architecture without architects

A Short Introduction to Non-Pedigreed Architecture

by Bernard Rudofsky

Doubleday & Company, Inc., Garden City, New York
Acknowledgements

The exhibition Architecture Without Architects, shown at the Museum of Modern Art from November 9, 1964 to February 7, 1965, was commissioned by the Department of Circulating Exhibitions under the auspices of the International Council of the Museum of Modern Art. Both the exhibition and the accompanying publication were prepared and designed by the author, Consultant to the Department of Architecture and Design.

The John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation and the Ford Foundation helped to finance the research for this project by awarding fellowships to the director of the exhibition for a study of non-formal, non-classified architecture. These grants might never have been given without the enthusiastic recommendations of the architects Walter Gropius, Pietro Belluschi, Jose Luis Sert, Richard Neutra, Gio Ponti, Kenzo Tange, and the Museum’s Director, René d’Harnoncourt, all of whom hail from countries rich in vernacular architecture.

Sincere thanks go to the many people, too numerous to list here, who contributed to this project in various ways. Special tributes, however, are due to Mme. Renée Heym, Musée de l’Homme, Paris; Miss Ruth M. Anderson, The Hispanic Society of America, New York; the staff of the Frobenius Institute, Frankfurt, and Dr. Myron B. Smith, Islamic Archives, Washington, D.C. Research assistance was rendered with exemplary patience by Miss Ellen Marsh. Credits for photographs, many of which were generously donated, are listed on the last page.

Bernard Rudofsky
Vernacular architecture does not go through fashion cycles. It is nearly immutable, indeed, unimprovable, since it serves its purpose in perfection. As a rule, the origin of indigenous building forms and construction methods is lost in the distant past. Below, houses typical of the Mediterranean area.

Architectural history, as written and taught in the Western world, has never been concerned with more than a few select cultures. In terms of space it comprises but a small part of the globe—Europe, stretches of Egypt and Anatolia—or little more than was known in the second century A.D. Moreover, the evolution of architecture is usually dealt with only in its late phases. Skipping the first fifty centuries, chroniclers present us with a full-fledged pageant of "formal" architecture, as arbitrary a way of introducing the art of building as, say, dating the birth of music with the advent of the symphony orchestra. Although the dismissal of the early stages can be explained, though not excused, by the scarcity of architectural monuments, the discriminative approach of the historian is mostly due to his parochialism. Besides, architectural history as we know it is equally biased on the social plane. It amounts to little more than a who's who of architects who commemorated power and wealth; an anthology of buildings of, by, and for the privileged—the houses of true and false gods, of merchant princes and princes of the blood—with never a word about the houses of lesser people. Such preoccupation with noble architecture and architectural nobility to the exclusion of all other kinds may have been understandable as late as a generation ago, when the relics and ruins of ancient buildings served the architect as his sole models of excellence (to which he helped himself as a matter of course and convenience), but today, when the copying of historical forms is on the wane, when banking houses or railroad stations do not necessarily have to resemble prayers in stone to inspire confidence, such self-imposed limitation appears absurd.

Architects Without Architects attempts to break down our narrow concepts of the art of building by introducing the unfamiliar world of nonpedigreed architecture. It is so little known that we don't even have a name for it. For want of a generic label, we shall call it vernacular, anonymous, spontaneous, indigenous, rural, as the case may be. Unfortunately, our view of the total picture of anonymous architecture is distorted by a shortage of documents, visual and otherwise. Whereas we are reasonably well informed about the artistic objectives and technical proficiency of painters who lived 30,000 years before our time, archaeologists consider themselves lucky when they stumble over the vestiges of a town that goes back to the third millennium B.C. only. Since the question of the beginnings of architecture is not only legitimate but bears heavily on the theme of the exhibition, it is proper to allude, even if cursorily, to possible sources.

A notion that swears by the Bible also finds it an incomparably rich book of reference. Also, the explicitness of the Scriptures in matters of architecture is never as disconcerting as when we learn (Genesis IV: 17) that Adam's son Cain built a city and named it after his son Enoch. A one-family town, delightful as it sounds, is a most extravagant venture and surely was never repeated in the course of history. If it proves anything, it illustrates the breathtaking progress made within a single generation, from the blessed human bird-creation in well-supplied Paradise to the exasperatingly complicated organism that is a town. Skeptics who dismiss Enoch as a chimera will find more significance in the Ark, particularly in view of the fact that it was commissioned by the Lord Himself and built to His specifications. The question whether the Ark ought to be called a building or a nautical craft is redundant. The Ark had no keel, the keel being an intellectual invention of later days, and we may safely assume that ships were not known as yet, since their existence would have defeated the very purpose of the Flood. When Noah
injured on Mount Ararat he was 601 years old, a man past his prime. He preferred
to devote the rest of his life to viticulture and left the task of building to his sons.
The Bible mentions (Genesis IX: 27) Shem's house—probably put together with
some of the Ark's lumber—but the decline in architecture was sealed.

The impious who prefer to turn to science in their quest for the origins of archi-
tecture will have to swallow a few indigestible facts. For it seems that long before
the first enterprises man bent some twigs into a leaky roof, many animals were
already accomplished builders. It is unlikely that beavers got the idea of building
dams by watching human dam-builders at work. It probably was the other way.
Most likely, man got his first incentive to put up a shelter from his cousins, the
anthropomorphous apes. Darwin observed that the orang in the islands of the
Far East, and the chimpanzees in Africa, build platforms on which they sleep.
"and, as both species follow the same habit, it might be argued that this was due to
instinct, but we cannot feel sure that it is not the result of both animals having
similar wants, and possessing similar powers of reasoning." Untamed apes do not
share man's urge to seek shelter in a natural cave, or under an overhanging rock,
but prefer an airy scaffolding of their own making. At another point in The
Descent of Man, Darwin writes that "the orang is known to cover itself at night
with the leaves of the Pandanus"; and Brehm noted that one of his baboons "used
to protect itself from the heat of the sun by throwing a straw-mat over its head. In
these habits," he conjectured, "we probably see the first steps towards some of the

North American tree dwellers. The evisceration scene is from Erasmus Francisci's Lustgarten,
1698.

simplest arts, such as rude architecture and dress, as they arise among the early
progenitors of man." (Our italics) Suburban man falling asleep near his lawn
mower, pulling a section of his Sunday paper over his head, thus re-creates the birth
of architecture.

Yet even before men and beasts walked the earth, there existed some kind of
architecture, coarsely modeled by the primal forces of creation and occasionally
polished by wind and water into elegant structures (fig. 19). Natural caves, espe-
cially, hold a great fascination for us. Caves, having been among man's earliest
shelters, may turn out to be his last ones. At any rate, they were chosen with great
forethought as depositories for our most precious artifacts—government and busi-
ness files. It is of course not within the scope of this exhibition to furnish a capsule
history of nondedicated architecture, nor even a sketchy typology. It merely should
help us to free ourselves from our narrow world of official and commercial archi-
tecture.

Although exotic arts have long been appreciated in the Western world—not,
however, without being cautiously dubbed "primitive"—exotic architecture (the
word exotic is here used in its original meaning, alien) has evoked no response;
and is still relegated to the pages of geographic and anthropological magazines.
Indeed, apart from a few regional studies and scattered ones, no literature exists
on the subject. Lately though, ever since the art of travel has suffered conver-
sion into an industry, the charms of "picture-postcard towns" and the "popular"
architecture of "fairytale countries" have proved of considerable attraction. Still,
our attitude is plainly condescending.

No doubt the picturesque element abounds in our photographs; yet, again, the
exhibition is not an exercise in quaintness nor a travel guide, except in the sense
that it marks a point of departure for the exploration of our architectural preju-
dices. It is frankly polemic, comparing as it does, if only by implication, the
serenity of the architecture in so-called underdeveloped countries with the archi-
tectural blight in industrial countries. In orthodox architectural history, the
emphasis is on the work of the individual architect; here the accent is on com-
munal enterprise. Piero Belluschi defined communal architecture as "a communal

Floating Village, China. From Erasmus Francisci's Lustgarten, 1698.
art, not produced by a few intellectuals or specialists but by the spontaneous and continuing activity of a whole people with a common heritage, acting under a community of experience. It may be argued that this art has no place in a raw civilization, but even so, the lesson to be derived from this architecture need not be completely lost to us.

There is much to learn from architecture before it became an expert's art. The untutored builders in space and time—the protagonists of this show—demonstrate an admirable talent for fitting their buildings into the natural surroundings. Instead of trying to "conquer" nature, as we do, they welcome the vagaries of climate and the challenge of topography. Whereas we find flat, featureless country most to our liking (any flaws in the terrain are easily erased by the application of a bulldozer), more sophisticated people are attracted by rugged country. In fact, they do not hesitate to seek out the most complicated configurations in the landscape. The most imaginative of them have been known to choose veritable eyries for their building sites—Machu Picchu, Monte Alban, the craggy bastions of the monks' republic on Mount Athos, to mention only some familiar ones.

The tendency to build on sites of difficult access can be traced no doubt to a desire for security but perhaps even more so to the need of defining a community's borders. In the old world, many towns are still solidly enclosed by moats, lagoons, glacis, or walls that have long lost their defensive value. Although the walls present no hurdles to invaders, they help to thwart undesirable expansion. The very word "urbane" is linked to them, the Latin urbs meaning walled town. Hence, a town that aspires to being a work of art must be as finite as a painting, a book, or a piece of music. Inborn as we are of this sort of planned parenthood in the field of urbanism, we exhaust ourselves in architectural proliferation. Our towns, with their air of fertility, go unchecked—an architectural excreta that defies all treatment. Ignorant as we are of the duties and privileges of people who live in older civilizations, we do in accepting chaos and ugliness as our foreordained fate, we neutralize any and all misgivings about the immoral of architecture on our lives with lame protests directed at nobody in particular.

Part of our troubles results from the tendency to ascribe to architecture—or, for that matter, to all specialists—exceptional insight into problems of living when, in truth, most of them are concerned with problems of business and prestige. Besides, the art of living is neither taught nor encouraged in this country. We look at it as a form of debouch, little aware that its tenets are frugality, cleanliness, and a general respect for creation, not to mention Creation.

To no small degree, this situation came about through the diligence of the historian. By invariably emphasizing the parts played by architects and their patrons he has obscured the talents and achievements of the anonymous builders, whose concepts sometimes verge on the mystical, whose esthetics approach the sublime. The beauty of this architecture has long been dismissed as accidental, but today we should be able to recognize it as the result of rare good sense in the handling of practical problems. The shapes of the houses, sometimes transmitted through a hundred generations (Fig. 11), seem eternally valid, like those of their tools.

Above all, it is the humaneness of this architecture that ought to bring forth some response in us. For instance, it simply never occurs to us to make streets into oases rather than deserts. In countries where their function has not yet deteriorated into highways and parking lots, a number of arrangements make streets fit for humans: pedicles and awnings (that is, awnings spread across a street), tentlike structures, or permanent roofs. All are characteristic of the Orient, or countries with an oriental heritage, like Spain. The most refined street coverings, a tangible expression of civic solidarity—or, should one say, of philanthropy—are arcades. Unknown and unappreciated in our latitudes, the function of this singularly ingratiating feature goes far beyond providing shelter against the elements or protecting pedestrians from traffic hazards. Apart from lending unity to the streetscape, they often take the place of the ancient forums. Throughout Europe, North Africa, and Asia, arcades are a common sight because they also have been incorporated into
"formal" architecture. Bologna's streets, to cite but one example, are accompanied by nearly twenty miles of portico.

Another alien type of the communal vernacular is the storehouse for food. In societies where food is looked upon as a divine gift rather than an industrial product, the architecture of granaries is solemn. So much so that to the uninitiated it suggests ecclesiastical buildings. Although small in scale, storehouses achieve monumentality, whether in the Iberian peninsula, in the Sudan, or in Japan. In view of their great stylistic purity and precious content, we have termed them quasi-sacral.

Apart from the High Vernacular—the sophisticated minor architecture of Central Europe, the Mediterranean, South and East Asia—and primitive architecture proper, the exhibition also includes such categories as architecture by subtraction, or sculpted architecture, exemplified by troyglose dwelling and free-standing buildings cut from live rock and hollowed out. Rudimentary architecture is represented by wind screens which sometimes attain gigantic dimensions. In Japan they may shield, indeed, envelop a house, a hamlet, or an entire village. Of the architecture of nomads, portable houses, houses on wheels, sled-houses, houseboats, and tents are shown. Proto-industrial architecture includes water wheels, windmills, both vertical and horizontal, and dovecots, those vital fertilizer plants. Being "contemptuous of ideas but amorous of devices," we may find the mechanics rather than the esthetics of this architecture more to our liking.

We learn that many audacious "primitive" solutions anticipate our cumbersome technology; that many a feature invented in recent years is old hat in vernacular architecture—prefabrication, standardization of building components, flexible and movable structures, and, more especially, floor-heating, air-conditioning, light control, even elevators. We may also compare the amenities of our houses with the unadvertised comfort of, say, some African domestic architecture that provides a respectable man with six detached dwellings for his six wives. Or we may find that long before modern architects envisioned subterranean towns under the optimistic assumption that they may protect us from the dangers of future warfare, such towns existed, and still exist, on more than one continent.

There is a good deal of irony in the fact that to save off physical and mental deterioration the urban dweller periodically escapes his splendidly appointed lair to seek bliss in what he thinks are primitive surroundings: a cabin, a tent, or, if he is less hidebound, a fishing village or hill town abroad. Despite his manias for mechanical comfort, his chances for finding relaxation hinge on its very absence. By dint of logic, life in old-world communities is singularly privileged. Instead of several hours of daily travel, only a flight of steps may separate a man's workshop or study from his living quarters. Since he himself helped to shape and preserve his environment, he never seems to tire of it. Besides, he is largely indifferent to "improvements." Just as a child's toys are no substitute for human affection, to him no technical contrivance makes amends for the lack of visibility.

Not only is the need for confining the growth of a community well understood by the anonymous builders, it is matched by their understanding of the limits of architecture itself. They rarely subordinate the general welfare to the pursuit of profit and progress. In this respect, they share the beliefs of the professional philosopher. To quote Huizinga, "the expectation that every new discovery or refinement of existing means must contain the promise of higher values or greater happiness is an extremely naive thought.... It is not in the least paradoxical to say that a culture may founder on real and tangible progress."

The present exhibition is a preview of a book on the subject, the vehicle of the idea that the philosophy and know-how of the anonymous builders presents the largest untapped source of architectural inspiration for industrial man. The wisdom to be derived goes beyond economic and aesthetic considerations, for it touches the far tougher and increasingly troublesome problem of how to live and let live, how to keep peace with one's neighbors, both in the parochial and universal sense.
A note on the illustrations
A study project such as the one that yielded the picture material for this exhibition is inevitably beset with uncommon difficulties. With the exception of the archives of European anthropological institutes, no pertinent sources exist. Many illustrations were obtained by chance, or sheer curiosity, applied to the subject and sustained over forty odd years. Methodical travel and long years of residence in countries that afforded a study of vernacular architecture have provided the mainstays of the exhibition.

Some of the illustrations are not up to professional standards; most of them are the work of inspired amateurs or were culled from the pages of obscure publications. (See opposite page.) Moreover, with current restrictions on the movements of the citizen, it would be impossible today to procure such rare documents as the photographs of villages in the Caucasus taken in 1929 by an American glaciologist, or to duplicate the aerial views of Chinese underground communities obtained by a German pilot in the early 30s, both of whom were surprised to find their handiwork greatly appreciated at this late date.

B. R.
The amphitheaters of Machu Picchu

Amphitheaters of a monumental kind, unknown to layman and scholar alike, can be found high on the American continent. In Peru, halfway between Cuzco and Machu Picchu, lies an ancient theater center that has no counterpart anywhere else. Built by the Incas, it comprises four theaters in the round and one in the form of a half-circle. As might be expected, the acoustics of all five theaters are superb.

The contours of the architecture have been eroded by the elements, the site turned to pasture and farmland. Yet the basic structure is relatively well preserved. The largest theater—probably set into a prehistoric crater—accommodated as many as 50,000 people.

Twelve of its terraces, each about 5 feet high and 23 feet wide, still exist. The lowest circular platform of the four theaters, which corresponds to the Greek orchestra, varies in diameter from 90 to 114 feet. Water pipes, one foot wide, carved into stone monoliths, carried spring water from a nearby mountain peak.

Although nothing is known about the kind of spectacles performed, we may assume that athletic exhibitions—boxing, jumping, racing, and animal baiting—outweighed true theatricals. Peruvian archaeologists believe that the "undescribable beauty" of the landscape (about 12,000 feet above sea level) was an inspirational factor in the grandiose enterprise.

As yet, the site has not suffered the ravages of tourism.
**House for the dead**

Great builders draw no line between sculpture and architecture. With them, sculpture is not "commissioned" as an afterthought or budgetary dood. Neither is so-called landscaping. The three are inseparable.

The geometric figures formed by stone stumps mark the battlefield of Trafalgar in Sweden. For all we know, the battle may never have taken place, but, since history does not concern us here, we are free to admire the design of this war memorial. It is no doubt more sophisticated than, say, the designs for the four hundred bronze and marble monuments of Gettysburg battlefield.

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"The aerial view of cemeteries near Landau, in the Chinese province of Kansu, brings to mind Isaac Negretti's models for his "contoured playground," a sculpture's rather than an architect's idea of how to improve on the surface of the land. As in other civilizations (see next pages), the houses of the dead were constructed far more solidly than those for the living."
Ordek's necropolis
Looking like the model of a prize-winning entry in a sculptors' competition, this spiky architecture turns out to be indeed a great monument. No more than a ruin, the forest of wild poplar poms nevertheless forms a striking composition whose original design has been greatly improved by the corrosive action of wind-carried sand. The hill, allegedly harboring countless coffins and treasures of gold and silver, was discovered in Sinkiang some thirty years ago by one of Siem Hedin's Turkish servants, Ordek, who liked to do some private prospecting on the side.
Troglodyism

Troglodyism does not necessarily imply a low cultural level. The picture of the caveman
dragging his mate by her hair is a cartoonist’s cliché, betraying nostalgia for bygone days,
rather than a portrait of the kind of people who prefer to live below ground. Besides,
troglodytic antinomies vary as much as those of more conventional habitats.
The irregular holes in the oases of Siwa, Egypt are entrances to a burial ground that has
been converted into living quarters. Compared to them, the caves-dwellings on the opposite
page are highly sophisticated architecture.

Opposite, a partial view of an underground village near Loyang in northern China. It
takes a second glance to notice that what looks like flat roofs is earth, bare except for a
few trees. Every room has a vaulted ceiling carved into the soil while the roof comes free.
Dwellings below, fields upstairs

One of the most radical solutions in the field of shelter is represented by the underground townships and villages in the Chinese loess belt. Loess is silt, transported and deposited by the wind. Because of its great softness and high porosity (45 per cent), it can be easily carved. In places, roads have been cut as much as 40 feet deep into the original level by the action of wheeled. In the provinces of Honan, Shansi, Shensi, and Kansu about ten million people live in dwellings hewn out from loess.

The photographs show settlements of the most rigorous, not to say abstract, design near Tunghwan (Honan). The dark squares in the flat landscape are pits an eighth of an acre in area, or about the size of a tennis court. Their vertical sides are 25 to 30 feet high. L-shaped staircases lead to the apartments below whose rooms are about 20 feet deep and 15 feet wide, and measure about 15 feet to the top of the vaulted ceiling. They are lighted and aired by openings that give onto the courtyard. "One may see smoke curling up from the fields," writes George B. Cressey in his Land of the 500 millions: A Geography of China, even though there is no house in sight, "such land does double duty, with dwellings below and fields upstairs." The dwellings are clean and free of vermin, warm in winter and cool in summer. Not only habitations but factories, schools, hotels, and government offices are built entirely underground.
Nature as architect

Our tendency to look at stalactite caves with cathedrals in mind, or to see castles in eroded rocks, betrays neither exceptional imagination nor artistic insight. Ciudad Encantada, the Enchanted City, about 120 miles east of Madrid, is a formation of cretaceous deposits covering 500 acres. The fantastic shapes, boldly cantilevered, are an astonishing sight and need no fanciful comparisons with architecture to be appreciated.

The baobab tree of tropical Africa, *Adansonia digitata*, sometimes reaches a diameter of 90 feet. Its wood being soft, live trees are often hollowed out and used as dwellings.
Architecture by subtraction

Occasionally, men have carved entire towns out of live rock above ground. The ramparts, castle, and houses of Les Baux-de-Provence were cut to a great extent from the calcareous mountains on which they stand. An important place in the Middle Ages, it has long been abandoned; the number of its inhabitants has dwindled to 250. Below, the ruin of a freestanding house.

Opposite, a close-up of one of the Glimer cases (see 48), sculpted by nature. They range from the size of a tent to that of a minor skyscraper with as many as sixteen floors. Plans of the apartments inhabited by Simeon the Stylite (in the fifth century A.D.) are shown at right. The lowest floor contained his oratory. Above it were his living quarters with a fireplace and furniture made from stone.
Architecture by subtraction, continued

These churches from these dioceses are not "buildings" in the strict sense of the word; they, too, are carved out of rock. Below, a view of the ninth-century monolithic church of Saint-Emilion (Gironde). At right, top, a church façade from about the same time at Goreme (Anatolia). At right, bottom, St. George's Church at Laibeda (Ethiopia), carved from the rock like a sculpture and hollowed out.
From Semiramis' Hanging Gardens to the latest dam building projects, agriculture has been competing with architecture in shaping the surface of the land. Building his first wall—probably for retaining water or earth—man created space on the human scale. Piling stone upon stone was a formidable advance over carving rock. Above, terraces in the loess area in Henan (China). Below, protective walls in a vineyard in the Comar Islands.
The choice of site

Man's physical freedom manifests itself in his ability to choose the place on earth where he wants to live. Whereas immediate reflection tends to judge by usefulness alone, a discriminating mind may ask its share of beauty. Neither privation nor danger will deter man from selecting a spot that provides him with the exhilaration generated by a superb landscape.

Phira, the capital of the small Greek archipelago of Thera, is a sort of box set in the theater of creation. It towers 600 feet above its small port on the brink of an ancient volcanic crater, and no better example could be found to illustrate the original meaning of the words uptown and downtown. Periodically devastated by earthquakes, the island has never been abandoned.
Architectural essays

Before being introduced to the prosaic tasks of their chosen profession, students of architecture are sometimes given problems that call for tackling items like these. It is the one and only chance in their careers for tasting the exhilaration that comes from working, if only on paper, in companionship with nature at its most magnanimous.

Opposite, one of a group of heretical strongholds called Metopes, near Trikala in northern Greece, that have been inhabited for the past eight hundred years. Access was once gained by being hoisted in a basket—the prototype of our elevators. Above, the Peñas de Alhucemas, one of a group of three small islands that guard the Moroccan coast southwest of Ceuta. With its turrets and battlements, the place is a sort of stationary battleship. Below: In the Spanish province of Castellón, facing the Mediterranean, lies Peñíscola of similar shape. A narrow sandbank joins it precariously to the mainland.
It is not that they are increasingly becoming refuges for city dwellers. People who have not yet been reduced to appendages to automobiles find in them a fountain of youth.

Positano (at right) changed within a few years from a simple fishing town—it was an important harbor some five hundred years ago—into a luxurious resort, without destroying the local architecture. Opposite: Aniceto, in the Sabine Mountains near Rome.
Mojácar, in the province of Almería, used to be one of the more spectacular Spanish hill towns until last year when tourism caught up with it. The houses shown in the photographs were torn down, or are being torn down, to make space for parking lots, hotels, apartment houses, and villas designed in bogus vernacular.

Below, a panoramic view of Mojácar. The Mediterranean Sea is visible in the upper right corner. Opposite, a close-up of the town.
Cliff dwellers of the Dagoon
Among Sudanese tribes, one of the best known—for their art rather than for their architecture—are the Dagoons. Numbering about a quarter of a million people, they live along the plateau of Bandingari, south of Tombouctou. The photographs show one of a string of villages built on rocks fallen from high cliffs. What at first glance appears to be mere debris (below), is a mixture of flat-roofed dwellings and straw-battled homes.

The absence of any large buildings, vehicles, or even streets, would suggest to us barbarian conditions had not extensive ethnographic investigations disclosed a highly sophisticated culture. The Dagoons' architecture expresses communal organization; their religiously inspired sculpture ranks among the best of African art. Typical subjects are human figures sculpted from tree-trunks that form an integral part of architecture. (See plate 156.)
Aquatic architecture

The proximity of a body of water, whether a river, a lake, or the sea, has always been of great consideration in the choice of a community. In the Orient, millions of people live much like waterfowl, more or less permanently on the water. Below, a sampling of houseboats in Shanghai's Bencow Creek near its junction with the Waanggo River. The advantages of the site are evident—the waterways never need be torn up for costly repairs, drains suffer no stoppage, a bath is ready at all hours. Besides, the expanse of water functions as a cooling plant during the hot season.

To judge from the engraving above, pre-Columbian Mexico City looked much like a smaller version of Venice. Houses faced the waterfront, alleys were narrow although the overall plan seems ample. The town and lake disappeared without a trace, and so might have Venice had the canals and lagoon been allowed to fill in. Instead, Venetians nobly preserved their natural defenses and thus were spared the invasions of foreign armies during a thousand years.
Nomadic architecture

Tents and pavilions, “the magnificent structures that have been the pride of the monarchs of Western Asia for thousands of years, fabrications huge in size, very costly, and even if not permanent, often of extraordinary beauty,” have never been seriously considered architecture by art historians, complains historian Arthur Upham Pope. The Chinese paintings below more than hint at the satisfactory combination of austerity and pomp. The geometric screens of silk, set at right angles, lend grandeur to the barren camping site.

Above and opposite bottom, a holiday encampment on the Ajdir Plateau in the Middle Atlas. The tents are made from black goats’ wool.

The diagram of a tent structure (right) is from J. Chapelé, Nomades noirs du Sahara.
Primeval forms
This is neither a case of nature imitating conical houses, nor of man copying conical rocks. The volcanic formations in the Aurunci valley of Gassen (above) were eroded by wind and water. Whether the stylized shapes suggested houses or not, the many crevices, holes, and hollows that occur in the soft stone had only to be enlarged and smoothed in order to provide habitable space. The site appealed to people with a desire for seclusion and, during the seventh century A.D., as many as 30,000 anchorites, male and female, lived here in a monastic community. Access to the thousands of chambers, churches, and chapels was, and often still is, by rope ladder.

Peasant houses, called trulli (below), dot the almond and olive groves of southern Apulia. They are built of angular layers of stone that terminate in a false conic cupola crowned by a keystone. The archaic house form of an early megalithic civilization, they are related to the Belemte talayots, Santorini megarons, and the art of Pindikarta. Despite the passage of a dozen nations, the type has survived almost without change since the second millennium B.C. It still serves the inhabitants well.
Architectural mimicry

Two examples of architecture where man's handiwork blends into the natural setting, thereby achieving a synthesis of the vernacular and organic forms. Below, rooftops with highly sculptural chimneys, typical of the Aegean islands. Opposite, the corner of a castle at Sotillo in the province of Avila, at the foot of the Sierra de Peñagrieta.
Town structures

Two different communal structures are represented by the almost pointillistic pattern of Zanzibar (left) and the relaxed geometric one of Marrakesh. A good part of the town of Zanzibar has preserved its village character with its detached houses, streets, or whatever the vacant spaces may be called, run serenely like raindrops on a windowpane. Marrakesh (Morocco) is the archetype of an Islamic town with its quadrangular houses organized around interior courts. There are no traffic arteries to speak of; the cool narrow alleys of broken course often lead to dead ends.
Unit architecture
The use of a single building type does not necessarily produce monotony. Irregularity of terrain and deviations from standard measurements result in small variations which strike a perfect balance between unity and diversity. At right and below, the Spanish towns of Mijas and Villa Hermosa; opposite, the Italian Pisticci.
The classical vernacular

Rugged nature seems to stimulate men's artistic powers. This remarkable town, whose inhabitants come nearest to living on a volcano, is a case in point. Aperaonosia is built on the brink of a crater, the leftovers of a volcano that blew up in prehistoric time. The houses, blindingly white against the masses of dark-colored rocks, represent a sort of endless sculpture.

In the 1930s, when this photograph was taken, commercial architecture was already on the march (see upper right corner). The old houses in the foreground, however, are modeled according to local tradition, their forms being no more accidental than the values of a fugue. All of them are variations of a single dwelling type, the vaulted cell. They contain no interior staircases, each room being accessible from the outside only. The small windows prove perfectly adequate since walls and ceiling—and often also the floor—are whitewashed and thus reflect the light. No outside buildings disturb the general harmony; even the many churches and chapels submit to the vernacular.
Fortified places

It is a curious comment on our architecture, not to say civilization, that grown-up people have been known to be in raptures over the aesthetic adventure afforded by a "split level" house. Which suggests that we seem never quite able to leave the ground on our modest flights of architectural fancy. Never having a chance to wend our way through imaginatively devised space, we are unlikely to be good judges of the architecture shown here. Yet even the poor snapshot hints at some of its delights. The fascination of labyrinths and secret chambers, of murky passages and vertiginous flights of steps—all the essentia mysteries of enclosed space—is here conveyed without loss of impact by being translated into an architectural idiom that is at once complex and crystal clear. Neither house nor town but a synthesis of both, this architecture was conceived by people who build according to their own inner light and unsoared imagination. Above and opposite, desert fortresses in Southern Morocco.
Family-size fortifications

Only a few hundred years ago, the skylines of many European and Asian towns bristled with slender prismatic towers, for it was both more dignified and more esthetic to fight intramural battles from the vantage point of an appropriate architecture rather than from rooftops or in streets, as is the custom in our day.

Opposite, two of the original two hundred towers of Bologna. The Torre Asinelli (left), 297 feet high, dates from 1109. The unfinished Torre Garisenda (right), built one year later, leans more than eight feet.

Above, a view of Vathia, one of several fortified villages in the Peloponnesus. Below, a Yemenite town of similar silhouette.
The fortified villages of Svanetia

Like Vachia on the preceding page, these villages in Svanetia, a high-lying valley in the western Caucasus, are protected by towers. Until recently, each family had to destroy its own defense budget, for as late as the latter half of the nineteenth century blood feuds and vendettas raged unchecked. "The little fortifications in which each family lives," comments William O. Field, an American glaciologist who visited the valley in the 1920s, "date from some time previous to the twelfth century. The outward aspect of the country has changed little, and the towers and castles remain dotted about the landscape, sometimes singly, sometimes in clusters of fifty or sixty."
Arcades

Neither the word arcade nor its many synonyms translate satisfactorily into the American language, perhaps because we have no arcades. (The penury arcade is not a variant to be considered here.) Arcades are alien in turned architecture—private property given to an entire community.

Above, arcades in Switzerland's capital, Bern, dating from the sixteenth century.

Below, a street in Alcan, in the Spanish province of Navarra. The town has preserved its medieval aspect; some streets are lined with arcades of wood or stone and many houses still have Gothic portals.

Above, an arcade running along a hospice at Cape Espichel in Portugal. Below, arcades around a square at Moulpier (Dordogne).
Arcades, continued

The disappearance of age-old pleasures and privileges is the first unmistakable sign of progress. Whereas less than a century ago every Spanish town and village boasted miles of covered ways along its streets, today they are disappearing fast.

Above, two sides of the town square of Garrovillas in western Spain. Opposite, below, a close-up of the street juncture seen in the picture above, right. It illustrates how simple design freely employed produces intricate, above all, attractive space.

Below, a street in Caldas de Reyes in Spain where the arcades have reduced the street itself to a narrow passage.
Arcades, continued

The old Moravian town of Telč in what is today Czechoslovakia consists mainly of two monumental blocks of patrician houses bordering the town square on one side and lakes on the other. Thus each house has an urban and a pastoral part, the latter ending in a garden. The town square (which is anything but square) forms the only thoroughfare. The entire length of its perimeter is covered by arcades.

Above and below, the rows of houses with their arcaded gable-ends. Opposite, an interior view of one arcade, a rural-type Rau Rivoii.
Covered streets

The three chimney-smoke pictures may strike terror into
the heart of the urbanite because he automatically as-
ociates them with unparsable crimes. In underdevel-
oped countries, however, such streets are usually as safe
as a church at high mass. Still, although they are taken
for granted by the natives, to us they seem unreal,
dvoid as they are of sidewalks, traffic lights, parked
cars, and batteries of garbage cans, all of which we
have come to accept as the attributes of higher civiliza-
tion.

On this page, top, a street in Benaharre, Spain and,
bottom, in Cefalbio, Italy. Opposite, a street at the
oasis Kharga, in the Libyan Desert.

Photographs can only hint at the actual experience of
traversing passages through complicated space that
plays on all senses: shafts of light piercing darkness;
waves of coolness and warmth; the echo of one’s own
footsteps; the odor of sun-baked stones. The sum of
these impressions adds up to an esthetic adventure
that, modest though it is, we are usually denied.
Semicovered streets
Less sturdy than arcades but gayer and more airy are the lacy coverings that are the delight of oriental streets and courtyards. Their shadow-plays are staged with simple means: canopies of melias, mats, nets, or vines are turned to good account for distilling the rare sunlight into a sort of optical liquor.

All examples are from Africa, except the last of the small pictures, which shows toddo, canvas awnings spread across a street in Seville.
Loggia

The loggia, an old feature of vernacular architecture, runs the entire gamut from covered walkways through more or less protected balconies and galleries to columned halls.

Opposite, a wing of the Greek monastery Simon Petra on Mount Athos. Above, a panoramic view of Aul Shrock in the Caucasus. Below, houses on the main square of Chinchón near Madrid, whose loggia serve as theater boxes on the occasion of bullfights.
Quasi-sacral architecture

Among some of the least known manifestations of rural architecture are the granaries in the Spanish province of Galicia, the northwest corner of the Iberian peninsula. The inhabitants of that region deserted from the Celts who invaded the continent around 500 B.C. Their rude, circular stone huts can still be found in mountain districts, yet it is the hórreos, the corn cribs, that most deserve our attention. Built for eternity, resembling nothing so much as chapels à pilatois, they are conspicuous for their severe lines. Such dignity is by no means accidental—some peasants have a religious respect for bread and the stuff that goes into its making.

Put together from large granite slabs, a hórreo is fire- and vermin-proof. It rests on pillars topped by circular stones that act as rain-guards, and, incidentally, are the forerunners of the classical capital. Inset slits in the walls serve for ventilation. Folklore has it that hórreos go on walls at night.
Granaries, continued

Cultures ties between northern Portugal and the rest of the country have never been as strong as with the neighboring Spanish province of Galicia. Not surprisingly, hercules (see preceding pages) have their perfect counterpart in the Portugese esgigueiros. In the rural community of Linhas, where harvesting is a collective task, these granaries are the dominant feature. They have been placed in a privileged position to take advantage of the winds (for ventilation) and to facilitate transferring the grain to the castle in case of invasion.

Below: A view of the granaries from the castle. The land on which they stand consists of natural granite terraces that serve as threshing floors.
Small-capacity granaries

The miniature silos are from Yennengaou (above), Korhogo (at right), and Diebougou (far right), on the upper reaches of the Volta River (Ivory Coast), about 400 miles from the sea. The fourth picture (opposite page, top) shows a Sudanese type.

While the leggy substructures of the Iborun stone granaries may have given rise to the popular belief in their mighty escapades, the potbellied type among these African storehouses suggests nothing so much as a propensity for dancing. Their anthropomorphically shaped character is underscored by such decorations as the human face (above).
Storage towers

The granaries of the Dogon people (see 40, 41) in what was once the French Sudan are hardly less monumental than those of Galicia or Libya. Both the square towers (above) in Bandiagara, and the slanted ones (opposite) near Mopti, take advantage of rocky overhangs.
Storage fortress

Whereas in Lindsey (see 93, 94) the individual granaries are located for safety's sake next to the castle, in Lhaya Cabao the storehouses themselves form a fortress. The steps leading to the upper floors are related, esthetically, to that singular feature of the American vernacular, the fire escape.
Fertiliser plants

In the Western world, pigeons take their place somewhere among such pests as houseflies or chiggers; whether nuisance or menace, most people look forward to their extinction. Not so in Eastern countries, where pigeonry is held in the highest esteem. The birds' droppings are collected in special towers that work on the principle of a piggy bank. When filled, they are smashed and their precious contents put to use.

Opposite, a battery of pigeon towers at Lindjan near Isfahan.
Above and right, pigeons in the Nile Valley.
Engineering without engineers

Some of the contraptions of primitive technology may earn the contempt of today's engineers, yet their charm cannot be matched by modern machines. This timeless Syrian waterwheel lifts water from the Oumes River into aqueducts for the houses and gardens of Hama. The wheel is 66 feet wide and does double duty as a gigantic mobile—a combination of Ferris wheel and diving board—for Hama's privileged youth.
Pile dwellings

Pile dwellings held a special fascination for the founding fathers of modern architecture who adopted them as architecture à pilotes. Yet they have never been adopted for practical purposes.

Primitive builders, being more realistic, have long been living in the safety of their pen-houses. Examples from three countries illustrate applications of elevated platforms. The simplest kind are fishing stations, such as at Vico, Italy (opposite top), and Stanleyville, Congo (opposite bottom).

Top: The entire Chinese village of Ho Keau in Yunnan province is built on stilts, above high water level. Bottom: A tree-house in the village of Bopy, located on Mount Clarence in New Guinea.
Skeletal architecture

"Upon the mountain slopes steep by the lake, stand the rows of naked pillars rising out of the green foliage like ribs of temples white, square pillars of masonry, standing forlorn in their colonnades and squares... as if they remained from some great race that once worshipped here." Characteristically, a poet, not an architect, discovered the charms of this exotic architecture. Around 1912, D. H. Lawrence lived on Lake Garda, and there wrote his essay The Lemon Gardens.

The lemonate form terraced labyrinths, enclosed by high stone walls and guarded by ferocious dogs. During the winter months, the lemon trees, some of which have been bearing fruit for 150 years, are protected from cold and snow by roofs of wooden boards, while glass panels are inserted between the 40-foot-high columns. The photographs, taken in summer, show the rustic conservatories stripped of roofs and walls.
The air-conditioners of Hyderabad Sind

These unusual rooftops are a prominent feature of the lower Sind district in West Pakistan. From April to June, temperatures range above 100°F, lowered by an afternoon breeze to a pleasant 85°. To channel the wind into every building, "bad-ga," wind scoops, are installed on the roofs, one to each room. Since the wind always blows from the same direction, the position of the wind scoops is permanently fixed. In multistoried houses they reach all the way down, doubling as intramural telephones. Although the origin of this contraption is unknown, it has been in use for at least five hundred years.
Colonial architecture

Among abstract architecture, some of the most impressive examples used in Jaipur, India. They are gigantic, astronomical instruments built in the eighteenth century to the plans of Maharajah Sawai Jai Singh II. Their purpose was to achieve greater accuracy of astronomical data than that available from portable brass instruments. Since they never lived up to expectations, they represent that rare instance of pure, or nearly pure, architecture of a functionless kind.

The photographs at left and right show the "supreme instrument," Samrat Yantra, and a dozen similar, smaller structures.

At right, one of several hundred small-scale observatories in the Portuguese fishing town Olhão. They are the local equivalent of our widows' walks.
Symbolic memorial

Only in our time are towers built for profit and curiosity. In the past their significance was mainly symbolic. Apart from the functional defensive tower, they usually expressed religious sentiments—faith, hope, grief, and the like. Spires, minarets, and pagodas were, or are, essential parts of buildings intended for launching prayers; only the notorious Tower of Babel spelled, unaccountably, blasphemy.

From left to right: The Tower of Samarra in Iraq, built eleven centuries ago. The 146-foot monument has to be made without benefit of railings.

The thirteenth-century towering tomb of Shab Shihab al Din 'Umar al-Suhawardi at Baghdad.

Ardmore Tower in Waterford County, Ireland.
Unadorned castles

The founding fathers of modern architecture took more than one cue from Spanish castles. Functional, austere, and remarkably free of confectionery chateau-style detail, the volumes of these fortifications are composed mainly of cubic and cylindrical forms.

Above, Monzalegre in the province of Valladolid. Opposite page, top, Villarejo de Salvanos, near Madrid. Bottom, a primitive type of fort in Swat Valley, on the North-West Frontier of west Pakistan.
Grass structures

Indigenous building methods often show great daring and elegance. The soaring framework (left) for a men's clubhouse at Matupit, in the Gulf of New Guinea, is made of bamboo poles and will be covered with thatch. (Bamboo is not a tree but a grass that may attain a height of eighty feet. For another imaginative bamboo structure see 158.)

At right, two working stages and the final result of a construction method used in southern Iraq. The building material is giant reed (fragmites communis) that grows along the lower Tigris and Euphrates, where it attains a height of twenty feet. It is bound into fascines, stuck into the ground and bent into parabolic arches. Mats woven from split reeds serve for roofing. The interior is bare of furniture; carpets and a hearth for brewing coffee are the sole fixtures.
Wood in vernacular architecture

Log cabins are not the only architecture that one can make with unsawn tree trunks. In the two examples shown, this material achieves monumentality, tempered by elegance. Below, a row of torii flanking the approach to the Inari Shrine in Kyoto. A torii is a kind of square arch, accessory to shinto shrines; its origin is unknown.

Opposite: This interior, reminiscent of Piranesi’s fantasies, consists of chortings in the eleventh-century salt mine at Wieliczka in Poland. This underground labyrinth extends over sixty miles and reaches a depth of 900 feet. The seven levels, one below the other, are connected by flights of steps.
Enclosures

Garden walls, hedges and fences are locked upon with suspicion by people who are allergic to privacy. Such screens of evergreen trees have always been indispensable requisites of civilized architecture. The perpendicular view of Logone-Beri (Cameroon) at left reveals such an abundance of enclosed outdoor spaces as to make the roofing-over buildings seem almost accidental.

The partial enclosures at right are windbreaks in Shimane Prefecture in Western Japan. To achieve solid buffers against winter winds and snowstorms, the farmers coax pine trees into thick, L-shaped hedges about fifty feet high. In some parts of Northern Japan, straw screens of similar height are put up during the winter months around houses and, sometimes, around entire villages.
Rural architecture

The aerial view of this village of Zambian herdsmen recalls the mycological phenomenon called witches' rings, where certain mushrooms grow in perfect circles. Here, a thousand thatched huts form a circle around the chief's enclave, composed of huts for his many wives. The largest hut belongs to his favorite wife, while he lives in a foreign-style, flat-roofed wooden box. The hundred-old pens accommodate 5000 cattle.

Opposite page, a segment of the ring shown at right.
Woven palaces

In civilizations less ponderous than ours, enclosures made from woven matting are considered fit for kings. The freeform walls (above) screen the royal court of Lealui in Zambia, the former Northern Rhodesia.

Opposite, a house in the royal quarter of Bakulu (Congo).

At right, a detail of the Palace of Justice at Afoa Bay in the Solomon Islands.
Movable architecture

Many so-called primitive peoples deplore our habit of moving (with all our belongings) from one house, or apartment, to another. Moreover, the thought of having to live in rooms that have been inhabited by strangers seems to them as humiliating as buying second-hand old clothes for one's wardrobe. When they move, they prefer to build new houses or to take their old ones along.

Moving day in Guinea (above), and in Vietnam (opposite below). At left, two donkeys carrying structural elements, to be assembled into huts. Kandi, Lesotho, South Africa.

Sometimes the borderline between clothes and habitation becomes blurred, as between a raincoat and a pap tent. Empty baskets (opposite top) may double as cover against the elements, portable rocks become umbrellas, and vice versa. Cherrapunji, India.
Vegetal roofs

In a genial climate, buildings often consist of little more than a roof that acts as parasol and parapet.

"We first spread a parasol to throw shadow on the earth," writes the Japanese novelist Tanizaki, "and in the shadow we put together a house." From the wealth of roofs made of vegetable matter, the three shown here are technically impeccable. The flaky covering of the Kuki hut (left) is as much a triumph of indigenous architecture as the heavy thatched roof from the Sudan (below). The roof with eaves reaching to the ground (right) is characteristic of the vernacular of some valleys in the northern provinces of Japan. Compared to some industrial roofing materials, thatch is everlasting (not to mention its being a superb insulation against heat and cold), but good roofers are hard to come by these days. Many old Japanese farmhouses which formerly blended into their natural surroundings today advertise their presence by shiny new tin roofs.
The primeval vault

The vaulted roof is often found in the neighborhood of troglodyte dwellings, yet their exact relationship has never been properly established. The Theraean house, illustrated here, is the earliest type. The standardized dwelling unit consists of a rectangular cell with barrel vault, on which another identical unit is often superimposed. The photograph at right clearly shows the transition from cliff-dwelling to half-dug and, eventually, to free-standing houses. Some houses have a flat roof added for drying fruit and vegetables (see also I). Specimens of the vaulted cell-house are not confined to the Aegean Sea but are also found along the Tyrrhenian.
Sail vaults

We usually judge enclosed space in terms of construction cost or rental fee; its sensual effect rarely makes itself felt except in a swathing for "high ceilings," regardless of a room's proportion. But at least this hints at the important role played by the lid of every architectural container. Vaulted ceilings, especially, seem to impart a sense of comfort.

In Iran, where vaulting is almost synonymous with building, a towncape seen from above clearly discloses the inner organisation of every building. At Lashian (below), homes of God, homes of men, even streets, are covered with voluptuously undulating roofs. The row of cupolas stretching diagonally across the picture covers a bazaar street.

Both, the caravanarad (above) and the teahouse (below) stand in the town of Quan, near Teheran. Their walls are of stone rubble, the vaults and arches of mud brick. The nine bays of the teahouse are covered by five domical vaults and four segmented vaults, resting on four piers and the peripheral walls. The vaults of the 27-bay caravanarad, flanked by ramping segmented vaults, have 4-pier internal supports for maximum elasticity. Swelled, as it were, like a sail in the wind, this type of vault is indeed referred to as a cola, a sail vault.
Mason versus architect

"Give a mason bricks and mortar," writes Jamshid Koosha, an M.I.T.-educated Persian architect, "and tell him to cover a space and let in light, and the results are astounding. The mason, within his limitations, finds surprising possibilities, there is variety and harmony; while the modern architect with all the materials and structural systems available to him produces monotony and dissonance, and that in great abundance."
Vernacular virtuosity

Truly magical effects are often achieved with modest means. At left, a Japanese arbor composed of bamboo poles and climbers. Below, the cupola of a Turkish bathhouse—a whirlpool of bright stars, arrested, as it were, in its movement. The luminous disks embedded in the dome are thick, lenslike glass blocks.

Izmir, Turkey. Ottoman period.
Caryatids, plain and polychrome
This rapid review of non-pedigreed architecture, concerned as it is mainly with its broader manifestations, cannot be expected to touch on the delights hidden under its roofs. These two pictures, therefore, merely hint at the intimate architectural aspects. The anthropomorphic pillars at left support the roof of the palace at Kete (Dahomey), the one at right stands in a communal rest house of the Dagur (Nedj). Less distant perhaps and less ladylike than the Kour of the Ewe people, they are linked to modern Western art. Museum pieces in our eyes, they represent rather common fare in some superbly underdeveloped countries.