

عَمَارَةُ الْبَيْتِ



EARTH
ARCHITECTURE

عَمَارَةُ الْبَيْتِ
الطين، الحجر والقرف



EARTH
ARCHITECTURE
MUD, STONE & SHALE

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Cover: Detail from a wall in Shibam with fresh mud plaster in the middle

DAW'AN MUD BRICK ARCHITECTURE FOUNDATION

مؤسسة دوعن للعمارة الطينية

NOTES, CONTRIBUTORS AND REFERENCES

Hijri (AH) dates when given appear before
Gregorian (AD) dates e.g. AH 1/AD 622

Site Plan of Shibam is courtesy of GTZ Shibam Urban
Development Project, 2007

Roger Moukarzel is a documentary and fashion
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**THE BUILDERS
SHIBAM
SAY'UN PALACE
NURAH MAGIC PASTE
TARIM
'AYNAT SEVEN DOMES
& A MOSQUE
DOME CATALOGUE
AL HAJARAYN
THE VILLAGES OF DAW'AN
QIRF**

CONTENTS

This publication coincides with the first Conference held by the Daw'an Mud Brick Architecture Foundation (Hadramut) in coordination with the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research.

The earth architecture of Hadramut Province, in particular, and Yemen, in general, is one of the country's most important assets and resources. In fact the architectural heritage, techniques and design of mud brick and *qirf* buildings in the towns and cities of Wadi Hadramut, Daw'an and al 'Ayn are amongst the most advanced and sustainable forms in the world, cited by international architects.

However, this living architectural culture, like the natural environment it coexists with, is no longer appreciated, encouraged or properly cultivated on the local level. Instead it is subject to disrepair and neglect, resulting in a considerable number of buildings that are damaged, demolished, lost, deserted or dilapidated.

Rehabilitation plans and national projects to recover some of these buildings have been very difficult to set up with government support and back up. Project funding is lacking, and the bureaucratic process prevents professional or qualified project administration. Public buildings, including schools and government offices, are constructed in cement in mediocre prototypes and hideous forms that are unrelated to the existing built heritage of this unique architecture that is admired internationally. Typical projects litter contemporary built centres in the Gulf or Middle East, where commercial interventions are managed by ill-informed contractors.

Public and official awareness is therefore at its lowest ebb. Ancient early mosques, notably Masjid Aban in Aden, and Friday Mosques all across the towns of Daw'an, most poignantly those at al Hajarayn, are simply allowed to be pulled down and reconstructed in ridiculous inept forms: a disgrace to the architectural heritage of Yemen. Such initiatives are carried out by individuals, through local contractors on behalf of a benefactor. To architects, academics and historians these buildings, which had a special place in the heart of the community, are irreplaceable.

Over the past two decades, the continuity and development of this traditional architecture has been steadily suffering and with it the demise of an entire generation of master builders. Today, there is no policy, enforced laws, legislations or discipline implemented in building and construction, or for developing the urban environment of the towns and villages. With maintenance not withstanding, and necessary upgrades

needed for the infrastructure, and in the absence of guidelines and legislations, inhabitants are left to take care of their buildings, confused with the condition of the worsening state of the existing urban fabric. Many have been led to believe that building new houses in cement is the solution for upgrading the quality of their buildings and lives.

It is hoped that this Conference may set an agenda amongst architects here, to work together in setting up open workshops with our students and builders to first and foremost bring awareness to the inhabitants, to assist them with restoring and rebuilding their towns, and to consolidate their own knowledge and cultural influence. An informed policy is needed to assist with recovering and upgrading these towns, to influence public opinion and engage the concerned local (Housing, and Development Planning) officials to understand and implement this course of action.

Through small individual efforts we might be able to attract both national and international attention to put an end to the squandering of such a rich and unique resource. In addition, the urban fabric confronting us evolved over hundreds of years with a sustainable ecosystem and included sophisticated water irrigation and storage methods. This can still be witnessed in the former built channels and large impressive, but now neglected, cisterns located at the mountaintops and edge of towns. Restoring these to function as part of an urban development plan to revive the agriculture, will aid in recovering a national asset that is environmentally balanced and valuable to the livelihood of communities, proven to be climatically and economically efficient and rewarding.

We are encouraged by the solidarity of architects, national and international organisations that have headed our call for convening this Conference. We wish to thank the Prince Claus Fund for Culture and Development (Amsterdam), ICCROM (Rome), CRATerre (Grenoble), The Delfina Foundation (London) and Adobe Alliance (Santa Fe) for their representation. Prince Claus Fund's Cultural Emergency Response (CER) has been an active partner of the Daw'an Mud Brick Architecture Foundation since 2007, in rescuing cultural landmarks in Daw'an, Sah and 'Aynat.

We look forward to enlisting the practical support of many of you who have joined us to look at the future of this remarkable earth architecture. Welcome to Wadi Hadramut.

FOREWORD

**Abdullah Ahmad Sa'id Bugshan, Chairman
Daw'an Mud Brick Architecture Foundation
Mukalla, January 2011**



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