

## **Animating Spaces: the Transformation of Colonial Prison to Freedom Park in Lagos**

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### **Abstract**

The uniqueness of any city lies in the specific arrangement, form and function of its spaces and the intersection between spaces, individual and collective experience. Post-independence Africa has witnessed transformation and modernisation in spaces, and the city of Lagos remains one of such cities. This paper examines the transformation of what served as 'colonial prison' to 'Freedom Park' in the post-independent Lagos, Nigeria. It analyses the concept of merging history with recreation by focusing on the importance of the spaces both in the colonial and post-independent Lagos. Indeed, the old Broad Street Prison was first built with mud and thatch in 1872, but the colonialists, who had earlier established a constabulary to control increasing crime rate as well as checkmate nationalists activities decided to rebuild it with brick in 1875 because of then prevalent fire outbreaks. During and after the demise of colonial rule, it underwent significant transformation, which reflected the broader structural changes in political, social and structural history of Lagos. I examine the symbolic implication of the transformation of a prison, one of the strongholds of colonial violence to a symbol of freedom in post-colonial Nigeria and the attendant contradictions involved.

**Key words:** Colonial Prison, Transformation, Freedom Park