

Conservation, Traditional Architecture and Kano Ancient City Walls and Gates

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Abstract: *This study examined the problems militating against the conservation of Hausa traditional architecture that involves a study of the Kano city ancient wall and gates. The purpose and significance of conserving the historic built environment were examined to clarify their validity to the study area while also evaluating the extent of decay of the walls and gates. Field surveys, interviews and observations were conducted and from the data collected it was revealed that walls and gates were rehabilitated in 2013/2014 and major parts of the ancient walls and gates are not in existence. The research concluded that the ancient city wall and gates are greatly threatened by destruction and gradually coming to complete extinction while conservation is the only way to prevent it. Finally, the Insurance of the historic structures promotion of tourism so as to generate revenue for the upkeep of the monuments amidst other were recommended.*

Keywords: Conservation, Traditional architecture, Kano ancient walls and gates.

1. Introduction

Conservation of traditional architecture reinforces the five senses of quality communities, namely, sense of place, sense of identity, sense of evolution, sense of ownership and sense of community. The Kano city ancient wall is a historic structure of 19km circumference (Akinade, 2005) with fifteen gates. It has a broadly triangular overall shape which marks the boundary of ancient Kano city. The historical wall of monumental importance was built about a thousand years ago as a source of protection to the inhabitants of the ancient city at the time (Akinade, 2005) and it was declared a national monument by the National Commission for Museums and Monuments (NCMM) in 1979. These City walls are like other historic buildings with pronounced characteristics of traditional architecture. However a combination of human activities, climate and other natural factors are rapidly bringing about decay of these city ancient walls and gates and without periodic maintenance, natural erosion accelerates the process even further. These problems are a threat to cultural heritage and traditional architecture. Feilden(2003) notes that our old traditional buildings differ from new ones in that they are expected to last forever. Contextually, 'forever' means as long as it is wanted. An historic building is one that, for various reasons, a society has decided shall be conserved for as long as possible. This study is concerned with the historic form of conservation, which involves the preservation and careful management of historic buildings with specific reference to city walls. From what has been observed the culture of Kano, as far as the ancient city gates are concerned have not been conserved, unlike the Great Wall of China, the most popular ancient wall and one of the most important monuments on earth, putting China on the world map and making it a very popular destination for tourists and researchers.

Map of Kano city wall and gates



Figure 1:

Source: National Commission for Museum and Monuments (2004)

If nothing is done to conserve these traditional features, then there are all possibilities they will be in total extinction. Francis (1986) observes that change is inevitable but in a place where old buildings have been swept away, people feel a sense of insecurity and continuity is lost forever. It is essential to keep some buildings of historic and architectural interest of all kinds and periods. John (1984) opines that a civilized environment should accommodate conservation and development in order to sustain continuity and rational discourse between architectural forms. This study analyzes the problems militating against the conservation of the Kano city ancient wall and gates and the prospects of conserving the wall and gates with a view to recommend better and more sustainable ways of preserving them.

Aim

The aim of this study is to provide strategies in conservation of Hausa traditional architecture.

Objectives

- 1) To appraise the extent of deterioration of the ancient city wall and gates.
- 2) To identify the factors causing the destruction of the city ancient wall and gates, and
- 3) To evolve a strategy for conservation of Hausa traditional architecture with emphasis on the ancient city walls and gates of Kano.

Methodology

The process adopted in this research is categorized into:

- 1) A critical review of existing literature on conservation of traditional architecture.
- 2) A reconnaissance survey of the ancient city wall and gates, where data such as distances between the gates; height, length, and width of some of the gates and the width of some passages through the wall, were measured, and digital photographs also taken.
- 3) Analysis of the reconnaissance and interview data. The primary data used include direct personal interviews conducted with the gate keepers (Sarkin Kofa), residents within and outside the city wall, officials of the National Commission for museum and Monuments, Kano State museum, Kano State Ministry of Land and Physical Planning, and Kano History and Culture Bureau and Observations, while the secondary data consist mostly of published information from textbooks, journals, magazines; internet, unpublished seminar papers; and articles. The area for this study is the ancient city of Kano located in north western Nigeria.

2. What is Conservation

Orbaslin A. (2007) defines conservation as a process of caring, maintaining repair and continuous preservation of a historic and or building of significant importance.

3. Why Conservation

3.1 Values in Historic Conservation

Feilden (2003) observes that values attached to cultural property come under three major headings namely: Emotional values (wonder, identity, continuity, spiritual and symbolic), Cultural values (documentary, historic, archaeological age and scarcity, aesthetic and symbolic, architectural, townscape, landscape and ecological, technological and scientific), and Use values (functional, economic, social, political and ethnic).

3.2 Economic Benefits of Historic Conservation

Rypkema (1999) observes that historic preservation based on economic development strategy has several measurable benefits including the following:

3.3 Job Creation

The labour intensity of building rehabilitation generally means a greater local economic impact in jobs and income.

3.4 Job Training and Skills Passing

The local craftsmanship of the building process often nearly lost in a generation can be passed on through historic preservation.

3.5 Import Substitution

Historic conservation is locally based, using expertise, labour, and materials from the local market. Often new construction is the opposite, requiring the importation of expertise, materials, and often labor elsewhere.

3.6 Compatibility with Modernization

Most components for modernization - water, sewer lines, telephone cables, electric wires, even high speed computer transmission lines, can be put in place almost invisibly (often underground) without jeopardizing individual historic resources or their important context and inter relationships.

3.7 Window for Tourism.

When tourism is identified locally as a component of an overall economic development strategy, the identification, protection and enhancement of the community's historic resources will be vital for a successful tourism effort.

3.8 Natural Business Incubator for Small Enterprises.

The size, location, character, and often pricing of historic buildings means that they frequently serve as natural incubators of emerging enterprises.

3.9 Most Effective Venue for Cultural Goods and Services

For communities that have cultural assets and crafts products that represents economic opportunity, historic buildings often constitute the most appropriate physical locations, for the sale and display of goods and the presentation of productions and the physical context of the historic building adds to the sense of authenticity, originality and indigenouness of the art.

3.10 Reflects Products of Differentiation

In economics it is the differentiated product that commands a monetary premium, thus if in the long run a community wants to attract capital and investment, it must differentiate itself from anywhere else. It is the built environment that expresses, perhaps better than anything else, a community's diversity, identity, individuality, in short its differentiation.

3.11 Compatibility with Evolution

Once there is an acknowledgement that effective historic conservation is not just museums and the concept of

adaptive reuse is adopted, historic buildings have proven themselves remarkably versatile in responding to the demands of the widest imaginable range of uses.

4. Restoration of the Kano City Walls and Gates

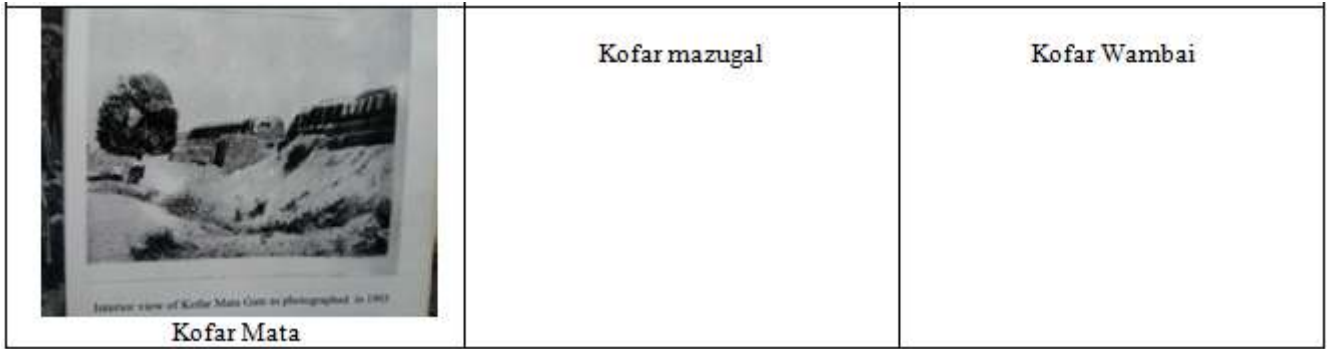
The dimensions of the wall are: height 5.95 meters, width 2.80 meters and the length about 300 meters, while the work done covered the reconstruction of the wall at Sabuwar Kofa and the rehabilitation of six gates namely: Sabuwar Kofa, Kofar Dan Agundi, Kofar Na'isa, Kofar Gadon kaya, Kofar Dukawuya and Kofar Kabuga. The rehabilitation of the six traditional gates took the form of replastering and application of Makuba mixture. At Kofar Na'isa, Kofar Gadon kaya, Kofar Kabuga, the roofs had collapsed before work commenced. They were rebuilt using Azara, mud blocks, traditional mats and ropes. At Kofar Dukawuya and

Kofar Kabuga, the offices of the gate keepers (Sarkin Kofa) attached to the gates were rebuilt, Akinade, (2005).

5. Descriptive Analysis

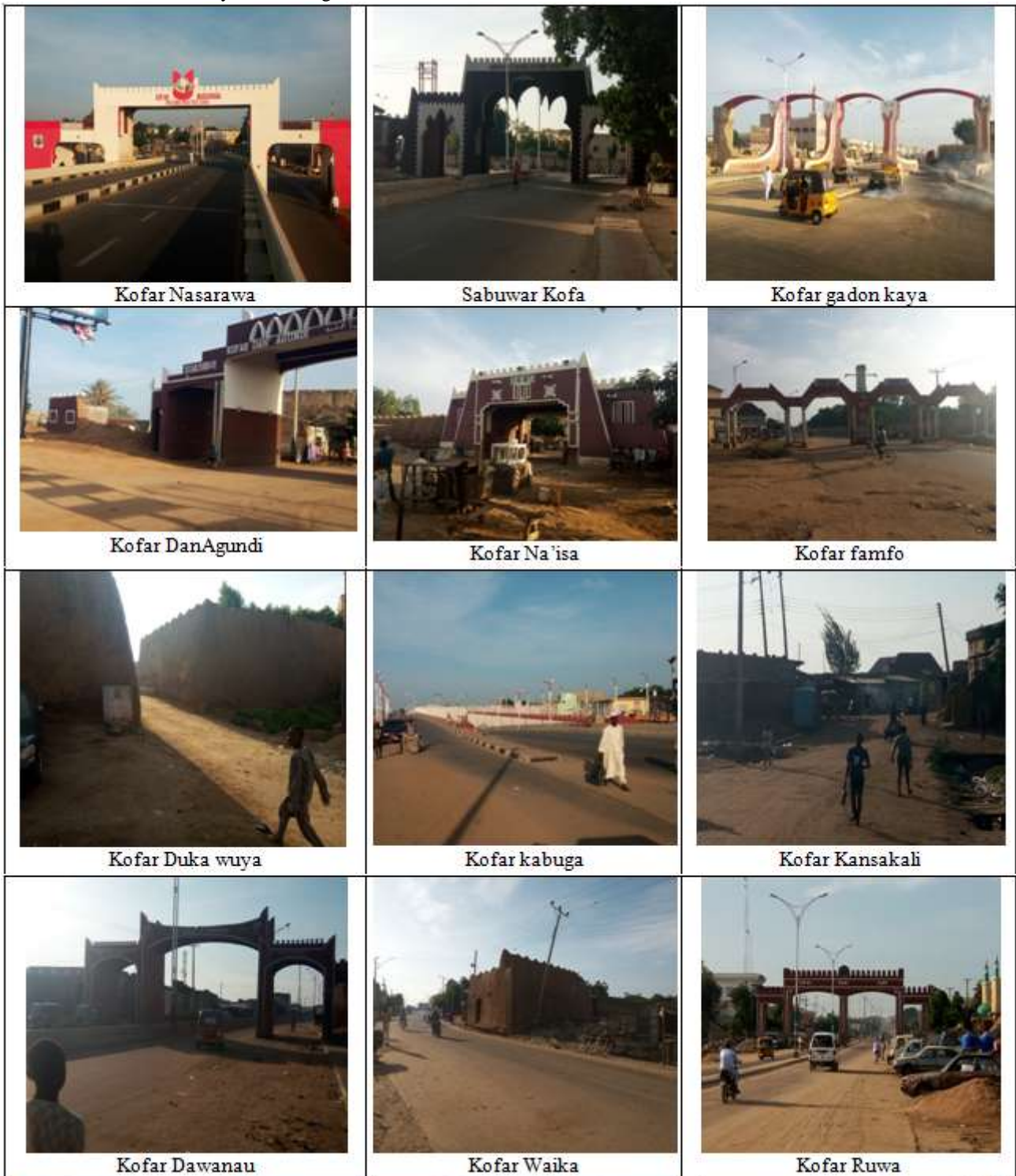
- Well Preserved: There is no encroachment whatsoever on a wall stretch.
- Moderately Preserved: The encroachment on a wall stretch is average (that is, below half of the wall had been encroached upon).
- Fairly Preserved: The encroachment on a wall stretch is above average (that is, more than half of the wall had been encroached upon).
- Not Preserved: The whole or almost all part of a stretch has been encroached upon, the station is judged.
- Illustrations of conserved traditional state of ancient city walls and gates.





Source: National Bureau for Arts and Culture

Current state of ancient city walls and gates





Source: Field survey 2017

Table 1: Summary of current state of the monuments

S/No.	Name of Gates	Gate type	Current Material	Construction Material	Length (m)	Width (m)	Height (m)	Year of Construction
1	Kofar Nasarawa	modern		Modernized in Concrete	-	-	-	1463 AD
2	Sabuwar Kofa	monumental	Completely modernized in Concrete	Traditionally in Mud 1937 AD	33.2	3.7	7	1937AD
3	Kofar Dan Agundi	monumental	same as 2	Traditionally in Mud 1463 AD	33.8	4.4	7.4	1463 AD
4	Kofar Na'isa	monumental	same as 2	Traditionally in Mud 1470 AD	30.3	3	6.8	1470 AD
5	Kofar Gadon qaya	modern		Modernized in Concrete	35.1	3.6	7.6	1619 AD
6	Kofar Famfo	modern		Modernized in Concrete	-	-	-	1621 AD
7	Kofar Dukawuya	monumental	Tubali	Traditionally in Mud	20.4	3.3	7.5	1112 AD
8	Kofar Kabuga	modern		Modernized in Concrete	38.5	4.2	7.2	1112 AD
9	Kofar Kansakali	monumental		Traditionally in Mud	47.9	13	5.7	1112 AD
10	Kofar Waika	monumental		Traditionally in Mud	29.2	13	4.9	1112 AD
11	Kofar Dawanau	modern		Modernized in Concrete	-	-	-	1112 AD
12	Kofar Ruwa	modern		Modernized in Concrete	30.25	3.9	7.3	1112 AD
13	Kofar Mazugal	modern		Modernized in Concrete	-	-	-	1118 AD
14	Kofar Wambai	modern		Modernized in Concrete	-	-	-	1112 AD
15	Kofar Mata	modern		Modernized in Concrete	-	-	-	1461 AD

Source: Field survey 2017 and National Commission for Museum and Monuments

Table 2: Summary of the Kano city walls proximity and their conditions.

Stations	Wall Stretch From One Gate to the Next	Length of Walls	Condition of Wall
A	Kofar Nassarawa - Sabuwar Kofa	781.50m	Poorly Preserved
B	Sabuwar Kofa - Kofar Dan Agundi	556.80ms	Fairly Preserved
C	Kofar Dan Agundi - Kofar Na'isa	989.70m	Poorly Preserved
D	Kofar Na'isa - Kofar Gadon Kaya	2,001.00m	Poorly Preserved
E	Kofar Gadon Kaya - Kofar Famfo	1,143.60m	Fairly Preserved
F	Kofar Famfo - Kofar Dukawuya	184.41m	Fairly Preserved
G	Kofar Dukawuya - Kofar Kabuga	788.70m	Moderately Preserved
H	Kofar Kabuga - Kofar Kansakali	1,760.60m	Fairly Preserved
I	Kofar Kansakali - Kofar Waika	1,050.00m	Fairly Preserved
J	Kofar Waika - Kofar Dawanau	903.00m	Fairly Preserved
K	Kofar Dawanau - Kofar Ruwa	1,280.00m	Fairly Preserved
L	Kofar Ruwa - Kofar Mazugal	5,299.00m	Fairly Preserved
M	Kofar Mazugal - Kofar Wambai	1,067.30m	Not Preserved
Total	Length Measured	27,411.61	

Source: Field survey 2017, and Bureau for Museum and Monuments

Measurements and Descriptive Analysis of the Gates during the field survey, a total of fifteen gates were surveyed. Six traditional gates (those built with mud like in the ancient times), six modernized gates (those rebuilt in concrete) and one modern gate (built in recent time with concrete). The length, width and height of the traditional gates (that is, those still constructed with mud according to how they were in ancient times) were measured; Kofar Kansakali was not measured because it has been destroyed. Six of the

traditional gates surveyed, that is, Kofar Dan Agundi, Na'isa, Gadon Kaya, Dukawuya, Kabuga and Sabuwar Kofa were rehabilitated. None of the ancient metal doors is still attached to the gates but about three of them are in the custody of the Gidan Makama Museum, Kano.

6. Factors Causing the Destruction of the Kano City Ancient Wall and Gates

6.1 Private individuals

The private individual constitutes the greatest threat to the wall and gates by building houses either very close or directly on the wall. This threat is likely caused by the population pressure within the old city, leading to demand for more land and the illegal selling of plots near and even on the wall, in most of such cases the ward heads and gate keepers (who are the custodians and guardians of these monuments) are the culprits. During the field survey, observations showed that buildings of both traditional and modern types have encroached on the wall. Some of these are situated very close to the wall while others have virtually taken over the wall in violation of the law which requires a minimum 30 meters allowance between the wall and any building should be maintained. Worst still is the fact that most of the traditional buildings encroaching on the wall and gates were built using sand and mud excavated from the wall. The second in line of private individual threat to the wall and gates, are those who see the wall as a veritable cheap raw material for molding sun dried mud blocks and direct quarrying of sand from the wall for construction of houses. The excavation of the wall though illegal has become a way of generating income to this group of people. Research showed that about 40 to 50 donkey loads of sand are excavated from the ancient wall site daily, which is equivalent to a tipper load of sand. Research also showed that about 108,000 pieces of sun dried mud blocks are produced in a year from the excavated sand. The third category of individuals threatening the ancient wall and gates are residents who create illegal passages (haure) through the wall. A total of 16 such passages were observed and mainly at the south western and south eastern parts, with an average width of approx. 7 meters: thus the total length destroyed amounts to approx. 112 meters, out of 27,411.61 meters. Other threats in this category include agricultural activities and the children who play on the wall by sliding down it, both removing and depositing soil particles from the wall.

6.2 Government Agencies

Perhaps most unfortunate in this case is the fact that various government agencies who are aware of the laws protecting the wall and gates go ahead to embark on actions which are detrimental to these monuments. Indiscriminate warrants of approval for construction which encroach and destroy the wall and gates. The main culprit here is the Kano State Environmental Protection Agency (KASEPA), which approves the construction of buildings close to the wall, clearly violating the 30 meters minimum allowance rule. The issuance of plots to individuals for houses, shops, etc. by the three Local Government Authorities bordering the wall (i.e. Dala, Gwale and Kano Municipal), which encroach the wall. According to a respondent, the reason or philosophy behind the allocation of plots along the wall by these local authorities were to check the menace of thuggery and other anti social behaviours committed by street urchins (known as Yan Daba) that have inhabited some sections of the wall. Unfortunately, the State Government in a bid to

renew Kano in 2000, through its Ministry of Land and Physical Planning demolished in excess of 1Km wall stretch between Kofar Nassarawa and Kofar Mata and more than 500 meters stretch between Kofar Nassarawa and Sabuwar Kofa, to accommodate the approved construction of motor dealers shop and a motor park and underpass. Recently also, in April of 2010, Kofar Na'isa, one of the prominent gates preserved as a Monument was completely destroyed for the construction of a tarred road through the wall.

6.3 Natural factors

6.3.1 Water Erosion

Rainfall exerts significant influence over the wall and gates, the rain drops hit the wall with kinetic energy/force thereby detaching, washing and moving soil particles from the wall and at the same time increasing the base width of the wall. The original height and width of the wall according to Hambolu (2000) was 10 meters and 7.5 meters respectively. Due to continuous erosion, the height and width have reduced drastically in different parts of the wall and gates as shown on table 1.

6.3.2 Wind Erosion.

The impact of wind erosion is negligible compared to rainfall, occasional blowing of the wind removes and transports particles from the wall. By so doing, it greatly reduces the dimensions of the wall.

6.3.4 Other Factors.

Ponds (Kududdufi in Hausa) and water drainages or spill ways broken through the wall to drain water out of the city cause the destruction of the wall by engulfing it. Time also plays its own part in the deterioration and decay of the wall and gates after centuries of existence.

7. Problems of Conservation of the Ancient City Wall and Gates

7.1 Inadequate Laws Protecting Monuments in Nigeria.

Nigerian laws protecting monuments are not in line with current realities and there is need for a review, which should include punishments for their violation and enforcement. The wall and gates need to be declared as national monuments.

7.2 Ignorance

From the data collated, many encroachers claim either ignorance of the law or significance of the wall and gates. They assumed that the little portion they individually encroached upon or destroyed does not amount to much harm to the facility.

7.3 Commerce

Another group value commerce more than cultural heritage, they see the space occupied by the wall as a waste compared to the economic activities that would generate revenue. This group consists mainly of influential people in the society and thus difficult to deal with even by the law enforcement agencies.

7.4 Kano city development

In Kano, large parts of the ancient wall and gates have been demolished to pave way for the construction of roads, houses, shops, motor parks, etc. which are thought to be more important than the historic wall and gates. This simply reflects the sense and the idea of the definition of modernity that the present is discontinuous with the past that through a process of social and cultural change, life in the present is fundamentally different from life in the past. Francis (1986) observes that change is inevitable but in a place where old buildings have been swept away, people feel a sense of insecurity and continuity is lost forever. It is essential to keep some buildings of historic and architectural interest of all kinds and all periods, houses, wind mills, warehouses, theatres, etc.

7.5 Lack of Funds

Conserving historic structures like the ancient wall and gates of Kano is a very expensive venture which government alone cannot sponsor, therefore need to mobilize financial resources to support various works of historical conservation, restoration, rehabilitation and enlightenment in order for the wall and gates to be conserved.

8. Conservation Strategies

- a) Conservation by Law: Enacting rules and regulations for restoration preservation and conservation.
- b) Restoration Strategy: Interventions made with the objective of recovering the original state of objects.
- c) Protected Areas: The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) (2010) defines a protected area as a clearly defined geographic space, recognized, dedicated and managed, through legal or other effective means, to achieve the long term conservation of nature with associated ecosystem services and cultural values.
- d) Education: Making people aware of the need to protect and preserve the environment and its resources through schools, youth forums, media and organizations such as United Nations Educational Social and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), Green Peace, Wild Aid, Environmental Camps for Conservation Awareness.
- e) Stakeholders most especially Architects should devise design strategies in incorporating existing city walls and gates to the new proposals in the event of city expansion or provision of infrastructure such as roads.

9. Conclusion and Recommendations

From the findings of this research work, the Kano city ancient wall and gates are greatly threatened by destruction and complete elimination while conservation is the only way to prevent this. Conservation involves people managing change in ways that sustain, reveal, or reinforce its cultural and natural values. Change in the environment or anywhere is inevitable, if only as a result of passage of time, but it can be neutral or beneficial in its effect on heritage values. It is only harmful if significance and value of the historic built environment is eroded.

9.1 Recommendations

- a) Government at the National, State, and Local levels should encourage conservation of historic buildings and structures by providing the necessary incentives and support for achieving it. For example in the case of Nigeria, government should increase its monetary allocation to the NCMM so that it can be able to carry out its duties effectively most importantly the indiscriminate allocation of plots near monuments or on monuments.
- b) Strict penalties such as imprisonment and huge fines should be imposed and enforced on violators of the conservation laws.
- c) Campaigns on the mass media on the benefits of conserving the historic built environment should be intensified as this will play a crucial role in discerning, communicating and sustaining the established value of places, and helping people to refine and articulate the values they attach to the historic built environment.
- d) Traditional authorities such as the emirate council should be custodians of traditional culture and monuments and as part of their contribution to the sustenance of the historic built environment, and they should use their influence and authority to organize communal activities, works periodically to renovate crumbling historic buildings, structures, clear plants, shrubs, trees and other obstacles taking over or destroying historic buildings/structures, create awareness amongst the locals on the need to safeguard the historic built environment.

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