Proposal for a Book

OMAN; A PEOPLES' ARCHITECTURE IN TRANSITION

Based on a study titled
Oman:Problems & Potentials of the Indigenous
Built Environment of a Developing Country
by
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Proposal Contents

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Proposal for a book titled:
Oman: Problems & Potentials of the Indigenous Built Environment of a Developing Country
or Oman: A Peoples' Architecture in Transition

Farokh Afshar for The Development Workshop, Canada. Oct.1984

1.0 Introduction

In 1973, the authors were invited by the Oman government to study the indigenous building methods of that country and to make recommendations for the improvement of those methods. It was a timely and unique opportunity to undertake this task since Oman had only recently, and for the first time in its history, opened its doors to modernisation. Thus it was a moment when indigenous practices and the processes of change on them could be clearly percieved. The proposed book is based on this study.

The book examines the indigenous built environment of Oman, its housing, building and settlement systems, materials and technologies, on three related levels.Firstly to show how this environment is a natural result of Omans' geography, climate, culture and socio-economic traditions. Secondly to describe the impact recent and rapid modernisation has had on this environment and finally to suggest how this environment and indigenous building practices can be upgraded appropriate to Omans' modernising aspirations.

the bk. is heavily illustrated with drawings + photographs.

Although many books have been published on indigenous architecture and interest in it continues to be widespread, few, if any, have dealt with the subject in this comprehensive fashion, based on a national study and undertaken at such a unique moment in a countrys' history.

2.0 Summary of Contents

1 Why Indigenous Building?

This section discusses how indigenous building practices can be a major resource for creating a modern built environment in many developing countries.

2 Omans' Indigenous Building: Expressing Regionality, Problems and Potentials.

This section analyses the indigenous built environment as an expression of the physical, climatic, cultural and socio-economic conditions peculiar to each region, and the effect modernisation is having on this environment.. Through detailed case- studies of settlements, house forms, materials and technologies, the advantages and shortcomings of this environment are identified. The section is divided into six parts corresponding to six regions of the country.

3 Indigenous Building in a Modernising Oman

The first part of this section argues that Omans' current emphasis on large-scale, capital-intensive, building projects concentrated in the Capital region, should be tempered with more emphasis on smaller-scale projects supporting development in its regional towns and rural areas. The second part details how the indigenous built environment and building methods can be upgraded within a construction program to develop these towns and rural areas. Examples include the upgrading of two town centres, and guidelines for improving and applying indigenous materials such as palm-stem and mud-brick, climatic comfort enhancing traditional wind-catchers and windows, and health-related water supply and bathing areas.

3.0 Detailed Contents

2.4 Dhofar Coast
Gegraphic, -Climatic and Socio-Economic Influences
Settlement Patterns: Sallala and surrounding settlements
House Form: Evolution of the Courtyard House
Materials and Technologies: Lime-stone
and Dhofari Barasti Construction

3.0 Indigenous Building in a Modernising Oman.

3.1 On Development and The Built Environment: A Case for Decentralised Construction using Indigenous Methods.
3.2 Upgrading the Built Environment:
Nizwa and Buraimi Town Centres
3.3 Upgrading Materials and Technologies
Structural Improvements
Barasti (Palm Frond)
Mud-Brick
Limestone
Roofing Systems
Health and Comfort Improvements
Windows and Screens
Wind- Catchers
Food Selling and Cooking Areas
Water Supply and Waste Disposal

4.0 Conclusions

Technical Appendix: Structural and Climatic Experiments and Costing of Materials and Technologies

4.0 About the Authors

Since the early 1970's the authors have worked and written extensively on indigenous building and settlement practices in a number of developing countries in Asia, the Middle-East and Africa. Their work experience includes running the building and settlement section of a rural development project (Iran),low-cost housing development, training and construction (Africa) and numerous advisory missions for organisations such as the United Nations and the Aga Khan Awards Foundation.

Their writings include one chapter in each of two books: Rural Development Technology; an Integrated Approach and Low-Income Housing;Technology and Policy, (Pergamon, 1978), Indigenous Building and the Third World, (CEDS, 1976), and various articles in the following journals; Ekistics, Journal for Housing Science, Appropriate Technology, Ecologist, Architectural Design, Communications and Development Review, Le Sauvage, Architectural Association Quarterly, Mimar,ENDA(UN)

They are currently co-directors of a firm, Development Workshop, based in Toronto. Cain and Norton are working on projects in Africa and Afshar is completing his Ph.D from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology