

## EGYPT'S VERNACULAR ARCHITECTURE, FROM RURAL SETTLEMENT TO EXOTIC RESORTS

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For millennia the Nubians of Upper Egypt faced harsh climatic conditions and scarcity of building materials. Yet they succeeded in building their shelters by using mud bricks to build thick walls, arches, domes and vaults. Nubian vernacular architecture, with its aesthetics and functionality was not discovered and appreciated until the late Egyptian Architect Hassan Fathy had started to study their settlements, architectural elements and building techniques in 1946. Since then Fathy has incorporated the traditional mud brick vaults and domes in his designs. His work is considered to be a revival in Traditional Architecture, and he became known for his theory of "Construction for the poor".

Unfortunately most of his theories were neglected, and what attracted a number of architects was the use of traditional architectural elements. This led to the emergence of what can be called "Hassan Fathy Style", a style that has been applied tremendously in the past three decades to create luxurious resorts on the Red Sea shores. Such appropriation was encouraged by investors and developers to create an attractive and exotic built environment, one that fulfills the dreams of tourists who come to the region to enjoy the sea, sun plus an extra piece of cultural heritage.

The aim of this paper is to trace the evolution

and revival of a type of Egyptian Vernacular architecture, and how it is transplanted in a new environmental, cultural and social context. The failure or success of this trend needs to be assessed, as it can either be a step on creating Neo vernacular architecture or just an abuse of Egypt's cultural and architectural heritage.

*Keywords:*

*Vernacular Architecture, Hassan Fathy, Egypt, Tourism.*