

Living architecture: Re-imagining vernacularity in Southeast Asia and Oceania

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Abstract

Southeast Asia and Oceania have a long tradition of outstanding scholarship that studies the rich and diverse vernacular architectural heritage of the region. Up until the early twenty-first century, this work tended to focus on traditional forms of vernacular architecture, emphasising their regional distinctiveness and analysing the ways in which they reflected social and cultural structures.

However, recent decades have seen rapid and fundamental social, economic, and environmental changes in the region that require new perspectives on the design, use, and meaning of vernacular architecture. Processes like population growth, urbanisation, globalisation, climate change, migration, natural disasters, conflicts, and the internationalisation and commercialisation of architectural practice have exerted increasing pressure on vernacular architectural traditions.

In recent decades more dynamic and active approaches to the study of vernacular architecture have emerged that attempt to challenge the dichotomies inherent in earlier definitions and representations of the vernacular. Those approaches raise interesting and indeed fundamental questions about the way the vernacular architecture of the region has been represented in the past; about the validity of those representations; and ultimately about how relevant they are in the here and now. Indeed, they call into question the validity and relevance of the concept of vernacularity itself.

Keywords

Introduction

Some thirty years ago, in 1990, Roxana Waterson published her classic *The Living House: An Anthropology of Architecture in South-East Asia*.¹ Drawing on years of research in libraries and archives, as well as on extensive fieldwork, it aimed (as the blurb notes) “to present a detailed picture of the house within the social and symbolic worlds of South-East Asian peoples” – even if the focus was mainly on Indonesia. Waterson’s account is thorough and comprehensive, documenting among other things the pre-historic interrelatedness of the many vernacular architectural traditions of the region (all of which are seen to be part of an Austronesian heritage that insular Southeast Asia shares with large parts of Oceania); the ways in which the architecture relates to social systems and cosmological ideas; the widespread notion that the houses are animated by a “vital force;” and the ways in which architectural space helps to shape social relationships. In the last chapter, “Migrations,” Waterson addresses some of the processes of change that are having an impact on the vernacular architecture of the region, especially migration:

“The continuing vitality of the magnificent indigenous architectures of South-East Asia depends, clearly, on many things: it depends on sensitive assistance and encouragement from governments; it depends on the continued self-confidence of those traditions, their ability to resist the homogenization of Western influences and the lures of an indiscriminately standardizing ‘modernisation’; but not least, we have seen that it may depend on certain intangible significances of the house, its continued importance within kinship and ritual systems. As these systems rework themselves and adapt to the circumstances of the modern world, they yet find ways to preserve threads of continuity with the past. Old patterns of

social relationships, once mirrored in the house, may change, yet houses continue to offer themselves as symbols of cultural identity, and as sites where that identity can be made real through the celebration of rituals.”²

The status of Waterson’s *The Living House* as a major milestone in the development of the study of vernacular architecture in Indonesia and insular Southeast Asia more widely, is undeniable. Even today, thirty years after its publication, it constitutes an indispensable work of reference to anyone interested in the subject. Having said that, *The Living House* wasn’t the first publication to have focused on the design, use, and meaning of the vernacular architecture of the region – nor, indeed, has it been the last. In point of fact it forms only a part, albeit a very prominent and important one, of a tradition of research into vernacular architecture that has a long history and that is of course not restricted to insular Southeast Asia only. Nonetheless *The Living House* is of interest here, not only because of its scope, depth, and rigour of analysis, and the fact that it explores the links between the traditions of both Southeast Asia and Oceania; but because of the way it encapsulates many of the assertions, premises, and assumptions of the academic discourse on vernacular architecture, both in insular Southeast Asia and beyond, at the time of its publication. It thus provides an opportunity to draw comparisons with the ways in which vernacular architecture is perceived and studied today. The references to the substantive and homogeneous nature of “self-confident traditions,” the indiscriminate and “homogenising” effects of modernisation and Westernisation, and the “mirroring” of social relationships in houses, are reminders of the extent to which academic ideas and understandings of culture, tradition, modernity, materiality, change, and the nature and role of vernacular architecture have changed over the last thirty years. It is important to reflect on those changes and to think about how they impact the ways in which we may study and understand the contemporary transformations of vernacular traditions in Southeast Asia and Oceania.

As in many other parts of the world, the interest in vernacular architecture in insular Southeast Asia and Oceania can be traced back to colonial times. Early European explorers to the region often described the building traditions that they encountered in their travel accounts. In the course of time, those written descriptions became more comprehensive and detailed, and accompanied by

visual representations (mainly drawings, but also maps and sometimes paintings) of the architecture concerned. The latter were initially made back in Europe, based on the written or sometimes verbal descriptions of the explorers, but from the seventeenth century onwards, as scientists and artists began to accompany the predominantly Dutch, English, and French voyages to the region, first-hand images were created too.³ In subsequent centuries, as exploration transformed into various colonial and imperialist projects, a substantial historical record of the vernacular architecture of the region was created by an array of administrators, missionaries, explorers, servicemen, artists, and academics. Comprising written documents (travel accounts, government reports, academic treatises, expedition proceedings), drawings, paintings, and photographs, as well as house models, house parts, and in some cases entire buildings, housed in archives, libraries, and museums around the Western world, this colonial record provides a wealth of information, not only on the nature and transformation of the vernacular architecture concerned, but also on the way in which it has been approached, studied, and represented over time. Although much subsequent scholarship, including Waterson's *The Living House*, has drawn on those colonial sources, much of it remains to be explored.

Already during the early twentieth century, this colonial and in essence descriptive record had begun to be supplemented by a steadily growing, if still fairly modest number of academic and to an extent more analytical studies of the vernacular architecture of the region. Most of those studies, it is fair to say, were produced by anthropologists; although architects and (architectural) historians were sometimes also involved. Many were not dedicated to the study of vernacular architecture per se, but included descriptions of settlement patterns, building types, construction methods, and spatial arrangements as part of more general ethnographies. It is only from the mid-twentieth century onwards that publications begin to appear that explicitly look at the way in which vernacular architecture relates to its social and cultural context. Most of this work focuses on houses, especially the ancestral, multi-family "longhouses" that in many parts of the region formed such a prominent part of the traditional architectural and social landscape. Studies such as Clarke

Cunningham's influential "Order in the Atoni House" aimed to show how such houses could be seen as symbolic representations of the worldviews of their builders, owners, and inhabitants.⁴ This theme of the house as a "microcosm" that symbolically represented cosmological ideas was developed further in subsequent decades, with various publications expounding the often complex and intricate ways in which vernacular architecture expressed cultural norms, values, and beliefs by means of architectural elements such as floor elevations, roof forms, decorations, and spatial arrangements. In *Inside Austronesian Houses*, James Fox showed how this approach, which was of course more commonly applied in other parts of the world too, revealed symbolic meanings and patterns (such as the use of botanic metaphors) that were shared throughout the Austronesian-speaking world of Southeast Asia and Oceania.⁵ In most publications, little attention was paid to other building types in the societies concerned, such as rice barns, meeting houses, or field huts.

Although the notion of the house as a microcosm continued as a prominent theme of study throughout the 1980s and 1990s, it also became subject to serious criticism at the time for presenting representations that were too static, selective, and essentialist. Analysing the symbolism of Nualu houses on the Indonesian island of Seram, Roy Ellen in particular noted how many earlier studies of architectural symbolism created "an illusion of certainty and uniformity" that misleadingly suggested that symbols are arranged in exclusive and orderly ways.⁶ The same period also saw the emergence of writings on the House as a social group, rather than as a work of architecture. Inspired by Claude Lévi-Strauss's discussion of so-called "House societies" (*sociétés-à-maisons*), the House (with a capital H to distinguish it from material houses) was seen to be a fundamental organisational principle throughout much of Southeast Asia and parts of Oceania.⁷

Waterson included a section on "Kinship and 'House Societies'" in *The Living House*, while a range of other influential studies debated the various ways in and extent to which the concept was relevant in the region.⁸ Curiously enough, although the House societies discourse stimulated an interest in the vernacular architecture of the region, the discourses on the house as a building and the House as a social group remained discrete in the vast majority of the work. The former effectively remained

dominated by the symbolic study of houses as objects (in fact, rather little was published on the actual architectural aspects of the buildings), while the latter in essence focused on kinship relationships and social structures. Only few studies have attempted to combine both discourses and tried to indicate how the house as a work of architecture plays an important role in the constitution of Houses as social groups, and vice versa.⁹ Indeed, while Waterson pays attention to both discourses in *The Living House*, she does not make such a connection either.

Old and new

Reflecting on the extensive discourse on vernacular architecture in Southeast Asia and Oceania that has developed throughout the twentieth and into the early twenty-first centuries, the scope and richness of much of the work clearly stand out. In comparison to the volume and quality of writings in other parts of the world, Southeast Asia and Oceania clearly hold a prominent position. It is equally remarkable how much of the knowledge and understanding embodied in the discourse is still relevant today. The architectural and symbolic commonalities among the various building traditions that indicate a shared Austronesia ancestry; the intricate ways in which the vernacular architecture relates to the social structures and cultural identities; the symbolic meanings that are embodied in the architecture by means of spatial layouts, forms, materials, and technologies; all of those aspects are still essential to take into account if one is to understand the design, use, and meaning of vernacular architecture in the region. Similarly, the call for an interdisciplinary approach that has been regularly issued, including by Waterson, combining the work of anthropologists, architects, geographers, and others, remains of value, as apart from a few notable examples much of the work is still carried out in disciplinary silos.¹⁰ Nonetheless, at the same time, it is also clear that in many parts of Southeast Asia and Oceania the social, economic, cultural, and environmental contexts that the vernacular architecture forms part of, as well as the architecture

itself, has significantly changed and that much of the literature no longer represents those current realities. Similarly, many of the academic ideas and methodological approaches that underpin the discourse have been challenged in recent decades. Those changes and challenges raise interesting and indeed fundamental questions about the way the vernacular architecture of the region has been approached and represented in the past, about the validity of those approaches and representations, and ultimately about how relevant they are in the here and now. Indeed, they call into question the validity and relevance of the concept of vernacularity itself.

One of the first observations to be made in relation to the discourse is that many of the studies start with a perceived dichotomy between old or traditional forms of vernacular architecture on the one hand and new or modern architectures on the other. Regardless of whether studies were published in the 1960s, the 1990s, or the 2010s, the attention has almost inevitably been focused on traditional forms of vernacular architecture; that is, on the building traditions that are seen to be pre-modern and in many cases pre-colonial: the *rumah gadang* of the Minangkabau in West Sumatra; the longhouses of the various Dayak groups in Borneo; the Sa'dan Toraja *tongkonan* in Sulawesi; the Maori *whare* in New Zealand.¹¹ It is those building traditions that are normally seen to represent the “real” or “authentic” vernacular architecture of a region; and it is consequently those traditions that are seen to express important symbolic values and meanings and that are believed to represent the cultural identities of the peoples concerned. An important observation in this regard is that this tendency is not limited to academic observers, but is often shared by the cultural groups themselves. It is no coincidence that traditional forms of vernacular architecture throughout the region have at various moments in time been selected and used to represent, emphasise, or even create ethnic, cultural, or national identities, either for political or commercial reasons. Nor is it a coincidence that they have often formed the source of inspiration for contemporary architects who want to root their work in history, culture, and locality. The traditional vernacular houses are commonly seen to be “the real thing”.

However, as anyone familiar with Southeast Asia or Oceania knows, they are commonly not the buildings that make up the contemporary architectural landscapes of the region. Indeed, in many regions it may be difficult to find them at all. In many instances traditional building forms have been complemented, overtaken, if not replaced by other, more recent forms of building, exhibiting different kinds of designs, different materials, different sizes, different layouts, and different ways of inhabitation. Sometimes such buildings appear radically distinct from the traditional forms and display features that would today be described as “modern” or “global” (and in the past often as “Western”). In other instances they may be more hybrid in nature, combining for example traditional forms with new materials, or new spatial layouts with traditional ways of inhabitation. In some more remote regions such developments may have been fairly recent; in most cases, however, especially in urban and more accessible rural areas, they may stretch back many decades if not centuries, and frequently to the colonial period. In some cases, such new buildings forms have been recognised in literature, albeit that oftentimes their existence has then been criticised and decried, rather than actually studied. In many instances, however they are not mentioned at all and often appear to be wilfully ignored; even though, in reality, they frequently outnumber, easily, the traditional house forms that may still exist in the regions concerned. The denial of their existence reflects an approach that sees architecture as a product rather than as an evolving process, and that perceives tradition as something fixed and unchanging that exists in opposition to modernity. The persistent focus of much of the discourse on traditional building forms ignores the dynamic and fluid nature of culture, tradition, modernity, and architecture in favour of static, essentialist, and often stereotypical representations.

Objects and subjects

A second dichotomy that can be observed in much of the work is that between architecture and culture (or society), materiality and mind, or object and subject. As in other parts of the world, most studies have long approached vernacular architecture in Southeast Asia and Oceania as a material object that exists in close relation to, but fundamentally apart from the people that build and inhabit it. That is, the house (or any other architectural form, such as a rice barn, field hut, or meeting house) is a building that exists on one plane, while the society or culture that it relates to exists on another. This approach is most obvious in the symbolic studies of the mid- and late-twentieth century that applied the so-called microcosm approach, which fundamentally started from the assumption that cultural values, religious beliefs, and social norms exist, as mental realities, independent of their representation in architecture.¹² Architecture is imbued with ideational forms, which can be read, almost like one reads a book, by those who inhabit or otherwise use the building. However, without the architecture, the values, beliefs, and norms would still exist; to be, they are not reliant on their materialisation in architectural form. The same dichotomy underpins most other work, be it the early, more descriptive documentation of vernacular traditions in the colonial period, or the more recent anthropological work on Houses as a social category. In the former body of work, architecture is documented as part of the material world, as an object of material culture, and frequently presented with little or no specific consideration of its cultural embodiment (that is, of how it is used or what it means to its owners or occupants). In the latter discourse, the emphasis is on the House as a social category, which does not rely on the house as a material form for its existence. Indeed, architecture as a material object is often absent from studies of the House society concept, which to all extent and purposes remains confined to kinship analyses and the study of “relatedness.” In all cases, therefore, a clear distinction is made between architecture as a material object on the one hand, and social or cultural values, patterns, or beliefs, as mental realities or representations, on the other. A basic assumption, clearly exemplified by Waterson’s “living house” that is animated by “what has been variously labelled in the literature as ‘spirit’, ‘soul-stuff’, ‘essence’, ‘vital force’, ‘cosmic energy’, and so on [and is] widely known in Malay and Indonesian

languages as *semangat* or its cognates,” is that the latter is active and gives life, or animates, the passive former.¹³

This distinction between passive objects on the one hand and active subjects on the other is of course not restricted to writings on vernacular architecture in Southeast Asia and Oceania and has been seriously challenged during the last thirty years or so. The burgeoning field of material culture studies in particular has shown how architecture, like other forms of material culture, is not a passive receptacle or repository for active cultural ideas and values, but is in fact an important and active constituent component of the latter.¹⁴ Rather than being imbued with already existing meanings and practices, architecture, as a material object, plays a fundamental role in the creation and reproduction of such meanings and practices. Architectural forms and dimensions, spatial layouts, and material qualities all contribute to the constitution of social and cultural relationships and identities. To paraphrase Daniel Miller and Christopher Tilley, houses, like other objects, “tend to be meaningful rather than merely communicate meaning.”¹⁵ The realisation that the materiality of the house plays an active part in the objectification of culture has opened the way to new understandings of the relationship between both. The latter does not animate or give life to the former; both constitute one another as part of a mutually constitutive, dialectic process. A Minangkabau *rumah gadang*, for example, does not only represent the already existing social status of its owner, but helps to create and maintain the latter because of its materiality (its size, form, materials) and can thus also be actively used to alter or manipulate it. The house, in this sense, has an agency or intentionality as much as its human inhabitants do and is not simply a passive material object.¹⁶

More recently, the notion that architecture has an agency because of its materiality has in turn been challenged, most notably by the anthropologist Tim Ingold, who argues that a focus on the materiality and agency of objects fundamentally maintains the problematic Cartesian distinction between materiality and mind, object and subject, and architecture and culture.¹⁷ For even if the former is now seen to play an active part in the constitution of the latter, both are still believed to

exist on two fundamentally different planes; the one a material one and the other an ideational. In other words, there is a physical world, of which architecture as a material object forms a part, and a mental reality, made up of values, norms, beliefs, and so on; both are mutually constituted in the material culture discourse, but remain separate entities nonetheless, with the former perceived to be fundamentally inanimate and requiring the latter, in the form of “a sprinkling of agency,” to bring it to life.¹⁸ Focusing on the properties and qualities of materials (timber, stone, bamboo, earth) rather than the concept of materiality, Ingold instead argues that the material world is not inanimate, but organic and always in flux, and that it forms as active a constituent of the environment as animate beings (including people). Architecture, being made up of materials, is thus not static or inanimate, but always alive and in a continuous state of becoming, just as much as people, and indeed all living beings are in a constant state of being-in-the-world. Architecture is not part of a material world, but of an environment that encompasses both humans and materials, ideas, and buildings. Subjects and objects, minds and matter, mental realities and buildings, in Ingold’s view, do not lie on disparate levels of being, but are part of the same world; a world in which both humans materials live within “the continuum of organic life,” which “itself undergoes continual generation in currents of materials.”¹⁹ Architecture is not fixed but processual and relational, like the materials it is made up of and the people that create and inhabit it. Moreover, it is not a cultural object built within a natural, material landscape, but part of an environment that encompasses all.

Reconceptualizations

From the 2000s onwards, the more active and processual perspective put forward in the discourse on materiality, combined with new theoretical thinking around notions of the global, culture, and modernity that stress their fluid and deterritorialised nature, have resulted in an increased number of studies that look at the ways in which vernacular traditions have evolved, combined, adapted, and formed an active part of identity formation projects.²⁰ Those studies, perhaps more prominent in relation to Oceania than South-East Asia, no longer see the vernacular as dichotomously opposed to

the modern or global, but recognise the conversations, hybridisations, and amalgamations that continue to take place between old and new, local and global, traditional and modern, and that in many parts of the region have resulted in new types of vernacular architectures in the form of, for example, bicultural architecture or indigenous design practices.²¹ At the same time, influenced by the same theoretical developments, calls have gone up for a reconceptualization or even abolition of the notion of vernacularity.²² The constant setting up of dichotomies between an old, traditional, passive, and unchanging vernacular and a new, modern, active, and dynamic non-vernacular has been argued to represent a static, essentialist, and primitivist perspective on architecture and its relationship to culture, tradition, place, and identity that no longer has a place in an increasingly global twenty-first century.

Recent work in the anthropology of design and making, which argues that the former is a continuous process that cannot be separated from the latter, adds further challenges to the relevance of the concept.²³ The vernacular is often distinguished on the basis that it has no architects and hence is not the result of a conscious design process. At best, vernacular architecture is made by master builders; skilled artisans who perform the physical realisation of a design already predetermined by tradition. They thus create an object that is a materialisation of an idea conceived at some other, earlier time, by undefined and unknown predecessors. As Tim Ingold has noted, “this assumption [...] elevates the work of the intellect while reducing the work of construction to mindless implementation.”²⁴ Not only does it belittle the skill, creativity, individuality, and intelligence of the builders concerned, it also belies the “messy practices” of building, which often involves many individuals doing different things at different times in a process that never really ends.

“[...] Sketching, tracing, modelling, digging, cutting, laying, fixing or joining, all [those practices] involve care, judgement and foresight, and are carried on within worldly field of forces and relations. None can be placed unequivocally on one side or the other of any distinction of fundamental ontological import, such as between form and substance, or between intellectual conception and physical execution.”²⁵

Nor indeed, can they ever be deemed to be finished, as all works of architecture are subject to continuous processes of occupation, conservation, renovation, demolition, interpretation, adaptation, and so on.²⁶ Vernacular traditions, from this perspective, cannot be seen to be more passive and static, and less active and dynamic than other forms of architecture. Indeed, they cannot be separated from the latter at all, as all are fundamentally the result of the same design and making processes. To paraphrase Ingold once again: “Who are we to say that they have no architecture?”²⁷

Recognising the processual, diverse, active, messy, and ever-changing nature of architectural traditions, and acknowledging that change and transformation as well as amalgamation, borrowing, and hybridisation will always take place in relation to them, and is in fact inevitable, opens up exciting opportunities for new research; not only in Southeast Asia and Oceania, but all around the world. For one thing it allows for the serious study of all those building traditions that have so far been ignored, decried, or at best grudgingly acknowledged because they are not traditional and authentic enough but are instead too modern, too different, too hybrid, or too debased; those building traditions that ironically have not been taken serious by the field of architecture more generally either because they are not unique, innovative, or elitist enough, but that nonetheless, as mentioned above, characterise architectural landscapes across most parts of Southeast Asia and Oceania (or indeed the world). It would also allow more attention to be paid to the ways in which all those building traditions, as well as the ones that have conventionally been the focus of attention, continue to develop in time, simply because they are an intrinsic part of an environment, inhabited by both objects and subjects, matter and mind, buildings and people, that itself always continues to develop. Most of all, it would allow the discourse to stop worrying about what vernacular architecture actually is and how it should be defined, and whether buildings X, Y, and Z are “truly” vernacular or not and, if so, why.²⁸ Vernacular architecture does not exist. What does exist are architectural traditions that are intricately related to people and all other objects and subjects that make up an environment, and that have often been excluded from architectural analysis for reasons of exclusivity, parochialism, and prejudice.

Challenges

Recognising all architecture as a fundamental part of the same process of living will result in a more inclusive discourse that should be better positioned to address the many issues that currently influence the architectural traditions of Southeast Asia and Oceania, but that have hitherto remained largely off the agenda. Eriksen recently commented that “ours is a world of high-speed modernity where change hardly needs to be explained by social scientists; what comes across as noteworthy are rather eddies, pockets and billabongs of calm and continuity”.²⁹ Globalisation, the term most commonly used to capture the driving-force behind the seemingly ever-more rapid economic, political, and cultural changes that most, if not all parts of the world experience, has resulted in an increasingly interconnected world where hardly any locality or tradition exists in complete isolation from others. Cultural identities are increasingly recognised as fluid, performed, and deterritorialised, while cultural traditions, including architectural ones, are frequently amalgamated or borrowed, abandoned or discarded, or formalised or revived, in response to changing social, economic, or political contexts. At the same time, environmental changes in the form of resource depletion (deforestation, desertification), more extreme weather events (floods, droughts, hurricanes) and, especially urgent in the region, sea level rise, add a dimension of increased unpredictability, vulnerability, and insecurity.

Conventional approaches that study vernacular architecture as expressions of fixed cultural identities and as responses to stable environmental conditions, and that do not recognise the ways in which architecture continuously develops as part of an ever-evolving environment, are increasingly out of touch with the realities of the twenty-first century – even if they do make valuable contributions to our knowledge and understanding of the world’s architectural diversity, ingenuity, and richness. Vernacular buildings across Southeast Asia and Oceania do indeed embody cultural identities, norms, values, and beliefs by means of architectural forms, spatial layouts, materials, dimensions, and orientations. They often continue to be important within ritual systems, employ

local materials, and among some peoples are still seen to possess a “spirit,” “life-force,” or “soul.” In some instances, houses, as material works of architecture, may continue to play an important role in the constitution of Houses as social groups (as defined by Lévi-Strauss) too. In many instances, however, they have also been modernised, appropriated, commercialised, abandoned, or destroyed, or been replaced with other buildings types that are sometimes fundamentally different in terms of their designs, materials, dimensions, layouts, and ways of inhabitation. Such changes have occurred not as a result of impersonal and culturally hegemonic and homogenising processes like modernisation, Westernisation, or globalisation (as Waterson could still say 30 years ago), but as a result of human intentions, decisions, and agency, and take place in response to changing economic, political, and environmental circumstances. They do not constitute a break with tradition, but represent a new phase in continuously evolving traditions that in themselves respond to ever evolving and all-encompassing environments.

Countries in Southeast Asia and Oceania, like those in other parts of the world, are today confronted with the impacts of rapid population growth, economic development, urbanisation, migration, technology transfer, natural disasters, conflict, and environmental change, among other things. Although the specific ways in which those challenges materialise and interrelate differ per region, all have a direct impact on architectural traditions, vernacular and otherwise. Depopulation, sea level rise, return migration, earthquakes, civil conflict, remittance economies, mining and illegal logging; all, and more, are at play in parts of Southeast Asia and Oceania and are in one way or another exerting an influence on the way that people build, use, and give meaning to buildings and places. So far, little to no attention has been paid to the ways in which those challenges relate to vernacular architecture, even if such research is urgently needed. An approach that no longer distinguishes between old and new, traditional and modern, or vernacular and formal architecture, but that recognises all architectural traditions as a fundamental part of the same process of living, is required to carry out such research in a meaningful manner. To overcome the distance that is

implicit in the concept of and discourse on vernacular architecture, it is necessary to look forward, as well as back.

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