Title of Article: Space Use patterns and Building Morphology in Yoruba and Benin

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Abstract: This paper presents a meta-analysis of three studies of samples of traditional and contemporary dwellings from Benin City, and Ile-Ife, in South-West Nigeria. The first Study investigated the relationship between activity patterns in Ile-Ife dwellings and spatial morphology, study 2 focussed on culinary related activities within the domestic space, drawn from another Ile-Ife sample, and the third study; on the spatial morphology of Benin domestic architecture, and meaning embedded in space use. All the studies employed space syntax theory developed by (Hillier and Hanson 1984) morphological analysis. The three studies revealed some differences in space use in the two cultures despite their contiguity.

The findings include a Strong continuity in space use meaning in the Benin traditional and new dwelling types was found, despite changes in spatial morphology; when compared to the Yoruba samples. Also, a relatively low specialization of space/room was found in the three samples, as the generic function label used to describe many spaces rarely captured the variety of activities that occurred within the key spaces. The strength of boundary between the locations of many activities and their related objects was quite fluid across the internal spaces in most of the Ile-Ife houses but to lesser extent in the Benin sample. This was particularly evident in the distribution of culinary related activities (e.g. cooking, dishwashing).

Despite a shared (national) history, exposure to similar (external) architectural influences, and close geographical contiguity, the analysis of Yoruba and Benin architecture revealed some differences in human behaviour invested in space morphology and space use; supporting the need to integrate spatial analyses with investigations of human behaviour.

Keywords: Yoruba Architecture, Benin Architecture, Space Syntax, Activities, Meaning.