ABSTRACT

From the literature and built works of the last decade on Tropical Architecture in Southeast Asia, there are two broad categories that Tropical Architecture tends towards:

1) A progressive rationalist approach that emphasise on values like efficiency, economy, ease of construction, energy considerations, appropriate climatic responses and so on, and

2) A more romantic approach that seeks to give cultural, psychological, emotional, experiential, sensual and other transcendental content to the architecture.

This phenomenon is but a manifestation of the traditional division that arose from scientism since the Renaissance, and the reaction from those who value the transcendental aspects of existence.

Till this day, it seems that there has not been substantial writing or built examples that talk about or demonstrate a satisfactory reconciliation between the two apparently irreconcilable approaches in Tropical Architecture in Southeast Asia. Are the two approaches mutually exclusive? Must the fate of architecture continue in this rivalry so that our landscape carries on to exhibit the stark juxtaposition of traditional and new built-forms? Where does one begin when discussing such differences?

To arrive at any meaningful level of discussion of the phenomenon of division in architecture identified above, this dissertation sets up a discourse on the relevant historical development in the last few centuries that took place, and discusses the power of certain prevailing conditions that shaped the division of worldviews.
Critiques and arguments will be surfaced from this discourse and used to examine the prevalent issues of Tropical Architecture in Southeast Asia. By setting up this discourse from which arguments can be surfaced, the paper attempts to open up more avenues and perspectives in assessing the current issues of Tropical Architecture and raise the consciousness of the re-thinking of these issues.

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