

Continuity of Place-Identity: Identifying Regional Components of Kerala Architecture through 1805-1950

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Abstract : Man has the need to know and feel as a part of the historical continuum and it is this continuum that reinforces his identity. Architecture and the built environment contribute to this identity as established by the various identity theories exploring the relationship between the two. Architecture which is organic has been successful in maintaining a continuum of identity until the advent of globalization when the world saw a drastic shift to architecture of 'placelessness'. The answer to the perfect synthesis of 'universalization' and 'regionalism' is an ongoing quest. However, history has established a smooth transition from vernacular to colonial to modern unlike the architecture of today. The traditional Kerala architecture has evolved from the tropical climate, geography, local needs, materials, skills and foreign influences. It is unique in contrast to the architecture of the neighboring states as a result of the geographical barriers however influenced by the architecture of the Orient due to trade relations. Through 1805 to 1950, the European influence on the architecture of Kerala resulted in the emergence of the colonial style which managed to establish a continuum of the traditional architecture. The paper focuses on the identification of the components of architecture that established the continuity of place-identity in the architecture of Kerala and examines the transition from the traditional Kerala architecture to colonial architecture during the colonial period. Visual surveys based on the principles of urban design, cognitive mapping, typology analysis followed by the strong understanding of the morphological and built environment along with the matrix method are the research tools used. The understanding of these components of continuity can be useful in creating buildings which people can relate to in the present day. South-Asia shares the history of colonialism and the understanding of these components can pave the way for further research on how to establish a regional identity in the era of globalization.

Keywords : colonial, identity, place, regional

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