

## In the Context of Tropical Asia: Vernacular, Colonial, Modernism, and Neo-Vernacular

Tropical Asia has a distinctive context both environmentally and culturally. Its geographic location makes it an essential transit point between East and West, a feature that attracted colonizers. During the centuries of colonialization, as well as earlier periods absorbing influences and migrants from regional neighbors, various architectural styles were voluntarily or obligatorily adopted. Thanks to their unique environmental context, any style, in its own way, had to attempt responding towards local conditions--an unforgiving humidity and torrential climate. These environmental parameters have helped to maintain the forms of vernacular traditions and to forge their own peculiar architectural paradigms today.

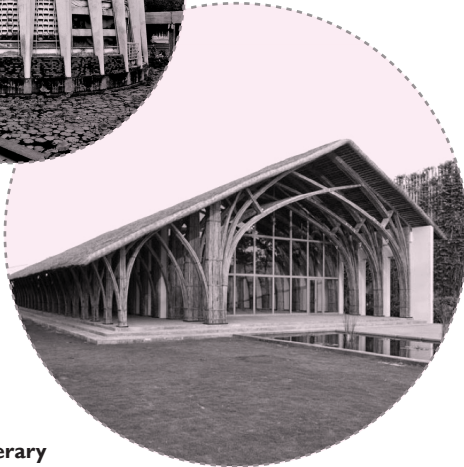
Tropical vernacular architecture, like other vernacular architecture in the world, finds its origins in rural dwellings, whose forms evolve from time-tested contextual conditions and functional concerns. Modernists as diverse as Adolf Loos, Giuseppe Pagano and Sibyl Moholy-Nagy, have identified rural houses as the root and embodiment of early functionalism and the origins of western modernism. Tropical modernism began as an imported ideology in the early years' of many Asian countries' independence; at this time, through orientalist lenses, western modern architecture was recognized as superior, and vernacular buildings as 'primitive'. From 1950s to the early 1990s, when western influences increasingly tied these countries to the global economy, tropical modernism pervaded their major cities, much of the architecture was designed by foreign architects or by western-educated architects. Indeed, the giant scale, solid concrete mass and monumentality of tropical modern architecture could be read as 'international'; however, these buildings also retained many traditional forms with their long-span pitched roofs, permeable facades, generous openings and veranda--all features of vernacular dwellings--imbue their modernist qualities with a distinct tropical flair. This balance between the international and local offer interesting examples of what Kenneth Frampton has called 'Critical Regionalism'.

In recent years, a number of local architects, such as Vo Trong Nghia and Ibuku, have started to reinvestigate the distinctive qualities of vernacular buildings--their materials, construction techniques, ritualistic spaces, craftsmanship, ecological responses and contextual siting, and tried to incorporate some of these dimensions in their own design process, generating a revival of traditional features that were lost in favor of western languages and the adoption of only the climatic strategies of tropical modernism. Hence, this new generation of architects has received global recognition for their efforts to re-establish both cultural identity and contextual sustainability in their architecture. These works can be seen as standing against the grain of the generic quality of new cities, hereby providing a missing link in a lineage of traditional practice that was disrupted by the event of colonial-imported modernism.

Under the looming shadow of 'Notopia', the great concern of contemporary architecture would be: **how can we as citizens of individual cultures and traditions, mediate between the International and Vernacular, and between advanced modern building technology and sustainable, contextual design?** With regard to this question, the developing process of Tropical Asian architecture offers us a rich set of case studies, both historically and geographically. During my travels, I plan to produce drawings as well as physical models to document and analyze the sites given on the list, and to identify relations between design features to trace their development across time and region. It is my hope that the historical investigation conducted for each lineage, in parallel, could in turn provide clues towards the emergence of such neo-vernacular traditions in other cities, and thus inspire future identities and practitioners.

### Bibliography

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- Said, Edward W. *Orientalism*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1978.
- Oliver, Paul. *Encyclopedia of vernacular architecture of the world*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996.
- Taylor, Brian Brace. *Geoffrey Bawa*. London: Thames and Hudson, 1996.
- Powell, Robert, and Patrick Bingham-Hall. *Singapore architecture*. Singapore: Periplus, 2004.
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### Visiting Sites

#### Vernacular: response to the context

Joglo	Yogyakarta	Indonesia
Ancient city of Polonnaruwa	Polonnaruwa	Sri Lanka
Karagahagedara Ambalama	Karagahagedara	Singapore
Boat Quay Shophouses	Singapore	
Kampung Glam		
Angkor Thom and Angkor Wat	Siem Reap	Cambodia
Vietnamese Museum of Ethnology	Hanoi	Vietnam
Boathouses on Red River		

#### Colonial and Modernism: imported mixed with local flair

Istiqlal Mosque. Friedrich Silaban, 1955-1982	Jakarta	Indonesia
Atma Jaya University Campus. Han Awal, 1962		
Wisma Dharmala. Paul Rudolph, 1985.		
Bandung Institute of Technology. Henri Maclaine Pont, 1919	Bandung	Sri Lanka
Old City Hall.	Colombo	
General Post Office. Wapchi Marikar, 1895		
National Museum. Wapchi Marikar, 1877		
Cinnamon Gardens Racecourse. 1893		
Bishop's College. Geoffrey Bawa, 1960-63		
Bentota Beach Hotel. Geoffrey Bawa, 1986	Bentota	
Serendib Hotel. Geoffrey Bawa, 1967-80		
Lunuganga Garden. Geoffrey Bawa, 1947		
Steel Corporation Offices. Geoffrey Bawa, 1966-69	Ouwela	Singapore
Kandalama Hotel. Geoffrey Bawa, 1991	Dambulla	
Victoria Theater. John Bennett, 1856-62	Singapore	
Koon Seng Road. 1929		
Tiong Bahru Housing Estate. 1936-54		
Pearl Bank Apartments. Archynamics, 1976		
The Colonnade. Paul Rudolph, 1985		
Raffles City. IM Pei, 1984-85		
Habitat Ardonore Park. Moshe Safdie, 1984-86		
The Concourse. Paul Rudolph, 1994		
Temasek Polytechnic. James Stirling, 1995		
The Commissariat. 1892	Phnom Penh	Cambodia
The National Museum. George Groslier, 1917-20		
National Olympic Stadium. Yann Molyvann, 1963-64		
Institute of Foreign Languages. Yann Molyvann, 1972		
Hotel Continental. Pierre Cazeau. 1878	Ho Chi Minh City	Vietnam
Saigon Central Post Office. Alfred Foulhoux, 1886-91		

#### Neo-Vernacular: traditions in the Contemporary Context

Alila Villas Uluwatu. WOHA, 2009	Bali	Indonesia
Suarga resort.		
The Green Village. Ibuku, 2010		
Sharma Springs. Ibuku, 2012	Jakarta	Singapore
Restaurant at Greenville. DSA+s, 2010	Bandung	
Bima Microlibrary. SHAU, 2016	Singapore	
Oasia Hotel. WOHA, 2016		
Park Royal Hotel. WOHA, 2013		
Kantha Bopha Conference Center	Phnom Penh	Cambodia
Phnom Penh Youth Center. 2010-14		
Naman Retreat Conference Hall. Vo Trong Nghia, 2015	Da Nang	Vietnam
Hay Hay Restaurant and Bar. Vo Trong Nghia, 2015		
Wind and Water Bar. Vo Trong Nghia, 2008	Thu Dau Mot Town	
Stacking green. Vo Trong Nghia, 2012	Ho Chi Minh City	
Diamond Island Community Centre. Vo Trong Nghia, 2015		
Roc Von Restaurant. Vo Trong Nghia, 2015	Hanoi	

#### From Left to Right

Vernacular: Bahnar Village, Vietnam  
Colonial: Koon Seng Road, Singapore  
Modernism: Institute of Foreign Languages, Cambodia  
Neo-Vernacular: Naman Retreat Conference Hall, Vietnam

#### Budget

	✈	🛏	📺	📧
500				
20	160	120	60	
80	100	60	100	
120	200	120	40	
200				
20	200	90	60	
60		30	20	
100	200	90	60	
60				
20	150	60	100	
30	120	60	40	
160				
100	300	150	150	
100		30	30	
60	100	40	30	
30	100	40	40	
70				
30	300	120	200	
650				
=2,410	=1,930	=1,010	=930	
<b>Total</b>	<b>=6,280 \$</b>			

#### Itinerary

<b>New York &gt; Colombo</b>	
Day 1-4	Colombo
Day 5-6	Polonnaruwa
Day 7-10	Bentota
<b>Colombo &gt; Hanoi</b>	
Day 11-13	Hanoi
Day 14	Da Nang
Day 15-17	Ho Chi Minh City
<b>Ho Chi Minh City &gt; Siem Reap</b>	
Day 18-20	Siem Reap
Day 21-23	Phnom Penh
<b>Phnom Penh &gt; Bali</b>	
Day 24-26	Bali
Day 27	Yogyakarta
Day 28-29	Bandung
Day 30-31	Jakarta
<b>Jakarta &gt; Singapore</b>	
Day 32-35	
<b>Singapore &gt; New York</b>	

