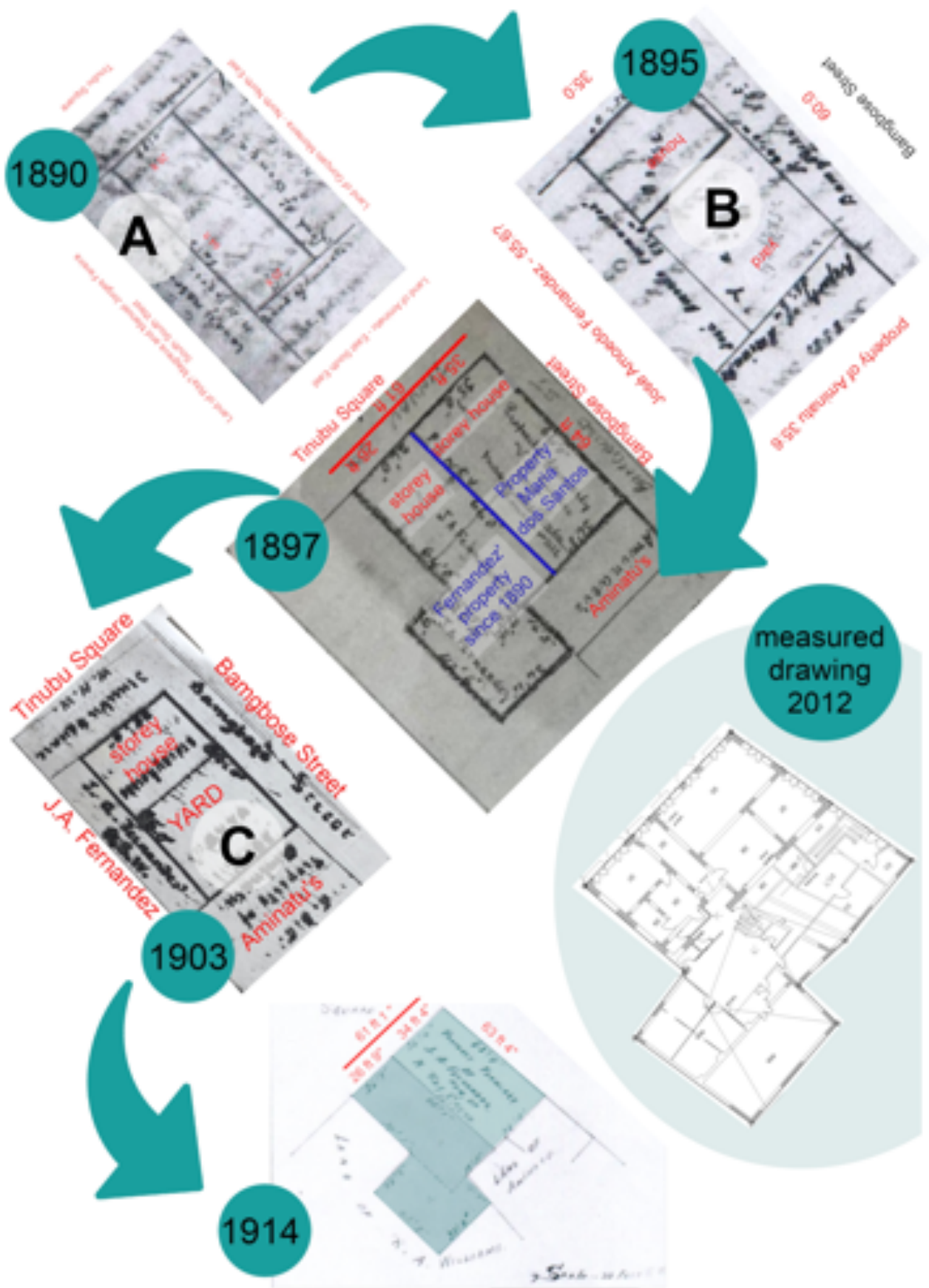


Illustration 2. The plots drawn in the margins on the official documents over time compared to the measured drawing of Casa do Fernandez done in 2012.

1890: On the 4th of January, trader Marcolino Joaquin Antonio sells a plot on Tinubu Square to his fellow trader José Amoedo Fernandes (spelled with an -s⁹⁸). This plot (marked A on the illustration) only covers a part of the land Casa do Fernandez was eventually built on (to compare, see the circled ground floor map of the monument). Fernandez did not appear to have bought the entire plot at the same time.⁹⁹

1895: This is confirmed in this document, where another trader by the name of Gonçalo M. Lopes sells the plot adjacent to Fernandez' piece of land on the corner of Tinubu Square and Bamgbose Street (marked B) to Vicente R. Guedes. The map indicates that plot has a yard in the back, something the later Casa do Fernandez not have.¹⁰⁰

1897: This deed does not cover a sale, but an arrangement between two neighbours on plots A and B. By then, as the deed states, Mr Guedes died at sea in 1895. For lack of other heirs apparent the property was inherited by his mother Maria dos Santos. She and Fernandez agree that the wall separating their properties will be maintained by Mr Fernandez. This document implies that between 1890 and 1897 Fernandez built a storey house on his own piece of land, as the map in the margin marks two storey houses on the adjacent plots on Tinubu Square. The mention of the wall and the continued existence of the yard suggest these are still separate buildings.¹⁰¹

1903: On the 5th of May of this year, for the very first time, the entire plot falls into the hands of one person: José Amoedo Fernandez, as Maria dos Santos sells him her property. Still, the yard behind the storey house is clearly indicated (marked C).¹⁰²

1914: José Amoedo Fernandez sells the entire plot to merchant Napoleon Rey Couto. This map finally shows the contours of Casa do Fernandez' ground floor (highlighted in blue). The yard has disappeared and instead a built entity shows up very much resembling the national monument. This suggests that as a whole, Casa do Fernandez was built between 1903 and 1914.¹⁰³

98 Ordinarily the name Fernandez spelled with a -z would indicate Spanish provenance, whereas an -s at the end indicates Portuguese origin. The problem is that the British used bot interchangeably. The last character of this family name in the context of this research therefore does not necessarily give away whether the name stems from a Lusophone or Hispanophone tradition.

99 LRL, No 96 of Volume 16 at Page 328 at the Registry Office at Lagos (1890).

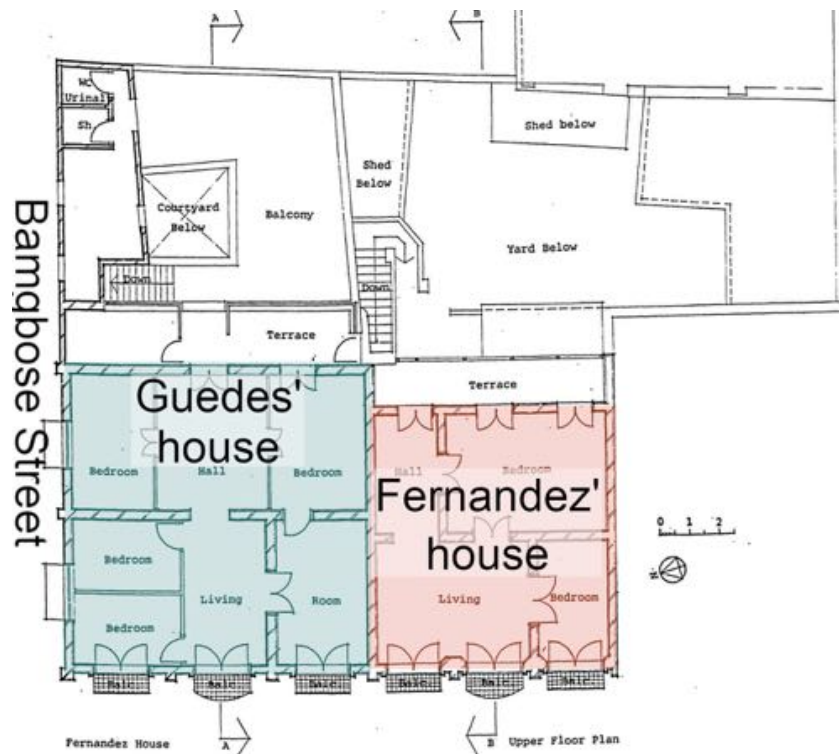
100 LRL, No 37 of Volume 26 at Page 134 at the Registry Office at Lagos (1895).

101 LRL, No 34 of Volume ? at Page 120 at the Registry Office at Lagos (1897).

102 LRL, No 28 of Volume 43 at Page 90 at the Registry Office at Lagos (1903).

103 LRL, No 113 of Volume 84 at Page 423 at the Registry Office at Lagos (1914).

These indentures found in the colonial records imply that Casa do Fernandez as we knew it was much less old than previously thought. They also suggest that the house was built in different stages, starting 1890. Remember that Murray Jack already mentioned this possibility in 1955.¹⁰⁴ To figure out if that conclusion could be correct, I will first have to find out who José Amoedo Fernandez was.



Tinubu Square

Using the plan Marjorie Alonge drew of the monument, I have indicated the plots which together formed Casa do Fernandez as we knew it, that were in different hands before 1903: Guedes and Fernandez. (Alonge, Afro-Brazilian Architecture, 267)

¹⁰⁴ Jack, 'Old houses of Lagos', 110.

§ 2.4. An unexpected tale of emancipation

José Amoedo Fernandez was not an easy person to find. He is not mentioned in any publications about the Afro-Brazilian community in Salvador de Bahia nor in the books that paint a picture of the community of Brazilian returnees in Lagos.

Turning to primary sources, I searched the dusty registry of the Holy Cross Cathedral on Lagos Island, where the baptism and death records are kept from the 1860s onwards. The Brazilian returnees who had come back to Africa as catholics attended this church, making it a database most researchers into Lagos' Afro-Brazilian heritage turn to. Also, it is a mere five minute walk from Casa do Fernandez, so already I imagined Mr Fernandez strolling to Mass on Sunday mornings. But nowhere in the termite eaten pages did I find the full name José Amoedo Fernandez.

I did come across many other Fernandez'. One in particular stood out: a Mariano Miguel Fernandez. He and his wife Dominga stood at the baptismal font as god parents of many newborns in the parish from the 1880s onwards¹⁰⁵, until he died of dysentery at the age of 55 in 1912.

Taking this for a sign of respectability, I decided to look into this person. Who knows this well respected Mariano Miguel could lead me to a namesake wealthy enough to build himself a monumental house on Tinubu Square.

I looked this other Fernandez up in Paynes' Almanack about the Lagos Colony, published yearly from 1882 and among others listing businessmen and professionals. There he was in the 1894 version on page 42: Mariano Miguel Fernandez, a cabinet maker from Massey Street. An expected find: a man practicing a typical returnees' craft and living in Popo Aguda. But nothing tying him to Casa do Fernandez.

Then my eyes went three rows up in the same almanac, to the following mention: *'Fernandes, José Almida (s), trader, Tinubu Square'*.¹⁰⁶ Could that be the person I was looking for?

It was not until I collected the first deeds of the Land Registry that José Amoedo Fernandez' showed his true colours. The conveyance of 1914, when he sells the property, not only mentions his name, but also states where he comes from:

*'José Amoedo Fernandez, Merchant of Pontevedra Puente Caldelas Villa "Fornelo" in the Kingdom of Spain'*¹⁰⁷

José Amoedo Fernandez turned out to be a Spaniard from a town in Galicia, not far from the Portuguese border.

105 Entries 1337, 1326, 1463, 2897, 4536, 4679, 5028, 5179, *Holy Cross Cathedral Baptismal Register 1863-1907*.

106 *Payne's Lagos and West African Almanac & Diary – 1894*, (Lagos, 1894), 42.

107 LRL, No 113 of Volume 84 at Page 423 at the Registry Office at Lagos (1914).



Galician water carriers in Lisbon in the early twentieth century.
(Source: Arquivo Municipal de Lisboa, photographer: Joshua Benoliel)

Now I knew I was not looking for a Brazilian returnee, the search became easier and the results more encouraging. The records I found from Lagos to Europe to the Americas enable me to draw a general picture of José Amoedo Fernandez' life.

*'The Portuguese go to Brazil, we go to Portugal. It is closer by, the roads are better and one can make more money.'*¹⁰⁸

These words of a Galician quoted in an early nineteenth century Portuguese collection of essays describe a phenomenon that was centuries old: Galician migration to Portugal.¹⁰⁹

The migration from this rural area was largely poverty driven after a population explosion in Galicia had made farm land scarce.¹¹⁰ It did not help that Galicians were often treated like second class citizens in their own country by the government in far away Madrid.¹¹¹ Their mother tongue made moving to Portugal relatively easy: the Gallego language has almost as much in common with

108 Phrase from Portuguese writer Eduardo de Noronha's 1912 book of essays *Memorias de um gallego*, quoted by González Lopo (see next note).

109 González Lopo, D.L., 'Gallegos en Portugal, una emigración (casi) olvidada (1700-1950)', in: Rocha-Trindade, M.B. (ed.), *Migrações, permanências e diversidades* (Porto, 2009) 187-215, 203, translation by the author.

110 González Lopo, 'Gallegos en Portugal', 188-189.

111 Del Rosário Albán, M., *A Imigração Galega Na Bahia* (Salvador, Bahia, 1983), 9.

Portuguese as with Spanish. But even in the neighbouring country the Gallego migrants, mostly single men¹¹², were often the object of ridicule and discrimination.¹¹³

At a 1872 Christmas Eve dinner in the Portuguese harbour city of Porto a Galician journalist counted many of his countrymen at the table. Among the 26 attendees were 15 Galicians, the majority of which came from Pontevedra, the province just north of Porto that Fernandez also hails from. Of course this is just an anecdote, but statistics also show that many Galician immigrants to Portugal came from Fernandez' area.¹¹⁴

By the end of the nineteenth century the once thriving economy of Portugal had collapsed as the country had missed the boat when it came to industrialisation and education of its population. That made Galicians explore greener pastures. Especially after a particularly bad harvest in 1853, known in Galicia as the Year of Hunger, the overseas journey to Brazil in search of economic opportunities seemed a more viable option to young men seeking a better living.¹¹⁵

As so often happens with economic migrants, they were attracted by the stories of some of their countrymen who had preceded them and had made their fortune in Salvador de Bahia,¹¹⁶ the same place where many of the Africans abducted from the Bight of Benin had ended up. And again, the biggest part of the Galician immigrants to Bahia came from the rural areas in Pontevedra, Galicia.¹¹⁷ Exactly like Senhor José Amoedo Fernandez.

But many an immigrants' hopes of wealth and fortune were shattered once they had reached their destination. Most Galicians could only just afford a third class ticket on a ship from Vigo, Pontevedra's capital, to Brazil and arrived in Bahia poorly fed and destitute. Their lives were usually poverty ridden, and even in Brazil they were looked down upon by the other Europeans. The majority did not see the dream come true of making a fortune abroad and returning to Europe flush with money.¹¹⁸ But not all Galicians fared so badly.

I suspect that our Senhor Fernandez joined his fellow Galicians on their quest for a better life to Porto and/or to Brazil, and that he did so more successfully than most, returning to his Galician village a wealthy businessman. In that sense, the story of the owner of Casa do Fernandez might indeed be a tale of emancipation. Not one of returnees to Africa, but of a second class citizen returning to Europe.

112 González Lopo, 'Gallegos en Portugal', 210.

113 Pazos Justo, C., 'Galegos, Galego-Portugueses ou Espanhóis? Hipóteses e contributos para a análise das orígens e funções da imagem actual da Galiza e dos Galegos em Portugal', in: *Diacrítica: Revista do Centro de Estudos Humanísticos* (Braga, 2012), 435.

114 González Lopo, 'Gallegos en Portugal', 187.

115 Del Rosário, *A Imigração*, 10.

116 Del Rosário Albán,, *A Imigração*, 10.

117 Del Rosário Albán,, *A Imigração*, 27.

118 Del Rosário, *A Imigração*, 13, 19.

The evidence connecting José Amoedo Fernandez to this story of economic migration is mostly circumstantial. I have not been able to search for proof of his migration in for example customs records. Time, money and travel restrictions during the pandemic made the archives where such documents might be kept in Portugal or Brazil inaccessible to me. To explore these would be a valuable follow up to my research, but I think the sources I did find paint a plausible picture of the life of this enterprising man.

§ 2.5. The Rodrigues Guedes brothers

The paper trail starts in 1890, when José Amoedo Fernandez bought his first plot in Lagos, on Tinubu Square. At the time, he was just 24 years old.¹¹⁹ He acquired it for £228¹²⁰, a considerable amount for a young migrant just starting up. I have been wondering how a relatively young Spaniard far away from home could afford such a purchase. Had he left Galicia less destitute than his fellow Galicians usually were? In that case, I would have thought the Galician newspapers would have mentioned the departure of such a wealthy citizen in the 1880s, or at least his name would have popped up in some manner in that earlier era, but I discovered no mention of him in the Galician newspapers I found online.¹²¹ Could he have succeeded so early in life because of his talent for business? Maybe.

There is a third possibility: that he had a mentor or partners, someone who helped him and gave financial support. Enter the Rodrigues Guedes brothers. These Portuguese siblings were born and raised in Porto by their mother Maria dos Santos (who would later inherit the plot on Tinubu Square) and their father José Rodrigues Guedes.

They had, as far as the records show, three sons: Adrião (born in 1856), Jacintho (born in 1862) and Vicente (date of birth unknown).¹²² Their father passed away at an early age and their mother got remarried.¹²³ Maybe that's why all three of Maria's sons moved overseas, far away from the parish of Bonfim on the Douro river bank where they were born.

Adrião settled in Porto Novo and became a wealthy trader,¹²⁴ most likely with help from his brothers on the other side of the Atlantic. Their journey had led them to Bahia in Brazil.¹²⁵ The two remained close, judging a lighthearted rebus written by Vicente for his 'dear brother' Jacintho in a 1982 Bahia almanac, hidden between the exchange rate tables and the adverts for tobacco.

I cannot tell for sure where our Fernandez met the Rodrigues Guedes brothers. Maybe he knew them already from Porto. Or perhaps he got to know them in Bahia, a place Fernandez would travel

119 A Galician newspaper announces the death of José Amoedo Fernandez in Pontevedra at the age of 73 in 1938: *El Pueblo gallego : rotativo de la mañana* (20 February 1938), 15:1938, 7.

120 No 96 of Volume 16 at Page 328 at the Registry Office at Lagos (1890).

121 I searched the online database of the digital library of Galicia that contains papers from as early as the 1880s: <https://biblioteca.galiciana.gal/>

122 The Register of the Bonfim Parish records the baptism of two of the sons: Adrião and Jacintho, in respectively 1857 and 1862. Accessed online 2 May 2021: <https://pesquisa.adporto.arquivos.pt/details?id=1847375> and <https://pesquisa.adporto.arquivos.pt/details?id=1917896>

123 The 1903 indenture in which Maria dos Santos sells her plot to Fernandez mentions that Guedes was her first husband, deceased, and she was then married to Antonio José Loureiro: No 28 of Volume 43 at Page 90 at the Registry Office at Lagos.

124 De Castilho, A., 'Província de S. Thomé e o Golfo de Benim, Comunicação a Sociedade de Geographia', in: Sociedade de Geografia de Lisboa, *Boletim da Sociedade de geographia de Lisboa* (1895), 800.

125 *Almanach do Diario de Noticias* (Bahia 1882), 158.

to until quite late in age.¹²⁶ Fact is that in 1892 a traveler who later reported his journey along the Bight of Benin to the Lisbon Geographic Society met Fernandez there in the company of Adrião Rodrigues, the eldest Guedes brother.¹²⁷

The connection to his brother Vicente was even closer: in the early 1890s he and Fernandez ran a business together on Tinubu Square in Lagos under the name Fernandes & Co.¹²⁸ If their shared enterprise started with Fernandez' purchase of the plot in 1890 is hard to tell, even though this is the earliest mention I found in literature.¹²⁹ I would have liked to scrutinise the archives of the Chamber of Commerce archives in Lagos to know more about the duration of the Spanish-Portuguese partnership.

We do know they ran a well frequented groceries shop from their Tinubu Square location.¹³⁰ Fernandez did not stay in Lagos for long. In fact, once he had left Galicia, he never stayed anywhere for long. We will see that after 1892 he spent just fifteen more years of his long life in Lagos, the longest consecutive period in one place, until he returned home for good. Perhaps the Gallego only felt truly at home in Galicia.

When Fernandez left the Lagos Colony in 1892, he handed over the running of the company to Guedes¹³¹ and the two ceased to be business partners. From Lagos Fernandez must have travelled to Porto Novo, where he met up with the other Guedes brother. The creeks running through the swampy coast connect Lagos with Porto Novo, making the journey only a day's boat ride. From Porto Novo he would have embarked on a vessel to Europe or to Brazil.

When Fernandez returned to Lagos in February 1896, he came off a ship from Salvador de Bahia. At least, that is Pierre Verger's assumption. It is remarkable that Verger mentions 'Mr J.A. Fernandez' in his magnum opus about the Afro-Brazilian returnees.¹³² That even this pioneer researcher of the returnee movement takes the Galician – not in so many words, but in context – for an African repatriate, makes the fact that many after him mistook him for one more understandable.

126 The 1924 passenger list of a ship from Vigo to Bahia lists the name José Amoedo Fernandez: 'Brasil, Bahia, Salvador, Relações de passageiros e imigrantes, 1855-1964', in: *FamilySearch*, accessed 20 February 2021, <https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:WSD3-SJPZ>. This online database of the passenger records to Bahia are a treasure trove to researchers into the transatlantic history of migration and commerce.

127 *De Castilho*, 'Provincia de S. Thomé', 800.

128 Note that here the surname is written with an -s: RX, 'Notice', in: *The Lagos Weekly Record* (2 June 1891).

129 Fileno Da Silva, A., *Voices de Lagos: brasileiros em tempos do império britânico*, Phd thesis University of São Paulo (São Paulo, 2016), 320.

130 Verger, P., *Flux et reflux*, 629.

131 In the English version of his standard work about the returnees from Brazil, Verger mentions that Guedes minded the store while Fernandez was away, but that Guedes had since passed away: Verger, *Flux and Reflux: African and Brazilian Diaspora* (1968), 360

132 Verger, P., *Flux et reflux*, 629.

VICTORIA SAUERBRUNNEN

The best refreshing water in existence.
Only genuine when with the registered
label on the bottles.

Always in Stock at

WITT & BUSCH, MARINA & OFFIN.

PATERSON, ZOCHONIS & Co. Ltd.

MARINA.

PICKERING & BERTHOUD.

MARINA.

JOAO da ROCHA, MARINA.

FERNANDEZ & Co. TINUBU SQUARE.

Beware of Imitations.

*Advert for mineral water in Lagos Weekly Record on November 29, 1902
listing Fernandez & Co among the big stores in Lagos. (Source: RX)*

§ 2.6. Fifteen years in Lagos

Fernandez' return to Lagos in 1896 would have been a rushed one: he had to come and settle his affairs after the death of his former business partner Vicente Guedes. The Portuguese had passed away seven months earlier on board of the steamship Léopoldville.¹³³ The liner from Antwerp to what was at the time called the Congo Free State, had been just a few days from Lagos when it happened. The news might have taken months to reach Fernandez, just like the journey on the brigantine back to Lagos would have.¹³⁴

Vicente Rodrigues Guedes passed away just half a year after he had purchased the adjacent plot on the corner of the square and Bamgbose Street with the house and yard on it (see the 1895 map in illustration 2 on page 26). Guedes did have a son in Brazil who was still a minor, but the boy died in 1896. Which left Guedes' mother Maria dos Santos as the only immediate heir.

Maria dos Santos, one of the few female characters presenting itself in this story, probably never set foot in Lagos. She lived in Porto in the parish of Paranho with her second husband, so tell the documents from the Land Registry.¹³⁵ The mother surviving three of her children might have said a prayer for her sons' souls at the Igreja Matriz de Paranhos where the catholic woman would have gone to mass, but it is not likely that she ever joined them overseas.

Dos Santos did have a representative in Lagos: Alvaro Loureiros, a son of hers and her second husband. Vicente had appointed his half brother as one of the executors of his will just before he died. On behalf of his mother, Alvaro signed the 1897 covenant in which Fernandez agreed to take care of the party wall in between both houses, and he again signed the deed of sale in 1903.

The other person Vicente Rodrigues Guedes had named executor of his will, was Walter Paul Siffre. Now this is where it gets architecturally interesting. The name of master painter Walter Paul Siffre is connected to many of the monumental Brazilian style structures in Lagos, from the Shitta Bey Mosque to the Lumpkin House that Nigerian heritage organisation Legacy restored in 1990, to the Holy Cross Cathedral.^{136,137}

This Afro-Brazilian painter lived around the corner on Bamgbose Street and had become a successful businessman after his arrival in Lagos.¹³⁸ Siffre had worked with master builders Lazaro

133 LRL, No 28 of Volume 43 at Page 90 at the Registry Office at Lagos (1903).

134 I am assuming, as Verger implies, that Fernandez returned on a sail boat and not on a steamer, even though these had been introduced in the late 1840s. The transatlantic journey on a steam ship would have take much less time.

135 LRL, No 28 of Volume 43 at Page 90 at the Registry Office at Lagos (1903).

136 Alonge, *Afro-Brazilian architecture*, 273.

137 Harrison, E. and Igwe, J., *Afro-Brazilian Style of Architecture in Lagos, Nigeria* (Paper for the Department of Architecture, University of Lagos, Nigeria).

138 Amos, 'The Amaros and Agudas:', in N. Afolabi, *The Yorubas in Brazil*, 78.

Borges da Silva and Francisco Nobre, returnees like himself. These two names are inextricably linked with Brazilian style architecture in Lagos as the architects of many structures.¹³⁹ Could this be an indication of the craftsmen and architects involved in the construction of Casa do Fernandez? At least it confirms that there were close connections between the European traders who had settled on Tinubu Square and the returnee elite.

What its architecture might reveal of Casa do Fernandez' history I will get into later. Let us now return to José Amoedo Fernandez.

On his return to Lagos in 1896, the local paper welcomed the European merchant,¹⁴⁰ an indication of his standing in the British colony. That might not have cushioned the blow of the loss of his former business partner. None of the other Guedes brothers were alive anymore either.¹⁴¹ I assume this is why Fernandez sent for an old friend in Galicia to come and join him: Napoleon Rey Couto.¹⁴² Together they established a new business in Lagos: Fernandez & Co (this time with a -z), selling wine and other provisions on Tinubu Square.

The partnership was a success. By 1897 Fernandez & Co had opened two more shops in Lagos, and again two more in 1899.¹⁴³ They even expanded outside of Lagos, to Ibadan¹⁴⁴ and Abeokuta. By 1906 the company had become one of the mayor mercantile firms in Yorubaland.¹⁴⁵ Fernandez also got involved in the local business community and attended several meetings of the to be established Lagos Chamber of Commerce.¹⁴⁶

When Maria dos Santos decided to sell her property in Lagos in 1903, Fernandez apparently had gained enough wealth to pay £1,300 for it,¹⁴⁷ a steep amount compared to the £180 Guedes paid for it in 1890. It is true that in that era Lagos real estate prices were rising,¹⁴⁸ but to have added that kind of value, something considerable must have been built on it. A house worth joining with the neighbouring structure on Fernandez' original plot to turn it into one awe-inspiring building.

139 Some of those structures are the Holy Cross Cathedral and Yoyo Aràròmi House in Lagos and the Catholic Church of Elmina (Ghana) and the Cathedral of Ouidah (Benin).

140 Verger, P., *Flux et reflux* (1968, Paris and The Hague) 629.

141 LRL, No 34 of Volume ? at Page 120 at the Registry Office at Lagos (1897) and No 28 of Volume 43 at Page 90 at the Registry Office at Lagos (1913).

142 A brief article on the occasion of Rey Couto's passing in a Lagos paper mentions that the 'Spaniard at birth originally came to Lagos for Mr Fernandez, whom he eventually succeeded': 'Death of Napoleon Rey Couto, in: *The Nigerian Pioneer* (March 15th, 1918), 9.

143 Fileno Da Silva, *Vozes de Lagos*, 321, 205.

144 In 1903 the Lagos Weekly Record reports: 'We learn from Ibadan that Messrs. Fernandes & Co contemplate establishing a business at that place: *Lagos Weekly Record* (8 November, 1902), 3.

145 Oluyitan, J.A., *History of Colonial Medical and Health Services In Ibadan 1900 – 1960* (Doctoral Dissertation, University of Ibadan, Nigeria) (April 2014) 78-88.

146 RX, 'The Lagos Chamber Of Commerce', in: *Lagos Weekly Record* (4 September, 1897), 3 and 'The Lagos Chamber Of Commerce', in: *Lagos Weekly Record* (15 May 1897), 3.

147 LRL, No 28 of Volume 43 at Page 90 at the Registry Office at Lagos (1903).

148 Mann, *Slavery*, 269.

TO LET.

The upper portion of a house situated at the corner of Tinubu Square (over Fernandez & Co.) suitable for dwelling and Offices.

Apply to **FERNANDEZ & CO.,**
Tinubu Square.

*To let advert in Lagos Weekly Record, 29 September 1900.
(Source: RX)*

That last addition shows that both buildings were already in use by Fernandez & Co before they were in Fernandez' possession. Could that mean Fernandez had started joining the two houses before 1903, creating the iconic façade that remained impressive even in its state of decay in 2016? We might never know.

At least Fernandez' side of the building must already have looked quite fancy, judging the fact that the Alake of Abeokuta, the traditional leader of that nearby city, slept under his roof on an official visit in 1900.¹⁵⁰ The Yoruba king and his chiefs spent three days in Lagos and were received with all due respect by the colony's notables, from the bishop to the governor to the chief justice. That Fernandez' abode was chosen above all others to house the highest member of the Abeokuta delegation says a lot, not just about the house, but also about society's esteem of its owner.

The newspaper describes a traditional Egba dance on Tinubu Square in honour of the delegation on day three of the visit. The dignitaries watched the two hour spectacle from a stage decorated with palms and flags, the crowd cheering when near the end the Alake himself joined the dance.

Who knows if afterwards Fernandez and his royal visitor would have enjoyed a glass of wine in Fernandez' apartment overlooking the square, before turning in? Whether the two houses were already joined together or not: the name Casa do Fernandez would have been buzzing all over town.¹⁵¹

Even though he only acquired the next-door building from Dos Santos in 1903, it seems Fernandez & Co had been managing it before that. As early as 1900 the company places adverts in the local papers that the corner piece on Tinubu Square is for rent as house or office space, 'over Fernandez & Co'.¹⁴⁹

149 RX Several adverts in the *Lagos Weekly Record* from September to November 1900.

150 RX 'Visit of the Alake and Council of Abeokuta to Lagos', in: *The Lagos Weekly Record* (27 October 1900).

151 Note that 'Casa do Fernandez' and 'Casa de Fernandez' have often been used in literature interchangeably although they mean something different in Portuguese. The latter means 'House of the Fernandez' family'. The former comes up more frequently and means 'House of Mr Fernandez', which is why I use this spelling.



*Fernandez home town of Fornelos de Montes, Pontevedra, Spain.
(Source: Wikicommons, photographer: La fabrica de nubes)*

Φ

§ 2.7. Flux and reflux to Galicia

The commercial success did not keep José Amoedo Fernandez in Lagos. In fact, it might have been precisely his success that enabled him to leave. Leave, he did, in 1910, to return to Galicia for good. In that year he starts turning up frequently in the local Pontevedra papers. Fernandez had moved back to the mountainous village of Fornelos de Montes.

Again, his departure might have been an abrupt one, because by the looks of it he had to settle his Lagos affairs from a distance. Fernandez & Co ceased to exist in 1913, when Couto and Fernandez dissolved their partnership. From then on, the newspaper announced, Couto would continue the business under his own name.¹⁵² A year later Fernandez sold Casa do Fernandez to his former business partner. As we saw earlier, the deed of sale sent from Spain is the first that covers the joined sale of the two plots.¹⁵³

Fernandez does not seem to have looked back. He settled as a trader in Fornelos, selling whatever he could lay his hands on, to even the discarded horses and carriages of a local transport

¹⁵² RX, 'Notice of dissolution of partnership', in: *The Lagos Standard* (19 February 1913), 3.

¹⁵³ LRL, No 113 of Volume 84 at Page 423 at the Registry Office at Lagos (1914).

company.¹⁵⁴ He was a generous donor to the local Red Cross in his town,¹⁵⁵ sat in local government commissions¹⁵⁶ and was until almost the end of his life an influential member of the agricultural union.¹⁵⁷ In Fornelos as in Lagos he was an esteemed member of the local community, and as such he attended official celebrations like a banquet for the mayor of Fornelos.¹⁵⁸

In the mean time his business partner Napoleon Rey Couto was integrating into Lagosian society and had started a family. On September 23, 1901, Rey Couto and his wife Joana Bele had a daughter they called Carmen Fidelia.¹⁵⁹ They had her baptised in the Holy Cross Cathedral three days later. Afterwards the couple would return to the church' font frequently as godparents, but never again, it would seem, for more of their own children.¹⁶⁰

Did Couto marry a local woman? As so often when it comes to women, the records fail to enlighten us. But Mr Graciano Martins, today's President of the Brazilian Descendants Association, remembered hearing Couto's name mentioned fondly by his forbears as someone fully blent into local society. According to the 68-year-old, Joanna might have been a returnee and her and Napoleon's offspring had been of colour.¹⁶¹ Around Tinubu Square the name Rey Couto is even associated with the returnees who had come back from Cuba, who of course spoke Spanish as well.¹⁶²

Long before he bought the place himself, Rey Couto had been living next door to Fernandez in the corner apartment on Tinubu Square.¹⁶³ His name seems to resonate more on Lagos Island than Fernandez'. He even turns up in the first known written narration about the Afro-Brazilians in Lagos, Anthony Laotan's 1943 pamphlet *The Torch Bearers*.¹⁶⁴ Laotan gives the European (whom he mistakes for Portuguese) an honorary mention as a 'great and steady friend of the Mission' who donated the paint for the cathedral. Laotan does not bring up Fernandez in any way.

Just as Guedes before him, Rey Couto was another owner who did not enjoy his new purchase for long: he died less than five years after he had acquired Casa do Fernandez,¹⁶⁵ on Saturday March

154 BDG, 'Venta', in: *Noticiero de Vigo: Diario independiente de la mañana* (2 November 1911) 26:11040, 3.

155 BDG, 'La Cruz Roja', in: *El diario de Pontevedra: Periódico liberal* (17 March 1910), 27: 7756.

156 BDG, 'Comisión mixta de Reclutamiento', in: *Correspondencia Gallega: Diario de Pontevedra* (3 April 1914) 26:7256, 1.

157 BDG, 'Gargamala y su Sindicato', in: *El Tea: Semanario independiente* (4 July 1935), 27-1119, 1.

158 BDG, 'De Fornelos', in: *Noticiero de Vigo: diario independiente de la mañana* (16 January 1911) 26: 10835, 3.

159 HCC, Baptismal Register 1863-1907, 4411.

160 HCC, Baptismal Register 1863-1907, 4343, 4971,

161 Interviews with Mr Graciano Oladipupo Martins on 21 January and 16 February in Freedom Park, Lagos.

162 Sarracino, R., *Exordio pre martiano de los que volvieron a áfrica*, paper University of Havana (Havana 22 October 2018), 20.

163 A hand drawn map of Tinubu Square by Herbert Macaulay in 1911 has Couto's name on the corner plot. KDB, Herbert Macaulay Papers Kenneth Dike Library, *Lagos, Land and House plans* Box 67, File 1 (8 November 1911).

164 A.B. Laotan, *The Torch Bearers*, 14.

165 HCC, Register of Dead 1917-1931, 2978: Spaniard Napoleon Rey Couto dies on 9 March 1918, around 46 years old.

9, 1918, in his apartment on Tinubu Square. He was 46 years old, his daughter Carmen Fidelia was just 17 when her father died. The local weekly mourned his passing and described him as a beloved Lagosian: 'though a Spaniard at birth he was very popular with the natives'.¹⁶⁶

After the funeral service in Holy Cross Cathedral, Napoleon Rey Couto was buried in Ikoyi Cemetery, two kilometres from his home on Tinubu Square. The funeral procession must have drawn quite a crowd. And even in his homeland Rey Couto's passing did not go unnoticed. The news must have reached Spain by telegram, because just five days after his death the Pontevedra paper printed the obituary of 'our dear friend D. Napoleón Rey Couto, an accredited merchant (...) well known in Pontevedra'.¹⁶⁷

On the other hand, the demise of José Amoedo Fernandez did not gain such publicity in distant Lagos. Actually, Fernandez does not seem to have ever gotten any mentions in Lagos newspapers after his departure from Nigeria in 1910. The Spaniard died aged 73 in 1938. The only mention of the man's passing that I found appeared in a Galician paper: a single line on page 7 hidden amongst the ads.¹⁶⁸

Rey Couto had become much more a part of the local Lagos society than his friend Fernandez ever had. It seems the latter never learnt how to speak English very well, as contracts always were read and explained to him in Spanish. Also I have found no indication that he was married in Lagos, or anywhere else for that matter. Surely if he had, the catholic would have had his children baptised in the Holy Cross Cathedral like his friend Rey Couto did.

It was not uncommon for Galician migrants to Portugal or Brazil to remain unmarried,¹⁶⁹ although in Bahia some did live with local women. When they returned to Spain, most times such unofficial relationships were abruptly abandoned.¹⁷⁰ The official records will not reveal whether Fernandez had a concubine in Lagos or even if he fathered any children out of wedlock, but that by no means signifies that he didn't.

All in all, the name José Amoedo Fernandez probably would have fallen entirely into oblivion in Lagos, had it not been for the impressive structure on Tinubu Square that the Galician merchant left behind: Casa do Fernandez.

166 RX, 'Epitome of News', in: *The Lagos Weekly Record* (16 March 1918), 6.

167 BDG, 'Los que mueron', in: *El diario de Pontevedra : Periódico liberal* (12 March 1918), 35:10179, 3, translation by author.

168 BDG, 'Gacetillas: Registro civil', in: *El Pueblo gallego : rotativo de la mañana* (20 February 1938) 15:4502, 7.

169 González Lopo, 'Gallegos en Portugal', 212.

170 Del Rosário, *A Imigração*, 21.



Illustration 3: A timeline of the life of José Amoedo Fernandez.

§ 2.8. Afro-Brazilian hands

Rey Couto had appointed barrister Robert Forsyth Irving as the executor of his will.¹⁷¹ The Lagos based Brit was supposed to settle his debts, sell off his properties and then share them amongst Rey Couto's unnamed heirs, presumably his wife and daughter. Forsyth Irving needed a lot of time to settle the matter.

Though his client died in 1918, it was not until 17 December 1932 that the property on Tinubu Square came up for auction. That's when Alfred Omolana Olaiya, a trader originally from Ekiti but based in Calabar, bought the building for the price of £ 2,500.¹⁷² From then on until its demolition, Casa do Fernandez would remain in the hands of the Olaiya family.

At no point in its history Casa do Fernandez as we knew it was owned by Afro-Brazilian returnees. Nonetheless, it does represent a part of Lagos' Brazilian heritage. Though the original owner might have been a European, it were the hands of the returnees that built the house for him. They were after all the go-to craftsmen and designers of these kind of structures at the time.

British architect John Godwin, the one involved in the two attempted renovations of the building, has no doubt it was 'designed and built by one of the better known builders such as Nobre or da Costa'.¹⁷³ Remembering that Vicente Rodrigues Guedes respected master painter Walter Paul Siffre so much he trusted him with the execution of his will, it is safe to assume that the other Brazilian builders of the era also had close connections to the Europeans on Tinubu Square.

Maybe Fernandez invited Siffre, Nobre and some others to his apartment one evening to discuss the joining of the two houses to construct his dream building. They might have had a glass of wine at the same table the Alake of Abeokuta might have sat on in 1900.¹⁷⁴ As Murray Jack noted, detailed blueprints would not have been made, but one of the master builders would have jotted down a draft or two as they were talking.

That table, along with the other furniture, could have been the work of José Amoedo Fernandez' namesake Mariano Miguel Fernandez, the Afro-Brazilian cabinet maker who lived one block away with his wife Dominga. All the details of the house bear the signature of the Afro-Brazilian returnees.

171 'Notice to creditors', in: *The Nigerian Pioneer* (5, 7, 12, 14, 19, 21 June 1918), 6.

172 LRL, No 45 of Volume 361 at Page 45 at the Registry Office at Lagos (1933).

173 *NCMM, Angel House, Tinubu Square, The survey and preliminary report* (2011), 1.

174 The former residents of Ilojo Bar claimed that until the demolition there had been a large wooden table in the house that came from the original owner. Nobody I spoke with seemed to know if it had disappeared in the rubble in 2016, or was salvaged.



*Comparing two Brazilian style buildings on Lagos Island: on the left Araromi House, on the right Water House
(Source: Wikimedia Commons)*

Carla Rabela Costa does not doubt the Brazilian connection. 'When I saw the house for the first time in a picture, I thought it was taken in Salvador de Bahia. This could easily be Brazilian,'¹⁷⁵ says the architect of the Brazilian government heritage institute IPHAN. She adds: 'If you walk around Cotonou and Porto Novo, you will see many buildings resembling Casa do Fernandez.' These port cities in Benin Republic are renowned for their Brazilian architectural heritage built by the returnees who settled in that region even before they started coming to Lagos in large numbers.

Who exactly designed Casa do Fernandez has not been documented. Maybe two other monumental buildings of that era in Lagos could give us a clue: Yoyo Araromi House and the Water House. The first one – lost in a fire in 1980 – was the family house of master builder Lazaro Borges da Silva, designed by himself. The second one was the house Lagos' richest returnee family Da Rocha had built. The name lives on in the Yoruba saying 'Bi ó ti ẹ lówó bi Da Rocha' – 'as rich as Da Rocha'. This house, also known as Casa da Agua, still stands on Kakawa Street.

Comparing the two structures, Rabelo da Costa deems it more likely that Casa do Fernandez was the work of the designer of Water House, than of the architect of Yoyo Araromi House – who we know was Borges da Silva.

Details like the roof parapet and the pilasters on both Casas show resemblances, the Brazilian architect states. Marjorie Alonge also points out other similarities between Casa do Fernandez and Water House. The latter did not start out as monumental as it is now and was built in stages as well.¹⁷⁶ It was not unusual in those days for the returnees to keep adding wings and floors, making their houses grow along with their wealth. So perhaps the same person(s) designed Casa do Fernandez and Casa da Agua. But that does not help us much: the architect(s) of the latter is unknown as well. Casa do Fernandez' precise architectural provenance will remain an educated

¹⁷⁵ This quotes and all the following ones of Carla Rabela Costa, architect of the Brazilian government heritage institute IPHAN, come from a phone interview on 26 May 2021.

¹⁷⁶ Alonge, *Afro-Brazilian Architecture*, 253.

guessing game.

Brazilian architect Rabelo da Costa can comment on its overall design, which was 'made to impress'. The large number of windows was meant to show off the owner's wealth, just like the Casa das Onze Janelas (house with the eleven windows) in the old city centre of Belem in Brazil. The parapet on the roof was also a luxury and not a constructive necessity: it was put there to hide the tiles on top. The architect assumes some of the more elaborate architectural elements like the cast-iron balcony brackets would have been imported from Europe, but does not rule out the possibility that some of the building materials came from Brazil.

The transatlantic trade of the returnees with Brazil in those days was intensive, with many of them sailing back and forth on a regular basis for business. According to family tradition, the great grandfather of Mr Martins of the Brazilian Descendants Association was such a person. As a young man in Oyo he got captured in one of the nineteenth century Yoruba wars, was sold to the Portuguese and shipped to Brazil. He managed to buy his freedom and returned to Lagos, where he became a supplier for the builders in the city. He supplied the roofing for the Holy Cross Cathedral, says Mr Martins, as well as building material for Casa do Fernandez.¹⁷⁷ Though impossible to check, it is plausible that José Amoedo Fernandez, apart from using his own direct trade contacts, also would have ordered some of the building material for his dream house from the established Brazilian businesses close to Tinubu Square. Mr Martins, who is a genuine treasure trove when it comes to the oral tradition of Lagos' Afro-Brazilian community, certainly thinks so.

As we will come to see, oral tradition and the stories people tell are as valid an indication for the meaning of heritage as archives and books, and maybe even more so.



Casa das Onze Janelas in Belem, Brazil.
(Source: Wikimedia Commons, photographer: Celso Abreu)

¹⁷⁷ Interviews with Mr Graciano Oladipupo Martins on 21 January and 16 February in Freedom Park, Lagos.

§ 2.9. A punishment house?

One dark issue still hangs over Casa do Fernandez: its possible connection to slavery. Recall that Marjorie Alonge describes the building as 'a 'punishment house' for slaves'.¹⁷⁸ Though that claim is only based on the story Omojala Olaiya told her, the subject of slavery and slave trade comes up too often in other narratives in relation to the site on Tinubu Square to just dismiss its validity all together. Most of those narratives, just as in Alonge's thesis, hinge on oral history.

To be clear: Galician trader José Amoedo Fernandez could not have been a slave trader. The Spaniard was born sixteen years after the Brazilian abolition of the transatlantic slave trade, and when he bought his first plot on Tinubu Square the British had already colonised Lagos. Under British sovereignty, slavery was illegal.¹⁷⁹ Even though the colonial authorities did not reinforce their own rule too strictly – the local slave trade continued long after the international slave trade had come to an end¹⁸⁰ – it is out of the question that the British would have tolerated the existence of a 'punishment house for slaves' in such a prime location in their colony.

But that does not exclude the possibility that the very location at some point in time could have been connected to the trade in human beings. There must be a reason stories about slavery keep coming up when you ask people on Lagos Island about Casa do Fernandez. In a now removed article on *The Nerve Africa* another Mr Olaiya (not further identified) speaks of how captured people were first kept in the house and then sold and shipped overseas.¹⁸¹ And the story of another descendant of the Alfred Omolana Olaiya who bought Casa do Fernandez in 1934 is too detailed to disregard.

Eric Aderemi Awobiyyide is the son of Deborah Olayenu, who was the second daughter of Alfred Omolana Olaiya and his first wife Dada. His grandfather had passed when Mr Awobiyyide was born in 1942, but Mr Awobiyyide was the kind of boy that listened when grownups reminisced. Maybe because of his awareness of the family history, he would become one of the staunchest defenders of the survival Casa do Fernandez – or rather Olaiya House, as it also was known. I met with him on several occasions on the demolition site, now a gaping gap on Tinubu Square where his

178 Alonge, *Afro-Brazilian Architecture*, 263.

179 McIntyre, W.D., 'Commander Glover and the Colony of Lagos, 1861-73', in: *The Journal of African History* (1963), 4:1, 57-79, 61.

180 Mann, *Slavery*, 153.

181 Tigidam, P., 'The Fernandez House in Lagos: Relic of an Afro-Brazilian Past' (18 December 2015), originally in *thenerveafrica.com*, accessed on 22 September 2021 via [archive.org](https://web.archive.org/web/20161101072357/https://thenerveafrica.com/2099/the-fernandez-house-in-lagos-relic-of-an-afro-brazilian-past/): <https://web.archive.org/web/20161101072357/https://thenerveafrica.com/2099/the-fernandez-house-in-lagos-relic-of-an-afro-brazilian-past/>

family house once stood.¹⁸²

He starts his story with his great grandfather, Alfred Omolana Olaiya's father. Mr Awobiyyide's parents told him he was a nineteenth century slave trader from Ekiti, in the southwest of what is now Nigeria. According to them, he raided villages in the region and captured people 'to bring them to the white slave traders here in Lagos'. Mr Awobiyyide even claims that his grandfather came to the building on Tinubu Square to sell the people he had taken captive. He adds that 'the white men left when there was no more slave trade'. In his version of events, this is why Casa do Fernandez was sold.

Now we know that cannot be true, since the monumental house was constructed long after the transatlantic slave trade had stopped. But again, that does not mean that before Fernandez' time slave traders did not use the location on Tinubu Square for their merciless business. After all, as Kristin Mann so convincingly describes in her book on the history of Lagos: 'The momentous birth of this now vast metropolis, which shaped the lives of its inhabitants for decades to come, can be traced to the time of slavery and abolition.'¹⁸³

Mr Awobiyyide backed up his story by telling me about the shackles the Olaiya family found in Casa do Fernandez after they had bought it. According to him it concerned chains used to cuff the enslaved: 'Those slave traders left them behind when they went back to their own country.'

He said he was about 12 or 13 when the chains were handed in to the National Museum. He went along with his uncle Daniel, his grandfather's eldest son who was in charge of the property after the Olaiya patriarch father died. He and the man at the museum knew each other, Mr Awobiyyide said. They both attended Hope Waddell, in Calabar, one of Nigeria's first missionary schools founded in 1895. He went on to describe how the chains were handed over to this 'Calabar man', and how his uncle Daniel signed for the transfer.

The anecdote was so specific I had to look into it. The Calabar man Mr Awobiyyide referred to might be Ekpo Eyo, the Nigerian archaeologist and anthropologist who would go on to become a highly praised Director General of the Antiquities Department and later the NCMM. At the time he would have been working under the British director Kenneth Murray, who we will meet in the next chapter. Or maybe Mr Awobiyyide got his years wrong and the chains were handed in some years later, when Eyo already was Director of the Department. Either way: if Eyo had received the chains, there should be a record of them at the National Museum.

I spent a week hunting them down.

I went through all the registry books in Lagos' National Museum's twice, but found no entry for

182 Interviews with Eric Aderemi Awobiyyide by the author on 23 January and 8 February 2021.

183 Mann, *Slavery*, 2.

shackles from Casa do Fernandez or Ilojo Bar in any era. The day I spent in the museum's depot, helped by the NCMM personnel, was equally unsuccessful: the collection of metal objects in the back of store number 4 contained no artefacts clearly connected to Casa do Fernandez – although it would have been hard to say. The years have faded many of the numbers on the metal that the objects could have been identified with.

I figured Ekpo Eyo might have made a note of the handover in his personal memoirs, so when I visited the National Archives in Ibadan where those are kept, I asked to see them. Unfortunately none of the boxes containing one of Nigeria's first archeologists documents could be found at the archives. I did not find any proof to back up Mr Awobiye's story.

The reason I tend to give credence to the story all the same, is one family name: Martins Jambo. The Martins Jambo brothers were white slave traders from Brazil.¹⁸⁴ One of them, Pedro, had settled in Lagos before the mid nineteenth century. Kirstin Mann, who wrote the book about Lagos' history, thinks he owned a shop and a house in the city, but does not know their location.¹⁸⁵ We do know that Pedro was kicked out of Lagos in 1853 by British Consul Benjamin Campbell along with other foreign slave traders.

The name Martins Jambo is the first one on the incomplete list of conveyances of deeds connected to the plot on Tinubu Square that architect John Godwin once assembled:

*'Conveyance dated 20 June 1863 in the names of Pedro Martins Jambo and Joaquin Martins Jambo, transferred to Thomas Cole and Harry Pratt'*¹⁸⁶

As it is impossible to search for names in the Land Registry, I have not been able to confirm what plot this 1863 deed refers to, but this unconfirmed data seems to imply that the land once owned by the Martins Jambo brothers was sold in that year. If indeed it pertains to the corner plot on Tinubu Square and Bamgbose Street, this directly connects the space to the large scale export in human beings from Lagos to Brazil. Maybe this is how the tale arose about the punishment house for slaves.

Pedro Martins Jambo was a business partner of Madame Tinubu, the lady who Lagosians till today will tell you would have sold her husband into slavery.¹⁸⁷ They were dealers in both slaves and legitimate trade like rum and tobacco: whatever was most profitable.¹⁸⁸ In 1853 Campbell had

184 Castillo, 'Mapping', 39.

185 Based on an email exchange between Dr Kristin Mann and the author in January 2021.

186 ANM, NCMM, *Saving Our Heritage*, 2.

187 A story told to me on Lagos Island on several occasions.

188 Harris, J.A.E., 'Circuits of wealth, circuits of sorrow: financing the illegal transatlantic slave trade in the age of suppression, 1850–66', in: *Journal of Global History* (2016) 11, 409–429, 424.

just given the foreign traders five days to pack their bags and leave Lagos, giving Pedro Martins Jambo hardly any time to wrap up his affairs.¹⁸⁹ Even after he left, many of the local traders owed him money, including Madame Tinubu who had bought tobacco from him on credit.¹⁹⁰

Martins Jambo returned to Lagos a year later, by the end of 1854, under the pretext of the legitimate trade in palm oil, but governor Campbell did not trust his intentions and kept his 'watchful eye' on the slave trader.¹⁹¹ On the other hand Martins Jambo and his fellow traders received a warm welcome 'by the King, his chiefs and the woman Tinnaboo'¹⁹², the governor writes apprehensively to the Secretary of State in London. According to Campbell's sources it was Madam Tinubu and the oba who had invited them back to Lagos.¹⁹³

The slave dealer was never enabled to gain a foothold in the British colony again, which explains why in 1863, two years before Pedro Martins Jambo's death, the property in Lagos was sold. Whether that was actually a part of the land that Casa do Fernandez was later built on, only the Land Registry in Lagos can reveal. Although one other archive exists that might disclose if Pedro Martins Jambo indeed once set up shop on Tinubu Square. That archive finds itself in Brazil, in the Public Archives of Bahia. I would have loved to visit it to look up the inventory of Martins Jambo's estate in Lagos,¹⁹⁴ but time, budget and travel restrictions prevented me from doing so. Hopefully a Brazil based researcher will one day pick up that loose thread.



Madam Tinubu. (Source: Wikimedia Commons)

The reason why this is important to find out, is the implication such a find would have for the narrative around the historical building. That the plot, before it became Casa do Fernandez, might have been linked to kingmaker, businesswoman and arms trader Efunporoye Osuntinubu Olumosa, in short Madam Tinubu, opens a new perspective on the story on this heritage site.

189 Verger, P., *Flux et reflux*, 585.

190 Ojo, O, 'The Organization of the Atlantic Slave Trade in Yorubaland, ca.1777 to ca.1856', in: *The International Journal of African Historical Studies* (2008), 41:1, 77-100, 91.

191 Letter by Consul Campbell to the Earl of Clarendon, Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, PRO FO 84-950 7 Campbell (5 December 1854), 400.

192 Letter by Consul Campbell to the Earl of Clarendon, Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, PRO FO 84-950 9 Campbell (21 December 1854), 452-453.

193 Letter by Consul Campbell to the Earl of Clarendon, Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, PRO FO 84-950 9 Campbell (21 December 1854), 456.

194 In her thesis Cláudia Moraes Trindade mentions the existence of Pedro Jambo Martins' inventory: *Inventário de Pedro Martins Jambo*, Arquivo Público do Estado da Bahia, Judiciária, 07/2094/04, 6, in: Moraes Trindade, C., *Ser preso na Bahia no Século XIX*, phd thesis Federal University of Bahia (Bahia, 2012), 16.

Governor Campbell, who called 'the woman Tinnaboo' a 'mischievous person in Lagos whose removal is desirable' had her expelled from the city in 1856,¹⁹⁵ but her name lives on. Tinubu Square is named after her and the tales about her wealth and cunning – she reportedly had sixty people, mostly enslaved, working for her when she was forced to leave Lagos and settled in Abeokuta¹⁹⁶ – raise a mixture of admiration and aversion in Nigeria.

Her story in connection to Martins Jambo's trafficking business offer a way to address the history of slavery in Lagos, a history that continued locally long after the international slave trade had come to an end.¹⁹⁷

195 Smith, R., 'The Lagos Consulate', 405.

196 Mann, *Slavery and the Birth*, 135.

197 Mann, *Slavery*, 153.



*A unique picture of Ilojo Bar in the mid 1940s. Beside a bar, it had also become a hotel.
(Source: The Crown Colonist, August 1946).*

Φ

§ 2.10. A family house

We looked at what might have occurred on the site on Tinubu Square before José Amoedo Fernandez built the monumental house. Now let us take a look at what happened after it was no longer in European hands. After all, the building belonged to the Olaiya family much longer than it ever did to Fernandez and Rey Couto. To the ones owning it since 1934 it has been a family home. To them, it is not Casa do Fernandez, but Olaiya House.

When the family patriarch Alfred Omolana Olaiya bought the building, he was not present at the auction, oral tradition seems to be clear about that. In fact, according to his youngest son Victor Olaiya, nobody knew the wealthy trader from Calabar who outbid even the richest Lagosians like Da Rocha.¹⁹⁸ But it looks like the patriarch never got to enjoy his new property: according to his grandson Eric Aderemi Awobiye, he fell ill shortly after and died on his way to see a herbalist in his village in Ekiti.¹⁹⁹

¹⁹⁸ Based on interviews with Eric Aderemi Awobiye by the author on 23 January and 8 February 2021 and an interview with Victor Olaiya by Jide Ajani and Anthonia Onwuka, 'Dr. Victor Olaiya Reminiscences (1)', in: *The Vanguard* (2 January 2011).

¹⁹⁹ Interviews with Eric Aderemi Awobiye by the author on 23 January and 8 February 2021.

The person then in charge of the estate was the eldest son Daniel. He was the one who opened a restaurant and bar on the ground floor and named it Ilojo Bar, after a village and a title in their state of origin. Over the years Ilojo Bar would become a household name in Lagos. In the thirties as a fancy dining spot for the local elite, offering local dishes like 'iyan' and 'ockro' (yam and okra) for a sixpence a plate, in the forties with a hotel alongside it, and from the fifties as a music venue for the best juju and highlife in town.



Advert for the Ilojo Bar restaurant in a 1939 publication of Daily Times of Nigeria (Courtesy: Ed Emeka Keazor)

The Olaiyas had brought music to the site. Older Lagosians remember how they saw local legends like juju pioneer Ayinde Bakare playing at Ilojo Bar,²⁰⁰ and the patriarch's youngest son Victor would go on to become a highlife musician and a Nigerian celebrity.

Little by little more family members moved in, the eight wives of the patriarch bringing not just their children but also their grandchildren. People living around Tinubu Square remember that from the fifties onwards the house was getting overcrowded. 'The place was going native', a Brazilian descendant told me a bit condescendingly, reason why I won't mention the name of the person here. But it does paint a picture of a gradual change in the building's appearance.

When Daniel died, Ilojo Bar closed its doors.²⁰¹ The location did stay relevant to local music life, because Victor opened a shop in musical instruments on the ground floor, frequented by the big names of Nigerian music of the era. In his memoir, juju legend King Sunny Adé mentions how he bought his first guitar in that shop, for one pound and nine shillings.²⁰²

Victor moved out with his music shop in the 1990's, as more and more members of the family left the decaying house to resettle in more modern and comfortable places. The building suffered from lack of maintenance, as the many children who shared ownership of the property had different ideas about its upkeep. Gradually, as happens to so many family houses in Nigeria, only the lesser off descendants continued to use it. They were joined by tenants who were in no way connected to the monument and its heritage, while the affluent family members moved on to pastures new.

It would be one of the root causes of the eventual downfall of Ilojo Bar.

200 Interviews with Mr Graciano Oladipupo Martins on 21 January and 16 February in Freedom Park, Lagos.

201 Interviews with Eric Aderemi Awobiyyide by the author on 23 January and 8 February 2021.

202 King Sunny Adé, *My Life, My Music* (Ikeja, 2006).



*Kenneth Murray (in shorts) in a museum arranging artefacts.
(Source: The Nigerian Field Society)*

Φ

Ch 3. The making of a monument

§ 3.1. Colonial times

It was a British art teacher who was instrumental in lifting Casa do Fernandez to its monumental status. Kenneth C. Murray seems to have been smitten with the structure, which he described as having 'probably the greatest architectural interest of all old buildings in Lagos.'²⁰³

Murray came to Nigeria in 1927 to work for the Education Department of the Southern Provinces of Nigeria and took up a passion for local arts and crafts and archaeology.²⁰⁴ He was also a passionate supporter of the local preservation of cultural heritage. As early as 1942 he deplored the fact that it was 'easier to study Nigeria art in Europe than in Nigeria'. For this reason, and to stop the large scale export of artefacts, he advocated building museums all over the country to harbour its heritage.²⁰⁵ When a year later the colonial government created an Antiquities Service, followed

²⁰³ ANM, Murray, K.C., *A List of Sites and Other Antiquities Declared to be Monuments the Antiquities Act from February 1956 to December 1964* (reprinted from the Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria, Vol. IV, No.1, December 1967).

²⁰⁴ Onuzulike, O., 'The Emergence of Modern Ceramics in Nigeria: The Kenneth Murray Decade, 1929–39', *The Journal of Modern Craft* (2012), 6:3, 293-313, 294.

²⁰⁵ Murray, K.C., 'The Need for a Museum', in: *Journal of the Royal African Society* (1942), 41:165, 241-249, 247.

by the Antiquities Department, Murray was the obvious choice to lead them.

A bill to protect Nigeria's antiquities had been drafted in 1940. However, because of the Second World War and its aftermath it would take till 1953 for this Antiquities Ordinance to be passed into law.²⁰⁶ It was under this Ordinance that the building that was by then known as Ilojo Bar was declared a monument, on April 5, 1956.^{207, 208}

The new law was based on earlier legislation in two other countries under British rule that had been confronted with large scale theft of cultural and historical artefacts: Cyprus, the British crown colony for which the nineteenth century had been an epoch of tomb raiding²⁰⁹, and Rhodesia, where the ancient walls of Great Zimbabwe had been plundered by European treasure hunters most of whom couldn't fathom that medieval Africans had built such an impressive city.²¹⁰

But in practice these preceding heritage laws concentrated on curbing the illegal export and tended to serve British interests – for example by giving the British Museum the right of first refusal on artefacts approved for sale. No doubt driven by Murray's campaigning, the Nigerian version provided a broader approach. It created a department responsible not only for overseeing archaeological activities and declaring and protecting monuments, but also for the creation of local museums. The spirit of the law breathed that the country's antiquities, defined as any object of archaeological interest dating from before the year 1918, primarily belonged there.²¹¹

Some scholars praise the Nigerian Antiquities Ordinance of 1953 as 'perhaps the most comprehensive piece of cultural heritage legislation within the British colonial world—certainly within Africa'.²¹² But not everyone shares that enthusiasm. The late Folarin Shyllon, founding Dean of Law of the University of Ibadan, saw the legislation as a toothless tiger. According to this renowned Nigerian fighter for the preservation of cultural heritage, the penalties for breaking the

206 Basu, P. and Damodaran, V., 'Colonial Histories of Heritage: Legislative Migrations and the Politics of Preservation', in: *Past & Present* (2015), 226:10, 240–271, 259.

207 ANM, letter of the Director of the Antiquities Department to the Independence Celebrations officer, November 26, 1958.

208 'L.N. 31 of 1956 :Antiquities (Monuments) Declaration No. 2, Notice, 1956: ' in : *Federation of Nigeria Official Gazette* (5 April 1956) 43:29. It declares as monument: 'The building known as "Ilojo Bar", Nos. 6 Alli Street and 2 Bamgbose Street, Lagos, and the compound in which it is situated.'

209 Goring, E., *A Mischievous Pastime. Digging in Cyprus in the Nineteenth Century. With a Catalogue of the Exhibition 'Aphrodite's Island: Art and Archaeology of Ancient Cyprus' held in the Royal Museum of Scotland, Edinburgh from 14 April to 4 September 1988* (Edinburgh 1988). Part 1 of this book vividly describes the era of tomb robbing, ordered mostly by diplomats ignorant of the cultural value of the artefacts and only interested in its export value.

210 Koutonin, M., 'Lost cities #9: racism and ruins – the plundering of Great Zimbabwe', in *guardian.com* (18 August 2016), accessed 7 May 2021, <https://www.theguardian.com/cities/2016/aug/18/great-zimbabwe-medieval-lost-city-racism-ruins-plundering>.

211 Section 2 of the Antiquities Ordinance 1958, Cap 12, *Laws of the Federation and Lagos 1958* (I used the 1958 version of the Laws of the Federation of Nigeria and Lagos because that was the only version accessible for me. In this case that does not make a difference, as it is verbatim statute as first passed in 1953).

212 Basu, P. and Damodaran, V., 'Colonial Histories of Heritage: Legislative Migrations and the Politics of Preservation', in: *Past & Present* (2015), 226:10, 240–271, 261.

law hardly discouraged the illicit export of historical artefacts, nor the demolition of monumental buildings.

The Antiquities Ordinance states that:

*'Any person who wilfully obstructs, hinders or delays any person in the exercise or performance of duties conferred or imposed by this Ordinance shall be guilty of an offence and liable to a fine not exceeding twenty-five pounds or to imprisonment for a term not exceeding one month.'*²¹³

In Shyllon's opinion, those fines and prison sentences were too low to scare off anyone: the illegal arts trade was simply too profitable and the ground some historical buildings stood on simply too valuable. And Shyllon is not alone: in a 2014 article his colleagues Adewunmi and Bamgbose call the penalty provisions 'ridiculous', especially when compared to the much higher sanctions that the Criminal Code provides for damaging valuable property.²¹⁴

Shyllon did not only criticise the low sanctions, he also stated that the implementation of the rules left a lot to be desired, due to 'ignorance and/or corruption in the police and customs departments'.²¹⁵ In other words: if caught, you could always bribe your way out of it.

In the eyes of Professor Shyllon, from the onset the preservation of Nigeria's heritage was threatened by a lack of awareness of the cultural value of heritage amongst the public, combined with weak penalties, corruption and a failing law enforcement. It is all the more telling that most of the sources I spoke with, pointed at exactly this combination of factors as leading to the eventual demise of Casa do Fernandez in 2016.

213 Section 19 of the Antiquities Ordinance 1958, Cap 12, *Laws of the Federation and Lagos 1958*.

214 Adewunmi, A.A., and Bamgbose, O.A., 'Inhibiting Nigerian Cultural Heritage Crimes Through Penal Laws', in: *Ife Juris Review: Journal Of Contemporary Legal and Allied Issue* (Ile- Ife, September-December 2014) 3, 484-500, 496.

215 Shyllon, F., 'Cultural Heritage Legislation and Management in Nigeria', in: *International Journal of Cultural Property* (1996), 5:2, 235-268, 237.

§ 3.2. Dreams of a museum

Mr Murray and his colleague Bernard Fagg had much bigger plans for Ilojo Bar than 'just' declaring it a monument. They wanted the colonial government to buy and renovate it, in order to turn it into a museum of Old Lagos. As such, Ilojo Bar was intended to be the centre of Nigeria's Independence Celebrations in 1960. The ground floor exhibition would show Lagos' development from 'the oyster-strewn sandy beach (...) to the capital city of independent Nigeria', the Antiquities Commission envisioned in 1958.²¹⁶

By then, Bernard Fagg had succeeded Murray as Director of the Department of Antiquities. The British archaeologist and anthropologist who had spent years digging up Nok terracotta around Jos in central Nigeria, was at least as fervent a supporter of heritage preservation as his predecessor.

In January of that year the Independence Celebrations Committee had responded favourably to the Antiquities Department's proposal for Ilojo Bar.²¹⁷ The building was subsequently appraised 'for the purpose of compulsory acquisition'. The Valuation Officer found the structure in a poor state, from heavily corroded iron work to broken floors. Because of its monumental state, he did not calculate the commercial value of the site, but just the 'rental value on extended life of buildings' and assessed this at an amount of £7,200.²¹⁸

On the 26th of November Fagg wrote the Independence Celebration Officer again with his final proposal for the Museum of Old Lagos. He estimated the total cost of the project to be £20,000, of which £7,200 was meant to purchase the entire property on the corner of Tinubu Square and Bamgbose Street, and £8,500 for its renovation.²¹⁹ In January 1959 the proposal was sent on to the Council of Ministers, the supreme executive organ of the colonial government, with a positive recommendation of the Committee for Independence Celebrations.²²⁰

And then the whole plan was abandoned.

It is hard to tell why, because this is where the paper trail ends, at least in the archives of The National Museum in Lagos where part of the correspondence of the colonial Antiquities Department is kept. The colonial records in London's National Archives might give a clue, but due to the pandemic that archive was not accessible to me in the course of this research.

216 ANM, 'Appendix 'A', A Statement of Policy for the Establishment and Development of Museums in Nigeria', in *Antiquities Act Amendments – Monuments* (1958).

217 ANM, Minutes of The Eight Meeting of the Antiquities Commission (1959) in: *Antiquities Commission Minutes*.

218 ANM, letter of the Principal Valuation Officer to the Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Education, Lagos (January 16, 1958), copy in: *Ilojo Bar File*.

219 ANM, letter of the Director of the Antiquities Department to the Independence Celebrations Officer Colonel E.A. Hefford (November 26, 1958), copy in: *Ilojo Bar File*.

220 ANM, Nigerian Antiquities Commission, *Information Bulletin no. 3* (January 1959), 1.



*Water House on Kakawa Street, Lagos Island, in 2016
(Source: Wikimedia Commons, photographer: Arafat Awoyejo)*

So all I can do is make an educated guess on why Ilojo Bar never became the focus of attention that the Antiquities Commission had dreamt it to be. It might have been due to the slow decision making by the Council of Ministers of the Colonial Office, about which the commission already expressed its worry in 1959. So maybe official permission and a budget simply never came through.²²¹ Or perhaps the Antiquities Department did get the go-ahead, but the difficulties of agreeing with the owner remained – an issue Fagg had earlier mentioned in his letter to the Independence Celebrations Officer in November 1958 – and the two parties never managed to reach an understanding.²²²

It is not hard to grasp why Daniel Olaiya, who as the eldest son of Alfred Olaiya was now in charge of the property on Tinubu Square, would not have been jumping for joy about the British bid. Its commercial value would have been many times higher than the £7,200 offered. By comparison: half a century earlier the Water House, a Brazilian style storey building not far from the Olaiya property and very similar to it, had been valued by surveyor Herbert Macaulay for almost £9,500.²²³ Corrected by historical inflation rate alone, that would have increased to an amount of over £45,000 in 1958.²²⁴ A stark contrast to the meagre offer the Olaiya's were presented

221 ANM, Minutes of the Eight Meeting (1959).

222 ANM, letter by the Director of the Antiquities Department (November 26, 1958).

223 KDB, Macaulay Papers Rocha vs Rocha, notes (1914), in: *Box 63, Practice of Herbert Macaulay as a Professional Surveyor*.

224 For this conversion according to historical inflation I used the UK Inflation Corrector online: <https://www.in2013dollars.com/UK-inflation>. It is not to be taken too literally – the value of property possibly would have increased even more in this period – but is just meant to give an indication.

with that same year for their property.

The comparatively small amount also seems to be in contrast with the great importance the Antiquities Commission said to attach to the iconic building. From the side of the National Commission for Museums and Monuments (NCMM) – its post-colonial successor – it has been suggested to me that the Olaiya family had been 'compensated' when the building was declared a monument. This would imply that it was no longer in their possession, but that they had been granted use of it and were allowed to collect rent for it. That would explain why the British Colonial Government was only calculating the rental value over the years when it was considering to buy, although the earlier mentioned phrasing 'compulsory acquisition' suggests that the colonial government did not leave the owners much choice in the matter.

The only other mention I came across suggesting some form of acquisition stems from much later, in a report from the time when Lagos governor Bola Tinubu considered making the Ilojo Bar into a cultural centre. That text mentions that the NCMM had 'acquired it as a patrimony in 1984', unfortunately without naming the source of that information.²²⁵

Proof of any such purchase is nowhere to be found in NCMM's records, even though there was a frantic search for it in its archives in Lagos and Abuja when the Commission and the family found themselves at loggerheads after the illegal demolition of Ilojo Bar in 2016.²²⁶ Without such proof, we'll have to assume that apart from a lot of attention – mostly from abroad – the Olaiyas did not gain financially from their property's monumental status. On the contrary, they had seen their property's market value plummet once it had been promoted to national monument. That might not have added to the family's appreciation of the piece of heritage they were living in.

But these are all speculations. Fact is that in May 1960, a couple of months before Nigeria's independence, the Antiquities Commission in its newsletter suggested a different location all together for this museum.²²⁷ The original plan, in Fagg's words, 'for a most impressive and valuable Museum of Old Lagos' ²²⁸ had been dropped, in spite of the admiration for Ilojo Bar of the two first Antiquities Directors. And in fact the dream of a Lagos museum that was to 'bear such a relationship with the Nigerian Museum as the London Museum does to the National Museum' ²²⁹ – Fagg's words again – would never materialise.

225 'Casa do Fernandez': *Cultural Centre – Draft*, no author (2005).

226 Interviews with several current and former NCMM employees that have been promised anonymity.

227 ANM, *Nigerian Antiquities Commission Monthly Information Bulletin No. 19*. (May 1960).

228 ANM, letter of the Director of the Antiquities Department to the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Education (October 11, 1958), copy in: *Ilojo Bar File*.

229 ANM, letter of the Director of the Antiquities Department (November 26, 1958).

§ 3.3. A myth was born

In their enthusiasm, Murray and Fagg did contribute to the creation of a story about the iconic building that was not historically correct. That is to say, I found the first inaccurate descriptions of Ilojo Bar as being built for an African family returned from Brazil in written records of the Antiquities Department of the 1950s and 1960s. The incorrect dating of the house seems to have started in that era as well. On several instances Fagg described the house as the property of Brazilian returnees, and in a 1967 list of descriptions of Nigerian monuments, Murray wrote that it 'was built about one hundred years ago', placing the year of build some time in the 1860's, and 'put up by a slave family returning from Brazil.'²³⁰

This narrative would be repeated by the NCMM and others for decades to come, and embellished with myths like that Ilojo bar once housed the first Brazilian Ambassador to Nigeria,²³¹ that it was the residence of the first Brazilian Nigerian returnee, Pa Fernandez in 1888²³² or that it was one of the oldest Brazilian style buildings in Lagos.²³³

It is surprising, to say the least, for a monument they thought so valuable that they even wanted to turn it into a museum central to the independence celebrations, that neither Murray nor Fagg ever bothered to have the provenance and history of Ilojo Bar investigated a bit more closely. For Bernard Fagg, a two minute walk from the National Museum to the register of titles of Lagos Island kept at the Public Works Department Headquarters at the Race Course (now Tafawa Balewa Square)²³⁴ might have sufficed to set the story straight. Imagine the oral history that could still have been recorded in that era. People perhaps who in their childhood had known José Amoedo Fernandez, Napoleon Rey Couto or any of the other characters in this story, like the architect(s) who designed the house and the artisans whose hands built it.

None of the Nigerian successors of the two British heritage aficionados would have the history looked into either, for that matter. The NCMM stressed the value and importance of Ilojo Bar every time it came up. But the trouble of an in depth investigation to put flesh on the bones of this skeleton of a story never seems to have been taken.

²³⁰ ANM, Murray, *A List*.

²³¹ Statement by NCMM director Adedayo of Monuments, Heritage and Sites as recorded in the minutes of the Ilojo Bar Stakeholders Meeting at National Museum in Lagos (22 February 2011), 2.

²³² Statement by Consul General of Brazil to Nigeria Maria Auxiliadora Figueiredo as recorded in the minutes of a Brazilian delegation with Governor of Lagos Bola Ahmed Tinubu (24 March 2005), 1.

²³³ Letter of the NCMM to the General Manager of the Lagos State Building Control Agency (7 June 2013).

²³⁴ According to British architect John Godwin who lived in Lagos from 1954 till 2016 this was the location at the time where the documents concerning Ilojo Bar would have been kept.

§ 3.4. A crumbling monument

'An S.O.S. to the President', was the alarming headline of a letter to Nigeria's President Goodluck Jonathan from the 8th of June 2010.²³⁵ The missive bore the letterhead of Lanre Falola & Co, solicitors to the Olaiya family, the joint owners of Ilojo Bar. The letter's reference was less enigmatic: it was a request for de delisting of Ilojo Bar as a National Monument.

It stated that the National Commission for Museums and Monuments, responsible for the preservation of the monument, had 'done little or nothing in this regard'. The situation was worsened, the letter continued, because according to the law the family was not allowed to do any repairs or renovation to the house without the NCMM's consent. Over half a century of monumental status had left the structure 'in complete distraught and total dilapidation'.²³⁶

The Olaiyas were fed up with Ilojo Bar's monumental status, that much was clear. Although they were free to use it as before, as stated in section 9 of the Antiquities Ordinance, they were not allowed to change anything structurally to it without the NCMM's approval.²³⁷ Now the family wanted the house back, to do with whatever they pleased. And if that was not possible, they asked for 750 million naira (over 4 million euros at the time²³⁸) to pack up and leave the property to the NCMM.²³⁹

There was a reason this letter was addressed to the President. Under the law applicable at the time, the status of national monument 'may at any time be revoked by the President with the like consent where upon the antiquity to which it relates shall cease to be a national monument'.²⁴⁰

This is a good moment to take a closer look into the law appertaining to Ilojo Bar's special status in its later days.

During its existence as a monument, Nigeria went through several heritage laws. We already looked at the colonial version, the Antiquities Act. This legislation stayed in place long after independence, until 1979. Then, only a couple of days before military leader Olusegun Obasanjo handed over power to a democratically elected president, he signed the National Commission for

235 Letter by Lanre Falola & Co to The President of Nigeria, *Re: Request For Delisting of Property Located at 2. Bamgbose Street/6. Alli Street, Tinubu, Lagos, As a National Monument* (8 June 2010).

236 Letter by Lanre Falola & Co to The President of Nigeria.

237 Section 19 of the Antiquities Ordinance 1958, Cap 12, *Laws of the Federation and Lagos 1958*: 'When an antiquity has been declared a monument. the owner shall, save as expressly provided in this Ordinance, have the same estate, right, title and interest in and to such antiquity as if it had not been declared a monument.'

238 For the conversion I used the historic rate of the naira to the euro on June 8, 2010 on www.xe.com, <https://www.xe.com/currencytables/?from=NGN&date=2010-06-08#table-section>, accessed on 10 May 2021.

239 Letter by Lanre Falola & Co to The President of Nigeria.

240 National Commission For Museums and Monuments Act, Cap 19, *Laws of the Federation of Nigeria 2004*, 13:6.

Museums and Monuments Act, thus repealing the Antiquities Act.^{241, 242}

According to Professor of Law Folarin Shyllon, the new bill was a hasty job that hardly fixed any of the shortcomings of the earlier legislation, and actually added some new ones. For instance, it still described an antiquity as 'any work of art or craft work made or fashioned before the year 1918', which ignores the fact that objects and buildings of later date may be just as valid a part of historical heritage.²⁴³

Also, undoubtedly in the centralist state of mind of a military regime, it scrapped the role of local authorities in heritage management which the former act provided for.²⁴⁴ Instead, the newly created National Commission for Museums and Monuments would now oversee the management of the historical sites from the nation's capital, which used to be Lagos, but in 1991 would become Abuja. We will later see how the disconnect between federal and state institutions would be Ilojo Bar's Achilles heel.

This weakness was also noticed in a 2008 comparison of cultural heritage laws in anglophone Africa. The study describes a disconnect between the community on grassroots level and the centralised government deciding on and managing heritage. Especially in countries that inherited colonial heritage laws like Nigeria, the law 'takes no cognizance of community interests, aspirations and belief systems.'²⁴⁵

The military decree that would only widen the gap between the public and the decision makers would in 1990 be integrated in the Laws of the Federation of Nigeria by an Act of Parliament,²⁴⁶ and later into the 2004 version of those laws, but it was never changed or adjusted.

At the time of Ilojo Bar's demolition in 2016, the monument's existence was governed by a scarcely adapted colonial law that was outdated and, according to a legal review in 2015 'failed in its purpose of preserving the nation's cultural resources'.²⁴⁷ Moreover, section 13 of the Act which deals with national monuments 'failed to make provisions for the giving of due care and attention to the buildings and sites so declared'.²⁴⁸ In other words: the NCMM was responsible for the maintenance of the monuments, but was not given the means to do so.

241 Decree No. 77 of 1979.

242 Committee for Cultural Policy, *Global Art and Heritage Series: Nigeria Report* (May 2020), 10.

243 Shyllon, 'Cultural Heritage', 240. Not widening the period might not have been an oversight of the military authorities, but a deliberate act, if you take into account that removing the 1918 statute would have enabled for objects and structures pertaining Nigeria's Civil War (1967-1970) to be marked as antiquities, an era that until this day is a sore spot in Nigeria.

244 Shyllon, 'Cultural Heritage', 251.

245 Ngoro, W., Mumma, A., and Abungu, G. (ed.), *Cultural Heritage and the Law: Protecting Immovable Heritage in English-speaking countries of Sub-Saharan Africa* (Rome, 2008), 5.

246 NCMM ACT, CAP 242 of the law of Federal Republic of Nigeria 1990.

247 Adewumi, A.A., 'An Appraisal of the National Commission for Museums and Monuments (NCMM) Act, 1979', in: *Ife Juris Review, Journal of Contemporary Legal and Allied Issues* (January – April 2014 Ile-Ife) part 3, 43-60, 60.

248 Adewumi, 'An appraisal', 47.

These shortcomings were by no means unknown. During his tenure as Director General of the NCMM in the 80's, Professor Ade Obayemi had already and publicly addressed each and every one of them. The historian and archaeologist pulled no punches in a public lecture in 1987 when he said:

*'It is an open confidential fact that the overwhelming majority of the 60 or so national monuments protected by Nigerian Laws are in a state of disrepair and maintenance. I mourn inwardly to say that within the space of 30 or fewer years after some of these monuments were declared, quite a number have collapsed totally.'*²⁴⁹

When the sledge hammers came for Ilojo Bar in 2016, this National Monument had not collapsed. Be that as it may, as early as 2009 the Olaiya family, through their lawyer, did warn that this might happen any time.²⁵⁰ The letter preceded the one to the President asking to take the house off the monuments list, and was directed to the NCMM. But the demands were similar: 750 million naira from the NCMM or the house back. The Olaiyas, or at least the ones on whose authority the solicitor was acting, were dead serious.



Ilojo Bar in 2015. (Photographer: Tom Saater)

249 Adewumi, 'An appraisal', 48.

250 Letter by Lanre Falola & Co to The Director General of the NCMM, Imminent collapse of property located at 2. Bamgbose street. Tinubu. Lagos (A National Monument) (1 December 2009).

§ 3.5. The final effort

In early 2012 scaffolding went up against Ilojo Bar's facade, rising all the way up to the parapet. From one of the platforms hung a yellow and burgundy signboard with the logo of GHK Architects. Soon after that people with yellow safety helmets on their heads were crowding the place, armed with measuring tapes and cameras. Ilojo Bar hadn't seen that much activity since the drinking parlour had closed its doors.

It seems the angry letters had finally spurred the NCMM into action. In March 2011 the Commission had partnered with Legacy, the historical and environmental interest group of Nigeria, to take up the challenge of renovating the iconic building on Tinubu Square.²⁵¹ Architect for the project would be John Godwin of GHK Architects. It wasn't the first time this British architect turned Nigerian citizen who had been living in Lagos since colonial times got involved in an attempt to revive Ilojo Bar.²⁵²

Previously, under Lagos State Governor Bola Tinubu and his successor Babatunde Fashola, a project had been initiated to renovate the National Monument and turn it into a Nigerian/Brazilian cultural centre called Casa do Fernandez. Godwin would serve as the technical consultant. But just as the previous attempt in colonial times, the undertaking failed. According to a member of the Olaiya family present at a gathering about the project with the Lagos State Governor, the latter walked out of the meeting in frustration: 'Fashola came to talk and left, because the family did not want to sell'.²⁵³



*Scaffolding put up at Ilojo Bar early 2012 for the survey.
(source: Legacy)*

²⁵¹ Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between The National Commission for Museums and Monuments (NCMM) and Legacy 1995 Nigeria (Restoration Architect) (15 March 2011).

²⁵² 'Casa do Fernandez': Cultural Centre' (2005).

²⁵³ Interviews by the author with several members of the Olaiya family in early 2021.

But a lot of the groundwork had already been done, so it would have seemed only natural when the renovation efforts were picked up again in 2011, that John Godwin would be the person to oversee it. It is worth noting that the architect by that time had reached the age of 83. It speaks to his life long dedication to heritage preservation that he took up the challenge on behalf of Legacy, an NGO that he had cofounded in 1995.

The sudden hustle and bustle around the iconic building early 2012 was the first part of the renovation plan. Not only did the JHK-team assess the state the monument was in, they also did a detailed measurement of the building and took samples of the mortar for testing. The inspection found the entire building in a critical state of dilapidation, but 'surprisingly, the survey indicates that structural stability has not been completely compromised'.²⁵⁴ According to the report regular maintenance had not been done for 30 years or more and practically every building element of Ilojo Bar needed major work.²⁵⁵ The final estimate for the renovation effort came to 199.497.384,25 naira, rounded up to 200 million naira for the purpose of fundraising (at the time a bit over 9 million euros).²⁵⁶



Start of the Ilojo Bar survey for Legacy supervised by architect John Godwin (second right). (Source: Legacy)

254 ANM, National Commission for Museums and Monuments, *Saving Our Heritage. The Ilojo Bar National Monument* (no year) 6.

255 NCMM, *Angel House, Tinubu Square, The survey and preliminary report* (2011), 2.

256 NCMM, *Saving our Heritage*, 12.

It had been clear from the beginning that none of the stakeholders would have such deep pockets, and that the only way to cover the renovation budget was by fundraising.²⁵⁷ It was agreed that along with many other charity events a gala night was to be organised.²⁵⁸ The hope was that celebrity musician Victor Olaiya and his trumpet would pull a crowd ready to pull their wallets. But the gala night never held and the octogenarian and highlife superstar would get to play a much less positive role in Ilojo Bar's existence.

Instead, in a by now familiar pattern, the whole thing fizzled out when it came to money. In a desperate sounding attempt to breathe new life into the process, then President of Legacy Desmond Majekodunmi wrote a letter to the NCMM 'about the serious structural state of this building and the apparent lack of priority being given to its restoration'.²⁵⁹ But it did not help.

How could a project that had been taken up with so much enthusiasm end in such defeat? All parties involved seemed to have given up. The driving force behind the process had been heritage organisation Legacy, but even from that side the energy had waned. In hindsight, current Legacy President Kofo Adeleke thinks the task might have been too challenging for a small NGO already caught up in another large scale heritage project: 'Maybe we did not follow up enough. We are all volunteers, our time is limited.'²⁶⁰

257 Minutes of the Stakeholders Meeting on the Ilojo Bar Monument held on Tuesday 24 May 2011 at the National Museum Lagos (2011).

258 Letter of Curator of the National Museum Victoria Agili to Dr Victor Olaiya, *Gala night and exhibition: Invitation to meeting* (4 April 2012).

259 Letter of Legacy President Desmond Majekodunmi to National Museum Acting Curator Victoria Agili (2 May 2012).

260 Interview by the author with Mrs Kofo Adeleke, President of Legacy (The Historical Environmental and Interest Group of Nigeria) (10 May 2021).

§ 3.6. A quarrelling family

Alfred Omolona Olaiya might have been illiterate, by the 1930's he had become a wealthy trader who had made his fortune selling gin to soldiers in Calabar and supplying the colonial prison with food.²⁶¹ And in those days in Nigeria, wealth corresponded with family size. When the Olaiya patriarch passed away, he left behind eight wives and 24 children.²⁶² He also left behind property in places all across the country's south.²⁶³ One of those was the recently acquired building on Tinubu Square, then still known as Casa do Fernandez.

With so many descendants having a stake in the late patriarch's estate, it is hardly a surprise that there were differences of opinion as to what to do with it. The family members found themselves against each other in court on several occasions. The latest account I found was a dispute over who was allowed to collect the rent from Ilojo Bar, which went on for almost two decades until it came to a settlement in 2009.²⁶⁴

After that the descendants kept disagreeing over what to do with the prime location property of Ilojo Bar. Of course they had seen how most historical buildings around the bustling square had long ago been wrecked to be replaced for high-rises with much more rent space. The earnings from the decaying national monument they owned were a pittance compared to what the landlords of those multi-storey office and shop complexes were making off their property. No wonder some family members placed economic value over historical worth.

By the end of the monument's existence, the family was roughly divided into two sections: one who wanted to keep the building as a monument and one who did not. It goes too far to start naming all individuals involved, so I will stick to the two names that come up in the records as representatives of either faction.

We already saw how musician Victor Olaiya, son of the patriarch's seventh wife, unsuccessfully applied for the removal of Ilojo Bar's monumental status in 2010. At the time he was the family elder – Victor Olaiya passed away in 2020 – and he had frequently lamented the 'lack of commitment on the part of the federal government and also the NCMM' to take care of the

261 Interviews by the author with several members of the Olaiya family in early 2021.

262 Terms of Family Consent, *Late Pa Alfred Olayia's Family Lines*.

263 Ajani, J, and Onwuka, A., 'Dr. Victor Olaiya Reminisces', in: *The Vanguard* (2 January 2011). According to Victor Olaiya the estate of his late father Alfred Omolana Olaiya included houses in Calabar, Aba, Owerri, Oron, Otukpo, Onitsha and Lagos.

264 High Court of Lagos State, *Terms of Settlement*, Omotayo Olaiya, O. Adeola, Tolal Kumolu, Tunde Awobuyide, Tunde Olaiya and Taiwo Olabode Olaiya v. Victor Abimbola Olaiya and Benjamin O. Olaiya (Suit No. LD/516/90) (16 March 2009).

building's maintenance.²⁶⁵

His faction was being represented by the law office of Lanre Falola & Co. That office was corresponding with the NCMM and other institutions on their behalf. The exasperation they felt is best described in a paragraph from yet another letter by their lawyer to the NCMM in 2010:

*'For the umpteen time your agency is hereby warned to live up to its responsibilities by carrying out a comprehensive renovations (sic) of the premises in order to avert its imminent collapse You will recollect that all our cries in this regard have been met with your agency's persistent rebuff.'*²⁶⁶

Eric Awobiye, a grandson of the patriarch's first wife, was the most vocal family member defending the monument's existence. This side was not happy with the state of the house either, but was still hoping for a solution. Mr Awobiye was the one who in October 2015 warned the Commission of the upcoming plot to demolish Ilojo Bar. Today, it reads as Job's news:

*'For your information, certain members of the family are taken step (sic) to invite Developers in order to demolish the building.'*²⁶⁷

And indeed on the 29th of April 2016, the demolition permit from the Lagos State Physical Planning Authority (LASPPPA) came.²⁶⁸ Oddly, it was addressed to Mr Alfred Omolana Olaiya, the long deceased family patriarch. It informed him that his application for demolition had been approved.

And even though the NCMM intervened by informing the Physical Planning Authority that because of the building's monumental status they had no right to grant such permit, even though hasty new stakeholders meetings were organised and even though worried epistles about the imminent wrecking of a National Monument were sent to the Lagos State Governor,²⁶⁹ this

265 Adedeji, N.O., *Management of Ilojo Bar and Its Socio Cultural Implications*, post-graduate thesis Institute of Archaeology and Museum Studies Jos (Jos 2010) 65. The appendix of this dissertation holds transcripts of interviews the researcher held with among others Victor Olaiya.

266 Letter by Lanre Falola & Co to the Director General of the NCMM, *Re: property located at 2. Bamgbose Street. Lagos (a national monument) - Notice to renovate property* (27 October 2010).

267 Letter by E.A. Awobiye to the Director General of Heritage of the NCMM, *Very urgent notice effected within seventy two hours (72hr) as it received redeemed RE: Ilojo Bar National Monument from demolition of no. 6, Tinubu Square* (24 October 2015).

268 Letter by the Lagos State Physical Planning Authority to Mr Alfred Omolana Olaiya, Ref, No: LASPPPA/2015/DPD/02S, *Re: Application For Demolition Permit at No. 2 Bamgbose Street/Nnamdi Azikiwe Street. Tinubu. Lagos Island, Lagos* (29 April 2016).

269 Letter by Agboola Dagbiri, Special Advisor Central Business Districts and Folorunsho Folarin Coker, Commissioner for Tourism, Arts & Culture to the Governor of Lagos State, *Re: Intended demolition of Olaiya House (Ilojo Bar) at No. 2 Bamgbose Street/Nnamdi Azikiwe Street, Tinubu, Lagos Island, by some members of the*

demolition permit granted to a dead man would turn out to be Ilojo Bar's death sentence.

Following the NCMM's intervention the Physical Planning Authority did send out a letter withdrawing the permit. However, the retraction that would have saved the building was sent to a completely different address in Lagos, unrelated to the Olaiyas or their lawyer. This is why in court the family could claim never to have received the retraction.

Several sources in the civil service who asked for anonymity found the Physical Planning Authority's explanation that the agency had not been aware of the federal monumental status of Ilojo Bar unconvincing, and considered the course of events fishy. To them it was clear that civil servants were 'settled' – Nigerian jargon for bribed – in order to look the other way and to facilitate the demolition.²⁷⁰

That I saw two versions of the wrongly addressed letter withdrawing the demolition permit is curious: one internal version with the signatures of the civil servants who had signed off on the correspondence as is usual in a government office, and one that was produced by LASPPPA for external use and off which those names seem to have been blotted out.

Graft by its very nature is hard to prove. But the fact that a Lagos State Government Agency worked against a Federal Institution to demolish a federally listed monument, could indicate that corruption and the lack of involvement of the local authorities, the two-headed dragon plaguing Nigeria's heritage management as already identified by Professor Folarin, also played its role in the downfall of Ilojo Bar.

Olaiya family (30 August 2016).

²⁷⁰ Interviews by the author with civil servants at NCMM and LASPPPA in the first quarter of 2021.



*An earlier attempt to demolish Ilojo Bar in 2016 which was averted.
(Source: a resident)*

Φ

§ 3.7. Bulldozers move in

It was 11 September 2016.

For the fourth time that year a bulldozer had come to Ilojo Bar, accompanied by soldiers and rented cops. The first three times family members living in the building had been able to prevent the wrecking by warning the soldiers at the nearby barracks who came and intervened. The fourth effort came on a quiet Sunday which was also an important muslim holiday, when according to the residents of Ilojo Bar 'nobody was around to come to the rescue'.²⁷¹

It took the excavator about five hours to raze the National Monument to the ground, as spectators stood by and saw its shovel pulling down wall after wall. The NCMC banners on the building warning it was a protected national monument came down with them. And whatever had not fallen to pieces in the process, the bulldozer's caterpillar tracks pulverised as it climbed onto the debris to continue its work. Not a single precaution was taken to protect the public as the crashing debris fell far into Bamgbose Street.²⁷²

²⁷¹ Interviews by the author on the demolition site in the first quarter of 2021.

²⁷² A five minute video of the demolition is to be found on YouTube:



Illustration 4: The balcony bracket that was for sale after the demolition (source: Ktravula.com) showing where this architectural element used to be. (Source: Legacy)

During the demolition every once in a while area boys rushed onto the ground to scavenge whatever seemed of value, like the cast iron brackets that had held up the balconies. They were being sold off on the street for as little as 700 naira (see illustration 4).²⁷³ The only thing that was kept, it would later turn out, was the 'Angel' that had crowned the building, the statuette once manufactured in Porto by the end of the nineteenth century.

Public indignation followed. Nigerian newspapers and websites lamented the destruction of the monument and heritage organisation Legacy filed a petition. It demanded that the perpetrators of the

demolition be brought to book and that the monument would be 'reconstructed exactly as it was' according to the measured drawings the organisation had done in 2012.²⁷⁴

A week and a half after the demolition then NCMM Director General Yusuf Abdallah Usman issued a statement on behalf of the Commission. He claimed that his organisation had been maintaining, promoting and preserving the monument'. A bit of an exaggeration, looking at the conclusions of the 2012 assessment that nothing had been done to Ilojo Bar's maintenance for at least three decades. He went on to describe Casa do Fernandez as a house built 190 years ago, which even at the time by any account was at least 25 years too early.

He also vowed that the NCMM would prosecute the perpetrators. But a quick look at what the 2004 NCMM Act promises violators of that law, confirms what Professor Shyllon already professed in 1996: the penalties were too low to make a difference. The prospect of a fine of 500 naira – an amount that buys a quick meal in a local Lagos bukka – or a maximum prison sentence of one month hardly will scare off anyone who expects to make millions of naira by breaking the law.²⁷⁵

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-IL1dryOqaE>.

273 Tubosun, K, 'Visiting the Demolition Site: Update on the demolition of Ìlòjò Bar/Ọlàyá House', in: www.ktravula.com (18 September 2016), accessed on 20 September 2020, <http://www.ktravula.com/2016/09/update-on-the-demolition-of-ilojo-bar/>.

274 Legacy, 'Petition Against the Demolition of Ilojo Bar (Casa do Fernandez)' (19 September 2016), in: legacy1995.org.ng, accessed on 22 September 2020, <http://legacy1995.org.ng/petition-against-the-demolition-of-ilojo-bar/>.

275 National Commission For Museums and Monuments Act, Cap 19, *Laws of the Federation of Nigeria 2004*, 19:5.

The DG also ensured that the Commission was ready 'to restore Ilojo Bar back to its original authentic form'.²⁷⁶ Just as the Federal Minister of Information and Culture, Lai Mohammed, later vowed the Federal Government would 'rebuild it and restore this building to its former glory'.²⁷⁷ But either men mentioned from which budget this reconstruction would be financed and under whose authority.

Lai Mohammed had come to Lagos in early 2017 to view the demolition site. On that occasion he also stated that even though the monument was demolished, that did not mean that the plot would go back to the original owner to do with as they pleased.²⁷⁸ And indeed, the banner announcing the residential building project of the Dr. Victor Olaiya Family, put up after the demolition, swiftly disappeared. But until today the site that once was the location of Casa do Fernandez looks exactly as destitute as it did on the day the Federal Minister visited.

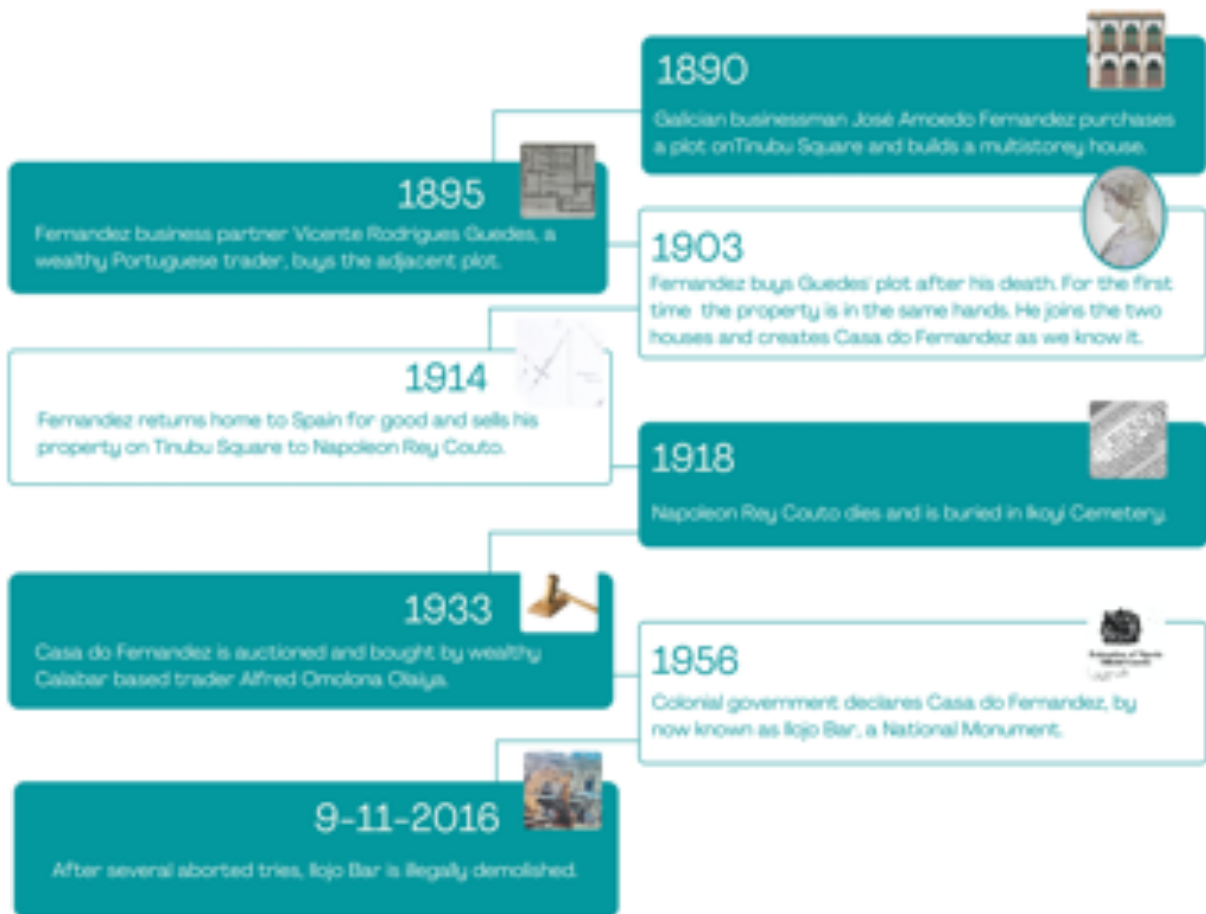


The state of the demolition site of Casa do Fernandez in February 2021. (Photographer: Femke van Zeijl)

276 NCMM, *Statement of Director General of NCMM, Yusuf Abdallah Usman* (24 September 2016).

277 News Agency of Nigeria (NAN), 'Nigerian govt vows to deal with collaborators of destroyed 190-year monument' (29 January 2017), in: *premiumtimesng.com*, accessed on 20 September 2020, <https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/more-news/221936-nigerian-govt-vows-deal-collaborators-destroyed-190-year-monument.html>.

278 NAN, 'Government vows'.



Demolition permit issued for Ikoji Bar by the LDPFA.

Illustration 5: An overview of the history of Casa do Fernandez purely as a building.



The statuette presented at the MOU signing on 15 January 2021. (Photographer: Femke van Zeijl)



Ch 4. Heritage

§ 4.1. The story of the angel

They called her 'the Angel' even though the statuette on the parapet of Ilojo Bar did not have wings. To the Lagosians looking up at the ceramic figure from Tinubu Square however, that is what she looked like. It was the only object recovered from the site after the monument's demolition in 2016.²⁷⁹ According to some family members the developer was given the explicit instruction to retrieve the statuette from the building before razing it to the ground.

Not that it was removed very carefully. When the statuette appeared in public again over four years later, the bottom part had been severely damaged. Apparently, the demolishers just used a shovel or hammer to ram it off the pedestal, which they did not bother to preserve.

Had they done so, the texts on its base would have given away name and provenance of the statuette. Fortunately, I came across a picture of it taken during the measuring in 2012 in which the text was clearly legible. It pointed me in the direction of the statuette's creator all the way in Portugal.

²⁷⁹ The statuette was presented by the Olaiya family at the signing of the Memory of Understanding with the National Commission for Museums and Monuments in Lagos on 15 January 2021.

'The angel' was in fact called 'Primavera' (Spring) and was a creation of José Perreira Valente, a ceramics artist in Porto, the northern Portuguese city close to the Spanish border where Fernandez' business partner Rodrigues Guedes came from. Mr Valente had learned the trade at the Fábrica de Cerâmica das Devesas, a famous ceramics factory in the harbour city, before setting up his own workshop across the street in Porto in 1884. According to Portuguese art historian José Francisco Ferreira Queiroz, specialised in Portuguese ceramics, this particular statuette would have been produced between 1884 and 1905. The allegorical figure would have been part of a set of four, each representing a season. Valente mass produced many statuettes like it that until this day embellish houses and gardens in Portugal and Brazil, to where the company exported many of its products.²⁸⁰



The statuette still on top of the monument during the measurement in 2012. (Source: Legacy)

The Primavera statue, in short, was not extremely rare or valuable outside of its special context as an iconic figurine on top of an over a century old monument in the heart of Lagos Island. That is what the Olaiya family would have realised had they tried to sell the severely damaged statuette – which some family members claimed they did. The market value of the legless figurine would have disappointed them.

As a piece of Lagosian heritage 'the angel' is priceless, and the story it tells invaluable. Maybe Fernandez brought it along from one of his travels to Europe or Brazil, or maybe another one of his Brazilian business contacts like Mr Graciano Martins' great-grandfather, who traveled across the Atlantic regularly, shipped it in for him. Either way, he found it special enough to crown the edifice on Tinubu Square once he had joined his property into one single monumental building. More importantly, the fact that generations of Lagosians grew up seeing 'the angel' on top of the building adds a significance which no monetary value can express.

This sums up what heritage really is, to once again quote Laurajane Smith's definition: 'intangible expressions, ways “of knowing and seeing” that inform and give meaning to the material

²⁸⁰ Information based on emails exchanged in January 2021 with Portuguese art historian José Francisco Ferreira Queiroz who is specialised in Portuguese ceramics.

world'.²⁸¹

In the case of Casa do Fernandez, at least a part of the Olaiya family did not see that intangible value. In fact, many of the Lagosians living in and around the building did not see it.²⁸² Even before its demolition, I remember once standing on the square across from the monument admiring its architectural details, when a passer by asked me why I was gawking at 'that rubbish' and why I did not turn my gaze to the high rises on the other side. And when I was walking around on Tinubu Square in January 2021 and asked after the missing structure once known as Ilojo Bar, I mostly met indifference at the illegal demolition. 'You can't stop modernisation', a cloth seller in one of the alleys off the square reacted with a shrug.

Clearly, heritage does not carry the same meaning for everyone. And as the case of Casa do Fernandez shows, it takes more than an official declaration of its monumental status to protect and safeguard a piece of cultural heritage. That is what this final chapter is about. It looks into what went wrong in this particular case of heritage management, or rather mismanagement, tying together all previous findings of the study. And it tries to come up with an approach that might lead to a more successful handling of such heritage in the future.

281 Schmidt and Pikirayi, *Community Archaeology*, 6.

282 Adedeji, N.O., *Management of Ilojo Bar*, 73. The appendix of this dissertation holds transcripts of interviews the researcher held, one of them being with a Mr Ikechukwu, a trader renting a shop on the ground floor of Ilojo Bar. He indicated not to know of the monumental status of the building he was using: he was there to do business.

§ 4.2. The result of stalemate

The Primavera statue was returned to the public eye on the 15th of January, 2021. The Olaiya family had brought it to the National Museum in Lagos where they were signing a Memorandum of Understanding with the National Commission for Museums and Monuments. The MOU was the outcome of a legal stalemate between the two parties.²⁸³ After the demolition in 2016, they both took each other to court.²⁸⁴ The family was accusing the Commission of not living up to its responsibilities in maintaining the monument, and the Commission blamed the family for having torn down Ilojo Bar illegally.

In Nigeria, where the average trial takes four to ten years and more than twenty if it goes all the way to Supreme Court, these disputes could have easily dragged on for decades. In the mean time the rubble site on Tinubu Square where the National Monument used to be would remain a wasteland in the centre of Lagos Island. That is why the parties decided to resolve the matter outside of court.²⁸⁵

They agreed to drop all charges and work together on a new development on the corner of Tinubu Square and Bamgbose Street that all parties could live with. A hybrid design for such a new building by Lagos architect Theo Lawson was presented at the signing. It combines a two storey facade on Tinubu Square commemorating the original building, with a seven storey tower for shops and offices rising up behind it.

The MOU is a typical compromise in a country where mediation often yields quicker results than going to court. The agreement states that the new structure will have a mini museum and meeting space managed by the Commission, but the remaining building can be used by, lived in and rented out by the Olaiya family, as long as ten percent of the profit will be reserved for maintenance.²⁸⁶

Clearly, the Commission has dropped its initial intention 'to restore Ilojo Bar back to its original authentic form'²⁸⁷ – probably realising it did not have the means or capacity to do so. Instead it has settled for an exhibition space and a say in the design and maintenance. And the Olaiyas will finally have the money making venture they had hoped their A-location property to be all along.

²⁸³ Interviews with both NCMM personnel and Olaiya family members who asked to remain anonymous.

²⁸⁴ Suit No FHC/L/CS/1329/10: Dr. Victor Olaiya & 8 others vs National Commission for Museums and Monuments, Suit No FHC/L/CS/2132/16: National Commission for Museums and Monuments vs Dr. Victor Olaiya & 8 others.

²⁸⁵ As explained at the MOU signing on 15 January 2021 by town planner and former Lagos State Commissioner for Physical Planning and Urban Development, Mr. Olutoyin Ayinde, who mediated between the two parties.

²⁸⁶ Memorandum Of Understanding Made Between National Commission For Museums And Monuments (THE Commission) and Alfred Omolona Olaiya Family (The Olaiya Family) (Lagos, 15 January 2021).

²⁸⁷ NCMM, *Statement of Director General of NCMM, Yusuf Abdallah Usman* (24 September 2016).

The MOU also specifies that the building will once again be rebaptised: in honour of the family patriarch, the new name will be 'Alfred Omolona Olaiya House'.²⁸⁸ 'The angel' that was brought to the signing by the family wrapped in a dusty cloth, will be showcased in the mini-museum, and a replica of it will be placed on the new building's parapet.²⁸⁹

It took about half an hour for the Olaiyas, their lawyer, the NCMM heads, the Commission's legal representatives and the witnesses to all sign the agreement that Friday morning. Then the Commission's Director General expressed the hope that 'the building will be eventually erected'. Because all intentions and beautiful words aside, the MOU comes with one big caveat: the money for the ambitious development plans still has to be found.



The model of architect Theo Lawson's design for a 'new' Ilojo Bar as presented at the MOU signing on 15 January 2021. (Photographer: Femke van Zeijl)

288 MOU, article 2,10.

289 MOU, article 2,3.

§ 4.3. A penal solution

'If you come and demolish, there must be penalties.' With this admonition Director General Abba Tijani of the NCMM warned Nigerians against ever again tampering with national monuments.²⁹⁰ He did so on 15 January 2021 on the MOU signing with the Olaiya family. On that occasion Mr Tijani also announced 'a revisiting of the law to avoid a repeated incident like Ilojo Bar'.

The demolition of the National Monument in 2016 stirred the NCMM to action. Long standing plans to adapt the heritage law dating from the military era finally materialised. In 2018 the National Commission for Museums and Monuments Amendment Bill was submitted to Nigeria's National Assembly, where it is waiting to be voted on. It is this 'revisiting of the law' that the Commission's DG referred to in his speech on January 15.

Let us take a look at the issues the amendment addresses. There is a reason Mr Tijani spoke of penalties: the amendment proposes a steep increase in comparison to the current version of the law that provides a measly 500 naira fine.²⁹¹ The elevated sanctions are stipulated in the following excerpt of the 2018 amendment:

- '(8) *Any person that contravenes the provisions of this sub-section (3) of this section shall be guilty of an offence and is liable on conviction-*
- (a) *If a natural person, to a fine of N2,000,000 or to paying the cost of restoration (whichever is greater), or imprisonment for five years,*
 - (b) *If a juridical person, to a fine of N5,000,000 and shall pay for the cost of restoration'*²⁹²

Under the amended law, not only would any law breaker risk a fine that is at least four thousand times as high as it is now, they could also expect to be charged with the cost of restoring the monument to its old state. Maybe, if this provision had already been in place when the shovel came for Ilojo Bar in 2016, the demolishers would have thought twice before turning the monument into a pile of rubble. The late Professor Folarin Shyllon, who had lamented the weak penalties of the heritage law for decades, would have surely welcomed the staggering increase.

Nonetheless, it is important to note that even if the law were to be voted in, the effect of it

²⁹⁰ Speech of Director General Abba Tijani of the National Commission for Museums and Monuments at the MOU signing at the Lagos National Museum (15 January 2021).

²⁹¹ National Commission For Museums and Monuments Act, Cap 19, *Laws of the Federation of Nigeria 2004*, 19:5.

²⁹² National Commission for Museums and Monuments Amendment Bill 2018, Part V, 32 (8).

hinges on its implementation. In Nigeria often the enforcement leaves a lot to be desired. To just give one example: the Nigerian law provides hefty fines and long prison sentences for anyone who tampers with electricity connections, yet in Lagos you can see electricians on flip-flops climbing into poles to meddle with the cables on a daily basis without any fear of repercussions. Without sensitising and incentivising law enforcers and the judiciary on the law and the value of heritage, the monumental fines will just remain a dead letter.

What other points of criticism as listed in the previous chapter does the amendment address?

The definition of built heritage has been touched, but oddly, upwards in age. The existing law defines heritage as anything built before 1918, the amendment shifts that four years earlier to 1914. If this development continues at some point even Casa do Fernandez will not be considered heritage anymore. The awareness that heritage and old age do not need to be synonymous has not yet penetrated into the new legislation.

The amendment does make one exception. A remarkable second stipulation was added to the definition, stating that built heritage is also: 'anywhere where a Nigerian founding father lived, worked or died.'²⁹³ Although already an improvement, this wording leaves a lot of questions open.

What to do with the building political campaigner and suffragette Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti lived, worked and/or died in? Does her house not deserve preservation? And how come it only speaks of founding fathers, and not of other great figures in Nigerian history, like famous artists, musicians and thinkers? Should they be left to oblivion? Under this definition Demas Nwoko's breathtaking architecture would not be considered national heritage, even though the structures of this Nigerian master builder born in 1935 are internationally recognised as such.

It seems a pity that when the makers of the amendment decided to widen the definition of heritage, they did not go further than this.



Detail of Demas Nwoko's 1970's Dominican Chapel in Ibadan. (Photographer: Femke van Zeijl)

²⁹³ National Commission for Museums and Monuments Amendment Bill 2018, Part V, 41 (3).

To the National Commission, the biggest stumbling block for heritage management was a lack of funding. How does the amendment address that? It seems that here the lawmakers are turning to the private sector, by enabling public-private partnerships, making construction companies deduct 1% of the budget of building projects to fund the National Commission and encouraging gifts from the public by tax deductions.²⁹⁴ The amendment does not seem to give clear provisions for a general NCMM budget from the Federal Government.

If the law gets voted in, it remains to be seen if the focus on private funding will work out and if it can provide the Commission with the necessary addition to its inadequate budget for heritage management. At least one NCMM worker was optimistic: 'In Nigeria, the private sector is the only thing that functions. If they can make money with heritage, the businesses will come.'²⁹⁵

The amendment mostly leaves the top down approach untouched that is an inheritance from the era of the military dictatorship. The President can still decide to undo any monumental status at any time, without giving a reason.²⁹⁶ And local and state governments are still largely left out of the equation. It was the disconnect between those layers of government that made it possible for the Olaiya family to pit state and federal organisations against each other, obtaining a demolition permit from a Lagos State institution even though it was in violation of federal law.

The amendment could have attempted to close this gap at least partly by returning some of the authority and management concerning heritage to local governments, but his opportunity was missed.

The amendment introduces one new clause that actually involves the public. It specifies that before declaring a monument, the Commission will 'Take cognizance of the customary rights and practices of the communities concerned after consultative meetings with identified stakeholders'.²⁹⁷ And while this is a step forward, the 2018 Act spares no thought on how to engage the public in heritage management or how to reach out to the grass-root level. The spirit of the law is rather that the public is something to protect cultural heritage from by stiff penalties and threatening prison sentences.

This propensity toward the penal solution is not unusual in Nigeria, where laws are still steeped in the autocratic mentality of military rule, and where the president himself is a former dictator. It was reflected at the MOU signing, in the way the Commission's Director General kept emphasising how lawbreakers would face discipline, instead of focusing on the value of well managed cultural heritage to the public. It left the impression that given the choice between the carrot and the stick,

294 National Commission for Museums and Monuments Amendment Bill 2018, Part XI, 121.

295 Interviews by the author with civil servants at NCMM in the first quarter of 2021.

296 National Commission for Museums and Monuments Amendment Bill 2018, Part V, 30 (7a).

297 National Commission for Museums and Monuments Amendment Bill 2018, Part V, 30 (1b).

the authorities would sooner go for the stick.

I came across a telling example of that attitude in a letter of the National Commission to the Olaiya family in 1981. It responded to the family's request to renovate the back part of their property on Bamgbose Street – the architecturally much less interesting section behind the main building facing Tinubu Square. The NCMM responded it was willing to grant permission for that renovation, providing that in return for that permission the Olaiya family would vacate the front part of the building 'for the purpose of preparing and presenting it as a National Monument'.²⁹⁸ It is representative of the stranglehold the family must have felt itself in ever since their property got its monumental status.

When I spoke with Cordelia Osasona, Professor of History of Architecture at the Obafemi Awolowo University in Ile-Ife, she was clear about her expectations of both the federal law and the federal institutions for heritage management in Nigeria, by calling them 'bulldogs without any teeth.' She advocated a different approach to heritage, in partnership with the owners and the community, one of which the public should be the main beneficiary. 'Only if people see heritage as something to be proud of that concerns them, anything will change.'²⁹⁹

There must be more positive and effective ways to connect users and public with the cultural heritage sites they live in, walk past and talk about. In the last part of this thesis I will try to come up with such ways, using Ilojo Bar as an example.

298 Letter of NCMM Director General to the Olaiya Family Council (27 August 1981).

299 Interview by phone with Professor of History of Architecture Cordelia Osasona at the Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, on 19 May 2021.

§ 4.4. Whose heritage?

In view of all the findings of this research, one conclusion seems to be inescapable, and that is that the seed of Ilojo Bar's demise was sown at the moment of its inception as a National Monument in 1956. The British antiquities officers who so admired the imposing structure on Tinubu Square, but never bothered to make further inquiries, thought they were preserving Nigeria's heritage. In truth they were unknowingly preserving something their western gaze considered worthy: a piece of architecture, as it turns out, with more European ties than anybody remembered.

In that sense for me personally this research has also been a confrontation with reflexivity. Because why did I, a Dutch woman who spent her childhood holidays touring castles and palaces in southern Europe, from the very first time I laid eyes on it, value the crumbling house so much that I used to take visitors to Tinubu Square to see it? Wasn't that because I also felt this was what a proper monument should look like? It uncovered my own biases just as much as it did those of Murray and Fagg, the two Brits who stood at the cradle of Ilojo Bar as a National Monument.

Does that imply that Ilojo Bar was not worth saving? Quite the contrary. But it is imperative to first recognise the eurocentrism of its origin as a monument, before trying to establish a less colonial context to value this Lagosian heritage site. As I already stated in the first chapter, history and heritage are not the same thing, although they are connected. In the words of heritage pioneer David Lowenthal: 'History and heritage transmit different things to different audiences.'³⁰⁰

In the case of Casa do Fernandez, this is illustrated by the way the Afro-Brazilian community has embraced and one might even say appropriated its heritage as their own. Historical research shows that the house was built for a Spaniard and at no time in its existence was in Afro-Brazilian hands. But that does not dismiss it as an important part of Lagos' Afro-Brazilian heritage. The descendants of the returnees have certainly acknowledged that by including the monument in their stories, with oral tradition claiming the Fernandez' to be a family of returnees like themselves.³⁰¹ They might not be historically correct, but in its context it does indicate the value they place on this cultural heritage.

After all, the house was built by their forefathers, and the fact remains that its remarkable architecture represented some of the best work in Lagos by the Africans who had returned from Brazil to the homeland. In this case, history and heritage are intertwined, and who is to say what version is most valid? To quote Lowenthal: that all depends on the audience.

³⁰⁰ Lowenthal, D., *The Heritage Crusade and the Spoils of History* (Cambridge 1989), 128.

³⁰¹ Interviews with Mr Graciano Oladipupo Martins on 21 January and 16 February in Freedom Park, Lagos and informal talks with other Afro-Brazilian descendants in Lagos.

There is a risk in too narrow an interpretation of heritage. Such could lead to the exclusion of those who do not feel the story concerns them, or rather, the exclusion of the audience not targeted by that single story. David Lowenthal was very explicit about this: 'History is for all, heritage for ourselves alone' and 'Heritage reverts to tribal rules and makes the past an exclusive, secret possession.'³⁰² At its worst, heritage can exclude and divide.

I would argue that the case of Ilojo Bar offers a striking example of this phenomenon. The moment it was bombarded into a monument, it has been defined as Afro-Brazilian heritage, and Afro-Brazilian heritage only, first by the Antiquities Department, then by its successor the National Commission for Museums and Monuments and soon by everyone else. By doing so, they did the monument a disservice, because it excluded all other readings of its historical relevance.

The indigenes and Afro-Brazilian descendants on Lagos Island generally live together harmoniously, but remnants of the old animosity rooted in the British favouritism towards the returnees and their perceived arrogance turn up in conversation in little ways. In the Nigerian context, where it mostly counts where your ancestors came from many generations ago, they are still seen as newcomers in Lagos, not as much as recent immigrants from other states, but more so than the indigenous Yoruba Lagosians. Why would they get all the attention? Celebrating an iconic building in the middle of Lagos Island as strictly Brazilian would not have eased that residual resentment.

Since the 1950's, Lagosians without Brazilian roots have been told this heritage was not theirs. I described how at the MOU signing even the Director General of the NCMM characterised the demolished National Monument as Brazilian, opposing it to the dominant Yoruba culture. What other message could Lagosians pick up from this narrative than that this particular heritage did not concern them? It makes it easier to understand why the Brazilian Ambassador felt more connected to the monument than the Nigerian who used the building every day to sell his merchandise, and why so little people on Tinubu Square seemed to care about 'that rubbish'.

In reality of course the National Monument on Tinubu Square was different things to different people: at the same time Casa do Fernandez, Ilojo Bar, Olaiya House and Angel House. That is the way I propose the kaleidoscopic story of this heritage to be told.

It should include the tale of the wealthy trader in Calabar who surprised all the rich men of Lagos by overbidding them when Casa do Fernandez went up for auction; the menu of the Ilojo Bar restaurant his son opened there; the juju music driven by the rhythm of the talking drum that was played under its roof. And now we know it should also include the story of the Galician migrants looking for greener pastures – a reminder perhaps that Africans are not the only ones traveling

302 Lowenthal, *The Heritage Crusade*, 128.

abroad to find a better life.

Besides that, the narrative might include the earlier tale that oral history preserved, of the dark era of the transatlantic slave trade and the implication of Lagosians as well as Europeans in it. One cannot go cherry-picking history, as British-Nigerian historian David Olusoga underscored at an online heritage conference in April 2021. Leaving out the difficult stories will create 'a fragile history that is full of holes and deliberate emissions'. The tragedies that have no heroes also need to be told, because these are 'stories in which our ancestors did terrible things and we need to acknowledge them.'³⁰³

As it happens, the kaleidoscopic narrative might even introduce the coveted connection to the Nigerian founding fathers that the newly proposed law mentions as a criterium for heritage. Nigerian historian Ed Emeka Keazor told me he remembered seeing an advert for a restaurant run by Herbert Macaulay in an early twentieth century newspaper from Casa do Fernandez.³⁰⁴ And even though I have not been able to retrieve that advert, I did find other primary sources connecting one of the most outspoken voices of early Nigerian nationalism to the site.

Macaulay's chequebooks kept at the Kenneth Dike Library in Ibadan contain several receipts he wrote out at regular intervals from 1907 to 1913, first to Fernandez & Co and finally in the name of Couto. It could confirm that this famous Lagosian was one of Casa do Fernandez' tenants.³⁰⁵

Another indication that Macaulay might be connected to the iconic building is a 1913 payment reminder addressed to him on Tinubu Square, and not to his office on Balbinna Street.³⁰⁶ A Lagos timber supplier urged him to pay his bill for wood that was delivered more than a year earlier and threatened legal action if he did not pay up within a week – if the number of reminders in the archive are anything to go by, this Nigerian founding father was not eager to pay bills. Maybe Macaulay used the delivered timber to upgrade the interior of his restaurant in Casa do Fernandez, that certainly would have been a fancy place. Being the socialite he was, Macaulay would have hosted the local elite in his restaurant. Who knows what revolutionary conversations and debates have taken place there?

Obviously this angle needs more research, as do the other perspectives I am suggesting. More than I could do in the course of this master's thesis. What I aimed to show was how to tell a more

303 David Olusoga, *INTO Online 2021: Building Resilience*, International National Trusts Organisation (4 April 2021), keynote address.

304 WhatsApp conversations with Ed Emeka Keazor from December 2020 to well into June 2021.

305 KDB, Special Collection, Herbert Macaulay Papers, Box 94, Chequebooks Herbert Macaulay, *no II, 1907*, No C50164 (16 February 1907) / *no II, 1907*, No C50167 (23 February 1907) / *no 13, 1907, March-April* No C51587 (29 March 1907) / *no 13, 1907, March-April*, No C51597 (5 April 1907) / *Sept 15-Nov 8 1910*, No C99896 (1 November 1910) / *no 2, B.P.*, No B107280 (23 November 1911) / *no 4, B.P.*, No B108227 (25 December 1911) / *no 10, B.P.*, No B111567 (4 March 1912) / *no 25, 2013*, No C132048 (7 August 1913).

306 KDB, Special Collection, Herbert Macaulay Papers, Box 88, File 4, *Payment reminder by W.B. MacGyver Ltd Lagos* (13 July 1913).

inclusive story of the site on the corner of Tinubu Square and Bamgbose Street than was done in the past. The alternative timeline in illustration 6 on page 86 shows what this enriched timeline could look like, compared to the rather bare timeline in illustration 5 on page 72.

Such an approach, I would argue, would not just introduce more stories and memories of days gone by in its history, but also connect a more diverse audience with the narrative, which might lead the general public – from indigenous Lagosians and tourists to Brazilians and Galicians – to embrace it as a heritage site that in some way also matters to them.

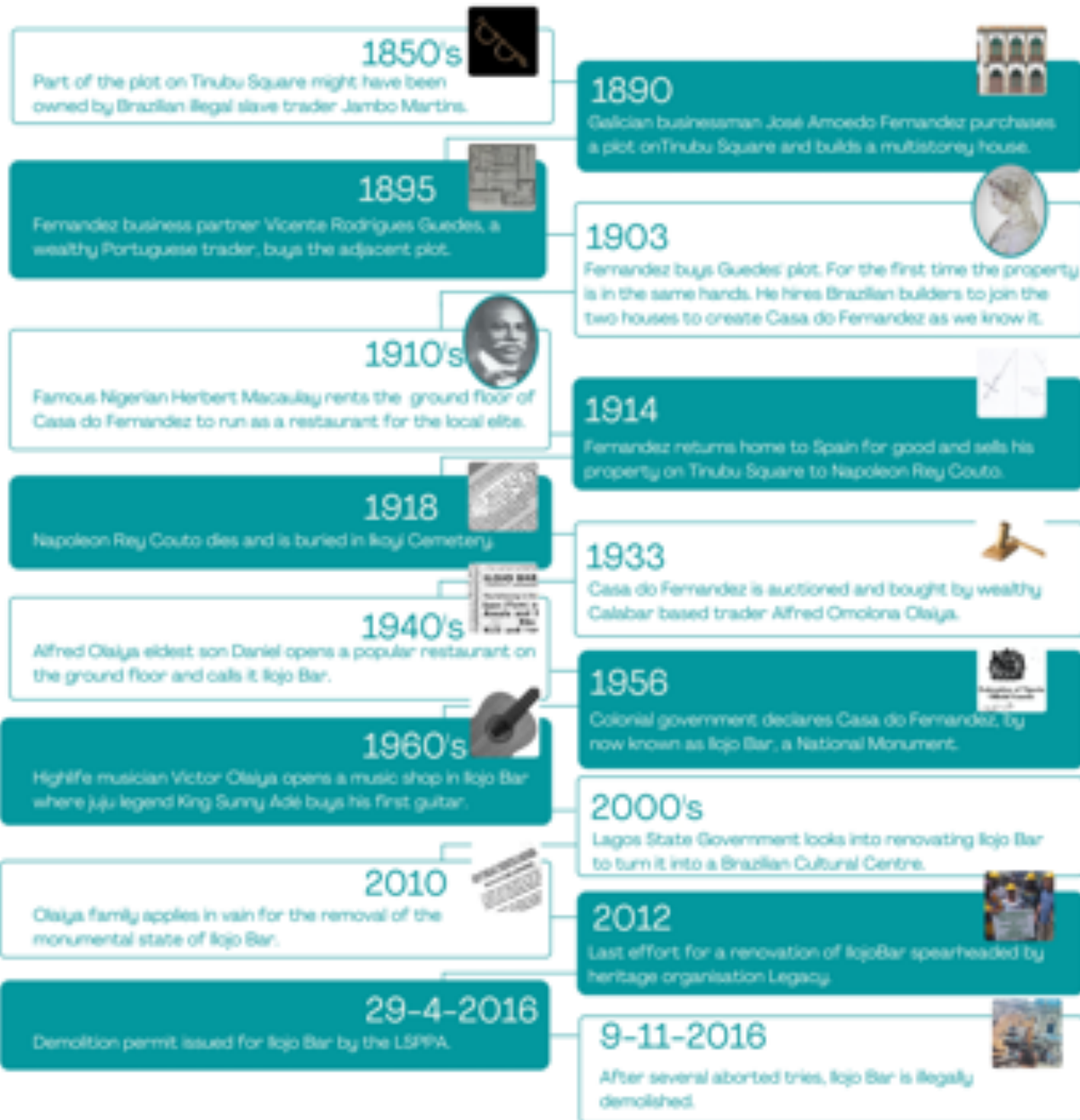


Illustration 6: An alternative timeline.

§ 4.5. A heritage-scape on Tinubu Square

It is not my place nor my intention to proclaim a redefinition of Casa do Fernandez/Ilojo Bar/Olaiya House/Angel House as a heritage site. Such a top down outsider's approach was one of the causes of the undoing of the National Monument in the first place. I do intend to show what a possible more inclusive approach of its story could look like, with less of a focus on only the tangible aspects of its heritage. Further research and input by anyone who considers themselves a stakeholder would help constitute such a new definition, one that would have to be updated and adapted over time as the concept of the heritage-scape is an ever changing one.

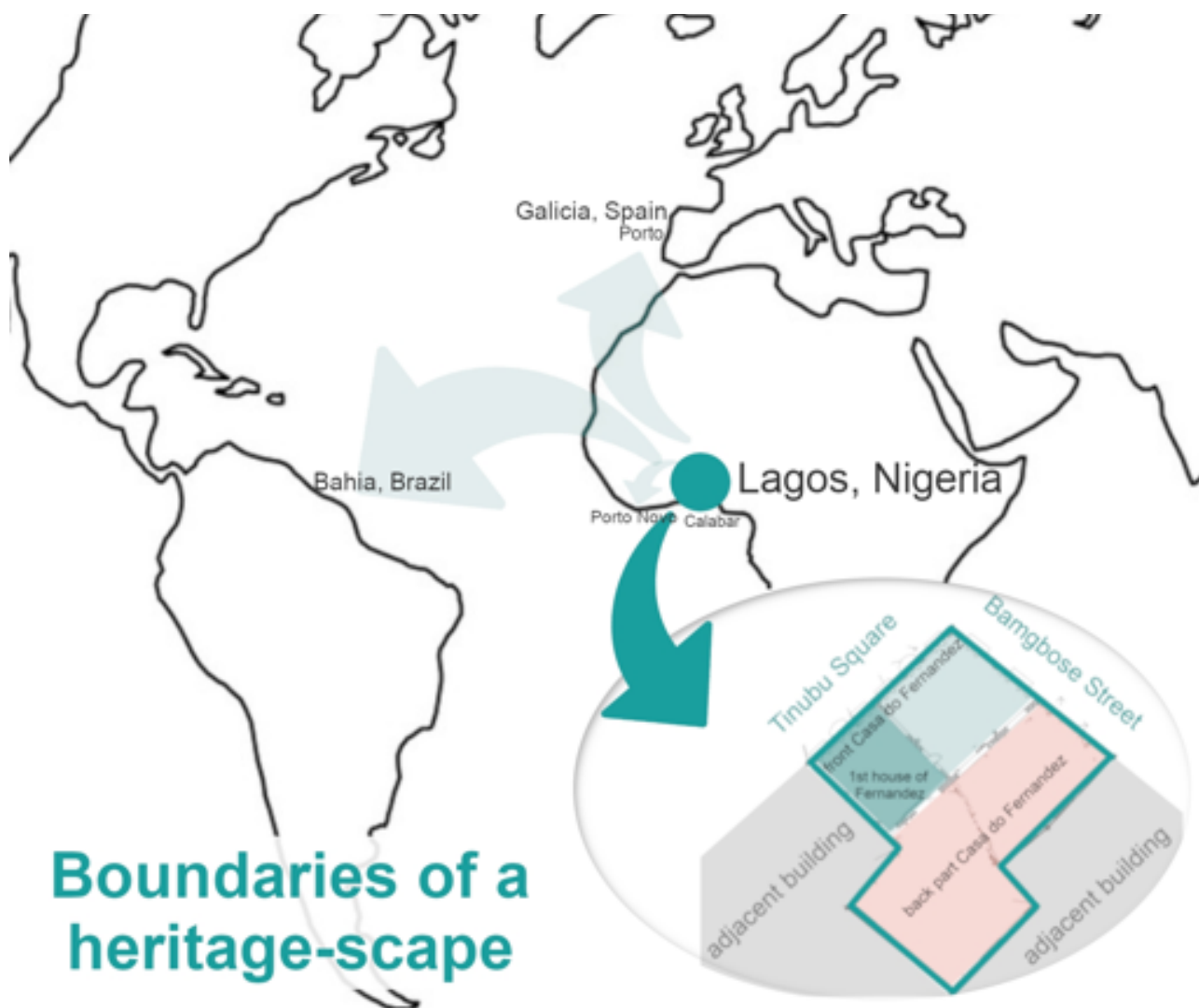
With that caveat, I will proceed to apply Garden's three guiding principles to the heritage site on Tinubu Square, Lagos Island, Nigeria (see p.11).

First, let us take a look at the **boundaries** of the site. Even physically these turned out not to have been the same over time. In fact, the key to the riddle of Casa do Fernandez' original ownership turned out to lay in the changing of its boundaries, or rather, the fact that the entire plot only came together as Casa do Fernandez in the early twentieth century.

But the house where Fernandez' royal guest spent the night in 1900 might have covered only half of what would later be proclaimed a monument, it could just as well have been known as 'Casa do Fernandez' – it was after all already Fernandez' place – elegant enough to accommodate the Alake of Abeokuta.

Interestingly, but without saying so explicitly, both the colonial and post-colonial government disregarded the back side of the monument, the part on Bamgbose Street. This architecturally less interesting part of the house was not visible from Tinubu Square. Both the British and the Nigerian government heritage organisations at some point suggested to detach that side of the building from the monument and leave it to the Olaiya family.

It never came to that, which might now be to the researcher's advantage. That the Bamgbose side was more modest in its architecture could point to the fact that the owner had not come round to renovating it. This implies that the building on it was of an earlier date than Casa do Fernandez. If the Brazilian slave trader Martins Jambo indeed used to be a previous owner of the land, it is possible that it's there that his footsteps lie, along with the silent witnesses of his inhuman trade like the slave chains the Olaiya family remember to have brought to the National Museum. Now the ground lays bare, excavations might bring up new evidence to give substance to that story and a boost to the conversation on slavery and Lagos' role in it.



Boundaries of a heritage-scape

Illustration 7: Boundaries of Ilojo Bar as a heritage-scape.

The entire plot therefore deserves inclusion in this heritage-scape as a space in Lagos' inner city, along with the indication that the plot changed and got connected over time (figure 7 gives an impression of what the boundaries of the heritage-scape could look like) . And that's just the physical space covered. Psychologically, the narrative could expand to spaces elsewhere connected to the site, like the slave market in Badagry, the business of the wealthy trader in Calabar or his home village in Ekiti, Fernandez' mountainous village in Galicia and the busy Atlantic port in Salvador de Bahia, to name a few. And one need to stray that far away: in many ways, Tinubu Square also begs to be a character in this story.

Which brings us to the next guiding principle: **cohesion**. With so many possible stories to tell, is it still possible to make sense of it all? If the storytelling amounts to pulling new anecdotes out of a hat, one story at a time, until a dazed audience cannot even be excited anymore, the whole exercise of creating a more inclusive narrative will have been counterproductive. Do these findings make sense not just as individual data but also as a collection, or do some of them need to be dropped in

Depending on the context in which this heritage-scape is depicted – one does not always have the space of a book – one might decide to leave out components or change the emphasis, which reflects the protean nature of the concept in the first place. But as a whole it only makes sense that the outcome is such a broad yet interconnected collection of narratives: in the end, each heritage-scape deserves a book, or rather, a library.

The last guiding principle, **(in)visibility**, could save the heritage-scape on Tinubu Square as a monument even now the actual building has been demolished. The tangible, visible components have been lost or turned into rubble, save for the partially dismembered Primavera statue. But this guiding principle argues that not all meaning of heritage is translated into material. The stories and histories that archival research revealed along with the stories told by people using the site, remembering it, living around it and connecting with it create a much broader narrative. It would be a narrative that is related, but not limited to the pile of bricks that the heritage-scape was so unceremoniously turned into in 2016.



*Mr Graciano Martins and Ms Folashade Awobiye on the site of Ilojo Bar, 18 January 2021.
(Photographer: Femke van Zeijl)*

I realised this the day I visited the rubbish heap on the corner of Tinubu Square and Bamgbose Street together with Mr Graciano Martins, president of the Brazilian Descendants Association, on 18 January 2021. When we arrived on site, he was warmly greeted by Folashade Awobiye, a great-granddaughter of the Olaiya patriarch who bought Casa do Fernandez in 1933. Soon enough Folashade's father Eric joined us, the one who as a boy used to listen when grown-ups spoke and remembers so many oral histories of the Olaiya family. The stories that were told amongst them brought the heritage-scape back to life, from the nineteenth century Yoruba wars to the sounds of Ayinde Bakare's ukulele. Since its demolition I had perceived Casa do Fernandez/Ilojo Bar as lost. Listening to these tales I realised that though the tangible was demolished, the memories that give meaning to the site still existed. These memories combined with the archival sources could partially reconstruct this heritage-scape.

Even the site in its current state could offer a suitable stage for such a reconstruction. After all, the rubbish heap that once was Casa do Fernandez also tells a story, one of colonial arrogance, administrative neglect and family discord. Rather than the ash heaps of history, it might be the perfect scene for an outdoor multi-media exhibition presenting the kaleidoscope of stories connected to the site. And why not use the empty space for a juju or highlife concert commemorating the musical history was once made there?

I must admit though: without a physical building to look at or refer to, even as a heritage-scape the site on Tinubu Square now feels lacking. Perhaps the intended 'reconstruction' of the monument as made public at the MOU signing early 2021 could tackle that issue – provided of course that the ambitious project will materialise. Bear in mind how every previous renovation project of Ilojo Bar failed the moment it came down to funding.

Should Theo Lawson's design of a commercial high rise with a front mimicking the contours of Casa do Fernandez' iconic facade ever be built, I would argue that to honour the many meanings of the heritage-scape, it needs to include something more resilient than a mini-museum. As Olusoga states, museums as institutes are colonial in their very being.³⁰⁸ Maybe because of that, they are a phenomenon the Nigerian audience never fully embraced. Instead of lamenting a lack of interest for the museal approach, who not add other kinds of features to the heritage-scape that the audience does connect with?

For an example one need not look very far, less than a kilometre from Tinubu Square. There architect Theo Lawson has changed the site of the former colonial prison that had also become a dumping ground into what is now well known as Freedom Park. His most successful Lagos creation is both a memorial and a venue for leisure, with a museum, restaurants, shops, outdoor theatres and

308 David Olusoga, *INTO Online 2021*, keynote address.

exhibition spaces. Lagosians go there to meet, eat, drink, listen to music and experience all kinds of cultural events, surrounded by a history inescapably present in for example the brickwork reconstruction of the prison cells.

Obviously there are differences between the two Lagos Island heritage-scapes, and the space available in the new building on Tinubu Square would be dramatically smaller than Freedom Park. That does not mean that the new heritage-site could not reflect its history in more diverse ways than a mini-museum, and dedicate the foreseen 'meeting space' as a venue for acoustic concerts and political debates, a studio for samba classes or a restaurant serving the food Macaulay used to have on the menu? Indeed, why not a bar where the palm wine is fresh the way it used to be poured in Ilojo Bar?

Such a more inclusive approach translating the invisible principles of heritage-scape into tangible attractions would not only beckon a different audience to this new Alfred Omolona Olaiya House. It would also ensure a wider public interest in the heritage-scape on Tinubu Square, so that hopefully never again Lagosians will have to stand by and watch a piece of heritage be demolished before their very eyes.

Conclusion

Decolonising heritage: towards a more inclusive approach

The principal research question of this thesis is: what are the challenges for the preservation of built heritage in Nigeria? To formulate an answer to that question, I will take a step back from Ilojo Bar to zoom out to a more general perspective. Each hurdle and pitfall described in the story of the rise and fall of the National Monument on Tinubu Square has implications for Nigeria's built heritage in general. Applying the lessons learnt from this particular case to others might help with a more successful approach for the creation and management of heritage in the future.

I will do so by systematically covering the three aspects of this thesis: history, law and heritage, to round up with a more comprehensive recommendation for heritage management in the Nigerian context.

First let us take a look at heritage sites as part of history. We saw from the inception of the National Monument how its history was misrepresented. At no point in time did anyone make the effort to truly research its provenance, resulting in a single story that was not only partially incorrect, but also led to the exclusion from the narrative of the very people living in, around and with the building.

I therefore would advocate a bigger role for research in the creation and management of monuments in Nigeria. As it turns out, most listed National Monuments only come with extremely limited background studies, if any, and most of them unchecked.³⁰⁹ To start with these existing cases should be the subject of in depth, academic scrutiny. And every newly created piece of heritage would have to come with more than a sketchy narrative. If this study has shown anything it is that any pile of bricks, however old or special, is only as good as the story it comes with.

When doing such research it would be essential to pay as much – arguably even more – attention to oral history as to the archives. That the colonial officers who deemed Ilojo Bar so admirable that they granted it monumental status never strolled to Tinubu Square to ask around after it is an eternal shame. Not just because, once more, they excluded the perceptions of the public from the definition of heritage, but also because at the time they would have gotten an oral history on record that has since been partially lost or at least diluted.

Oral history registers what remained unwritten, sometimes because it was deemed unworthy for

³⁰⁹ Zubairu, S.N. et al, 'A Study of Listing of Buildings and Monuments in Nigeria (1956- 2009)', in: *Journal of Economics and Sustainable Development* (January 2012) 3:7, 89-99.

a write up, sometimes because someone wanted it hidden and sometimes because there were no records to put it in. As the Head of the History Department Olutayo Adesina of the University of Ibadan once told me: 'The street never forgets.'³¹⁰

That does not mean that oral histories are to be taken at face value. In the case of Casa do Fernandez, the occupants did remember a connection to the slave trade, but they convoluted it with the Fernandez' story, creating a factually incorrect version of history. Historical research also implies carefully weighing the different sources against each other and disentangling such knots, using what is scientifically plausible and trying to understand what is not.

My last recommendation when it comes to the history of heritage sites would be to cast a net much wider than the specific stories you expect to hear from a specific time frame you have selected. As seen in the case of Casa do Fernandez, its single background story was frozen in time from its inception: once it was labeled Afro-Brazilian heritage there was no room for any other interpretation. Even I started out this research with that mindset. A more open minded approach brought up the kaleidoscope of stories we have seen coming up in this thesis. The realisation that a monument never stops collecting stories, and that they all deserve their space in the timeline would go a long way when creating more inclusive interpretations of heritage.

The legal challenges heritage management faces in Nigeria have been amply discussed in the last chapter where I evaluate the 2018 amendment to the law. Clearly the Commission for Museums and Monuments also saw the existing legislation as an impediment to effective heritage management. And some of the proposed changes could make a difference.

But rather than opt for a complete overhaul of this legal inheritance of colonial and military times, the choice was made for a tweak here and there of the existing legislation, leaving the overall weaknesses intact. With the experience of Ilojo Bar in mind, I would have suggested more all-embracing adjustments, like the decentralisation of heritage management to local governments – with of course the necessary funding. Also I would have advocated a regulated, constant inclusion of users and public at grassroots level in heritage management, to make sure that the stakeholders of heritage sites will no longer be forgotten, ignored or even pushed out.

The active involvement of the grassroots is also my recommendation for more effective heritage management. From the stories people in and around the site have to tell, to the activities they would like to develop there, to the contributions they would like to make: include them in the decision making and everyday running of the site, instead of treating them like enemies to the cause as sometimes seemed to be the case with Ilojo Bar.

My follow up suggestion when creating and managing heritage sites would be to focus less on

310 Conversation with Professor Olutayo Charles Adesina in his office at the University of Ibadan (12 March 2021).

government and more on private parties. Many of the historical buildings mentioned in the few existing tourist guides on Lagos have been renovated by private individuals or organisations. The NCMM has acknowledged it needs private parties for funding, but hopefully these parties will also be allowed more space to act themselves. Without dismissing the public administration from its duties, it seems to me that a pro-active private sector in a country where the government struggles to cover its most basic tasks would ensure a more effective preservation of heritage.

I hope the amendment will stimulate such initiatives through subsidies to boost a professional approach to renovation and maintenance by third parties, rather than discouraged by the insistence that only the government can decide on anything of historical value. Allowing such kind of active ownership would be the most effective guarantee that sites would be taken care of and cared for in the future.

Lastly I would support a more imaginative presentation of heritage sites. Why come up with yet another museum hardly anybody visits, if there are so many other ways to communicate the value of heritage that the audience does understand? And if a palm wine bar is a bridge too far – although I beg to differ – then go ahead and create some other kind of social gathering space that will include the site in people's daily experiences and lives and will infuse them with some sense of history and connection. After all, is that not what heritage is about?

Going over this list of suggestions that could help overcome the current challenges of heritage management in Nigeria, it is impossible not to see the leitmotif: most obstacles in some form or other originate from colonial times. From the single story told by British outsiders, to the ineffective law on Museums and Monuments, to the top down interpretation of heritage, to the persistence on the museal approach: they all stem from the time a foreign power had occupied the land.

Now I am the last person to claim that all Nigeria's problems are caused by Western imperialism, but I would argue that these colonial influences need to be examined and dealt with. The fact that they have been allowed to linger for so long in post-independence Nigeria shows that they serve a purpose, but that purpose is generally not beneficial to the public. That is why in the heritage sector, as in many others, a redefinition is long overdue.

An inclusive narrative of heritage can create a sense of belonging and self worth, perhaps leading to a more vocal population aware of its roots and rights. That is why I would applaud it if heritage creation and management in Nigeria were adapted to local standards and experiences, and stripped from the elements that are steeped in and hindered by their colonial history. But that is as far as my suggestions as an outsider can go. Decolonisation in its very essence is a job for insiders.

Φ

Word of thanks

As a freelance journalist, I am not used to colleagues sharing information with each other. In the scoop oriented news business every reporter tends to protect their knowledge and sources of information. That is why for me it was such a revelation to deal with academic researchers as colleagues in the course of this study. Most of the specialists that I contacted, be it (art)historians, architects, sociologists or anthropologists, were so open to sharing ideas and experiences that I feel I was standing on their shoulders while writing this thesis.

When I still had no clue where to search, Lisa Earl Castillo pointed me in the right directions. Kristin Mann shared her extensive knowledge on Lagos' history and in an extensive email correspondence we reminisced about who this Fernandez character could be – and neither one of us had imagined the answer to lie in Galicia. Jeferson Afonso Bacelar shared his research plans of the Da Rocha family with me and our communication was a joy for its multi-lingualism alone. Ed Emeka Keazor gave me invaluable advice on the archives to put one's hope in – and the ones one should not. Ceramics specialist Francisco Queiroz showed me around in the world of Portuguese ceramics and advised me on the Galician connection, as did Luis Velasco-Martínez. Of course my academic supervisor Karwan Fatah-Black, who helped me focus when the journalist inside me clashed with my inner scholar, should not be missing from this list. All of these academics gave me invaluable help with the research for my thesis, and for that I am grateful.

But most of the help came from outside academia, from people who in some way feel connected to Nigeria's heritage. Kofo Adeleke of Legacy, the Nigerian heritage organisation I did my academic internship with, gave me backup when I needed it, without which I would not have had the goodwill and access that I experienced. Jide Bello – lawyer by day, art lover by night – jumped in when the road to the Land Registry seemed to have become a dead end. Bilikiss Adebisi-Abiola of the Lagos State Records and Archives Bureau proved to be the most heritage minded IT adept a researcher could wish for. And the staff of the National Museum did not get tired of attending to me every time I came to Onikan Road with a new piece of information. I hope this thesis might one day also benefit them in their setup at Alfred Omolana Olaiya House.

John Godwin deserves a special mention. I sometimes worried that I was over asking this nonagenarian architect involved in several attempts to save Ilojo Bar, but every time he responded to my emails or made time for a phone call.

To all of them my sincere thanks: my research would have been impossible without your aid and support.

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During the writing process I stayed with my mother, Joke van Zeijl-van den Bosch. I always say she runs the best writer's residence in Europe. Thank you, mama, for the bowls of strawberries and mugs of tea and heaps of love.

But most of all I owe the people of Lagos and Nigeria.

Graciano Martins who never gets tired of talking about the Afro-Brazilian history of Lagos; Eric Awobiyide who every time we meet has another beautiful story to tell; Afro-Brazilians in the diaspora like Anthony Fernandez and Damazia Ajayi (nee Gansallo); Titilola Marinho-Anidugbe whom I met at the registry of Holy Cross Cathedral and who in the search for her own family history has become a buff in all things returnee, and everyone I have spoken with in the last decade that I have called Lagos my home.

They have welcomed me in their city and in their lives, and for that I am profoundly grateful.

In trying to figure out a tiny part of the story of this universe of a city, I hope to have given a little bit in return.



Tinubu Square on a postcard on 1978, Ilojo Bar in the back on the left. (Source: @YorubaHistory)

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