



9.19



9.20

Figure 9.19 Friday Mosque, Zaria: plan in 1962

Figure 9.20 Friday Mosque, Zaria

Figure 9.21 Patterning in Makuba

technology. Each of the main spaces is approximately 7 metres square and is supported on two main structural walls, 21 columns and one isolated wall at the centre of the composition. It represents the conclusion to structural experiments carried out over many generations in Hausaland. The domes



9.21

and the arcades which support them are bound together into a monolithic structure by a series of rising beams, along the haunches or backs of the arches. In this way the mass of the weighty mud domes is transferred to pillar and wall, with a minimum of asymmetrical loading.

DECORATION

Throughout Hausaland, highly modelled decorative patterns of different styles and varying degrees of complexity have long been used to enhance architectural form. The decoration probably reached its zenith in the city of Zaria in the work of Babban Gwani, Mallam Mikaila during the mid-nineteenth century and flowered again there from the 1930s to the 1960s. Much of this fine decorative work has been lost forever, as fashions have changed and as

older buildings have been replaced by modern ones equipped with the amenities now regarded as essential for a reasonable life style.

Traditional Hausa decoration was an integral part of the building process. It was usually the work of the general builder and was carried out during the last phase of construction when the final coat of plaster was applied. The simplest form of decoration is made by repetitive hand movements on newly plastered surfaces (Figure 9.21). These wall finishes are used on, for example, the perimeter wall of the compound indicating, by extensive patterning, ownership at this interface or edge between the inner private world of the extended Muslim family and the outer public space.

For continuing structural stability, a mud building must have a sound surface finish: its lifespan depends on maintenance. Among the Hausa, the annual resurfacing was, and to some extent still is in rural communities, a form of ritual. The whole community is involved in this activity. Patterning becomes a simple expression of this ritual, making marks and reasserting ownership. Special care is devoted to critical points in the structure. Weak points in the wall surface, openings, parapets, the crossing points of arches and points where arches join the wall, all receive special attention. Points such as these are guarded by the greatest use of protective symbols. Openings in walls, particularly the entrance, are most in need of protection. Throughout West Africa rites and rituals relating to change or transition occur at the entrance. Naming ceremonies announcing the birth of a child or its entrance into life are performed at the compound entrance; funeral rites take place here too, while it is at the entrance that strangers are met and welcomed to the Hausa compound. There is usually one entrance to the compound and it is here that the Hausa concentrated the most lavish decoration (Figure 9.22).

Some motifs used in by the Hausa in wall decoration have their origins in the totemism of pre-Islamic animism. The most common decorative



Figure 9.22 Zaria, decorated doorway