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Race, Aesthetics, and Shelter: Toward a Postcolonial Historical Taxonomy of Buildings

ABSTRACT

This article proposes that one source of deep-rooted prejudices among peoples derives from their fundamental lifeways respectively as settled or peripatetic. Although the advantage in the present is clearly with settled, notably urban, peoples, that is no reason either to project an attitude of superiority into consideration of the past or to assume inherent superiority in the present. Building types characterize these fundamentally different lifeways, and settled peoples unthinkingly assume the superiority not only of their own building types but of a small subset thereof conceived as architecture, conceived as the work, principally, of the mind rather than the hand. This article proposes a fundamental historical taxonomy on grounds of function—the provision of shelter—of buildings of all types employed by both settled and peripatetic peoples, from tents to temples. Although the antagonism between settled and peripatetic peoples, based on different conceptions of the land, rests on their fundamental differences in lifeways, including building practices, those differences are often entangled with racial considerations.

I like best the bread which I have baked—the garment which I have made—the shelter which I have constructed—the fuel which I have gathered.

—Henry David Thoreau, *Journal*, October 20, 1855

I. FORMS OF PREJUDICE

Food, clothing, shelter, and fuel are among the most fundamental human needs. Henry David Thoreau is far from alone in valuing above all others those versions over which he exercises control. Many human communities do the same. My focus here is Thoreau's third human need: shelter. Contemporary hegemonic societies place a particularly high value on forms of shelter (and other forms of building) that they describe as *architecture*, even though architecture is a tiny fraction of the built environment. In their accounts of building as a human activity, aestheticians and philosophers of art from hegemonic societies, no less than architectural and even cultural historians, generally ignore most of the structures humans create. (By hegemonic societies, I refer to those societies and strata of societies that enjoy advantages of power, status, and command of resources in contradistinction to, and often at the expense of, other societies and strata of societies.) Is there a justification for this exclusion? Is the emphasis on the tiny proportion of human-made structures described as *architecture* a matter, in the first instance, of racial prejudice? Or is the mutual antagonism between those who value not only architecture but long-term building generally and those who use temporary or movable structures even more fundamental than racial prejudice? This article proposes that a sketch of a historical taxonomy of shelter types can be the first step in analyzing a set of circumstances in which the values of sedentary peoples overwhelm and obscure those of others. It also argues that the contempt of sedentary peoples for others, whether explicit or implicit, is as fundamental a form of human group antagonism, as is that of members of one race for another.

If architecture and urbanism go together, it would seem that discrimination between architecture and other built things is not principally

a matter of racial prejudice because scholars in the greater European world now credit the Fertile Crescent of West Asia, the Indus Valley of northern India, the Yellow River valley of China, Mesoamerica, and the Peruvian littoral as the birthplaces of urban societies (Mann 2005, 196). Urban development followed the birth of agriculture and the growth of settlement during the so-called Neolithic Revolution, a term introduced by the archaeologist V. Gordon Childe (1935, 1936). All five of these regions are non-European and non-Western. The dominant European tradition, though, has placed Greek and then Roman urban settlement practice—the *polis* and its successors—at the heart of the development of civilization. Civilized urban settlement existed in the Mediterranean peoples' scheme of things in contradistinction to the supposed barbarism of nomadic peoples beyond their borders. From at least the time of Herodotus in the fifth century BC, the settled peoples of the Mediterranean regarded the nomadic Scythians of the western steppes of the Eurasian land mass as their "Other" par excellence.

Adherence to the values of settled peoples has long been a mark of civilization in the European dominated world. In consequence, apologists for various non-European and non-Western societies have claimed the social status deriving from urban development. Scholars anxious to promote the equal status of the peoples of sub-Saharan Africa have pointed out the Black African role in the growth of ancient Egyptian culture as well as the sophistication of sub-Saharan urban sites that include brick or stone buildings from the eleventh century onward, such as Djenné, Mapungubwe, and Great Zimbabwe in present-day Mali, South Africa, and Zimbabwe respectively (see, for the latter, Pikirayi 2001, 2016; Fontein 2006). Received opinion suggests that Europeans had to deny the capacity of Black Africans to develop urban societies in order, in part, to justify their racist projects of slavery and colonialism. Demonstrating that some Black Africans, at least, had created complex built structures from durable materials shows some apologists for Black African societies acquiescing in the European claim that the attainment of civilization is dependent on urban settlement. This assumption, nurtured by European archaeologists, anthropologists, geographers, and historians from at least the nineteenth century onward, remains dominant in Western—and not only

in Western—ideology. As a widely held, scarcely questioned assumption, the claim is part of Western orthodoxy.

The modern Western notion of social evolution describing progress from savagery (marked by the use of the bow, fire, and pottery) through barbarism (characterized by agriculture, the domestication of animals, and metalworking) to civilization (which alone employs writing) derives from the work of the American historian and anthropologist Lewis H. Morgan, whose *Ancient Society* was published in 1877. This work has colored much popular and academic thinking about human social organization ever since. Although many people may eschew explicit talk of social evolution, it nonetheless colors much thinking, both academic and popular, about the built environment. "Cities are birthplaces of civilization; centers of culture, trade, and progress; cauldrons of opportunity," states the web page for real estate developer Jonathan Rose's book, *The Well-Tempered City* (2016). "The Answer Is Urban" is the title of the Introduction. Harvard economist Edward Glaeser employed an ideological creed as the subtitle of his 2011 book *Triumph of the City: How Our Greatest Invention Makes Us Richer, Smarter, Greener, Healthier, and Happier*.

It is not my purpose to take issue with such claims regarding the potency of cities. Nor is it my purpose to argue in favor of other ways of life as either desirable or practicable now or in the foreseeable future for the majority of humankind on a planet with a population of over 7.6 billion people (Worldometers 2018). I simply want to draw attention to the long-sustained pervasive opinion that urbanism—indeed, settlement more generally—affords the best conditions for high civilization and is inherently superior to other ways of life. It seems to me to be gross prejudice to project such a belief in the inevitable superiority of the settled life backward in time and to assume that urban life—indeed, all forms of sedentary life—is and always has been inherently superior to other ways of life.

II.   THE NEED FOR A HISTORICAL TAXONOMY
OF BUILT STRUCTURES

The first step in a consideration of human-built structures must be to propose a basic historical taxonomy, appealing to fundamental formal

features of those structures in relation to their functions. My purpose here is to do no more than this. In pursuing this preliminary goal, I want to bear in mind certain basic questions: Can the histories, functions, and usages that serve to situate a consideration of material and formal characteristics of built things help inquirers to sort out distinctions among a wide variety of such things in all parts of the world throughout history? Are inquirers justified in excluding the majority of the structures people make from any account of building as a human activity, whether in terms of aesthetics or history? If not, what might the consequences for aesthetics, philosophy of art, art and architectural history, and cultural history be? What role does race play in this taxonomy, and how do considerations of race intersect with the habitus, or lifeways, of various groups?

Before sketching such a taxonomy, I should offer a word about terms. I use the term *building* (as a noun) in the broadest possible sense to encompass structures made by humans, rather than in the sense in which many sedentary people use it to denote fixity and permanence. Sedentary people tend to use different terms to distinguish implicitly between such fixed structures, which they think of as *built*, and temporary or moveable structures, which they think of as *set up* or *erected*. For reasons that I hope will become apparent, I shall not hold to this culturally contingent distinction.

I use the term *historical taxonomy* to distinguish a categorization that takes historical contingency and the inconveniences of particular instances into account at the expense of absolute order. This distinction opens the way for possible confusion, so it is worth elaborating briefly. In contrast to taxonomy in the field of biology, historical taxonomy does not aim for, much less produce, discrete taxa ordered into neat hierarchies. Historical taxonomy addresses the history, function, and use of structures and their materials, rather than formal features alone. Furthermore, it addresses contingent human uses and conceptions of things expressed in social conventions, rather than attempting to define an absolute order. An example of a historical taxonomy in conflict with a biological taxonomy is the 1818 New York law case, *Maurice v. Judd*. At odds were two conceptions of whales: are whales fish or mammals? The popular, biblically sanctioned view that whales are fish prevailed over the biological view that they are mammals. The jury found whale oil to be fish oil for government inspection purposes (Burnett 2007).

The distinctions I make are not so much dependent on materials, modes of construction, or duration in a given place as on function. My principal functional concern is shelter. Shelter is a common human need. Few peoples live without shelter, in the first instance from the elements, whether precipitation, wind, cold, or the heat of the sun. Shelter is almost as widespread a human need as sleep, food, and drink.

III.   LONG-TERM STRUCTURES FOR PURPOSES OTHER THAN SHELTER

Although much building is about the provision of shelter, it is important to recognize that some buildings articulate space for other purposes. For instance, there are processional ways in various parts of the world, such as the sixth-century BC route leading to the Ishtar Gate in Babylon. Walls do not necessarily support roofs. Humans also build walls to impede progress, such as the Ming dynasty era Great Wall of China, rebuilt and extended between the fourteenth and the sixteenth centuries. On a smaller scale, humans build walls or stockades designed to provide more local defense, such as settler forts throughout nineteenth-century northern and western North America. Walls might be said to provide a form of shelter—shelter for those behind them from the unwanted attentions of those who might seek to breach them, whether animal, human, or supernatural—but in speaking of shelter in this article, although this sense may be applicable, it is not foremost in my consideration. As well as enclosed structures sheltering those within from the elements, humans also make open-air structures. Among those built by peoples in the past are henges (circular or elliptical earthworks) in the British Isles; stone circles, predominantly in Europe and West Asia; stone pyramids in Mesoamerica; and stone platforms (*marae*, *malae*, *mala'e*, *me'ae*, *ahu*) in Oceania. The modern and contemporary world has seen the building of many examples of open-air structures, such as parade grounds. There is none more ubiquitous than the sports stadium.

Another kind of non-sheltering structure is designed to span obstacles, often water, as examples

of bridges from many parts of the world attest. They range from cordage pedestrian walkways in Tawantinsuyu (the former Inka empire in South America) to wooden ritual structures in East Asia to arched stone bridges on piers in the Roman world and its successor polities to steel constructions using girder or suspension technology in the contemporary world. People on foot, people on horseback, pack animals, vehicles drawn by draught animals, railroad trains, and motor vehicles all require appropriate bridges. Some timber-truss bridges have been built with their roadways fully sheltered in parts of China, Switzerland, and North America, but these shelters are intended to preserve the wooden structural parts, to prevent the accumulation of snow on the roadway, and to forestall shying by mounts and draught and pack animals rather than to shelter people crossing them from the elements.

Other forms of travel have occasioned the building of suitable structures, which may or may not incorporate sheltering elements, though shelter is rarely fundamental to their core functions. These include accommodations on shores and harbors for water-born travelers and goods, railroad stations from the nineteenth century, and airports, from the twentieth century onward. Humans also construct buildings for storage, beginning with agricultural products, and subsequently for manufactures of all kinds. Last in this far from comprehensive list of human buildings by purpose, there are built structures of many kinds for the disposal of the dead, from enormous stone monuments and mausolea, such as the pyramids at Giza, Egypt, and the tombs of Mughal India (the mid-seventeenth-century Taj Mahal, Agra, being the most famous) to the stone *dakhmas* (towers of silence) used for the aerial exposure of the dead by the Parsi in Mumbai, India and Karachi, Pakistan, and the wooden scaffolds for the dead of various North American Indigenous peoples. Other structures exist for the cremation of the dead, whether the burning ghats of India, among which those in Varanasi are best known, or the modern crematoria of western Europe and North America, where reformers advocated cremation from the 1870s onward. My concern, though, is with human-made structures that provide shelter for the living as their core purpose.

IV.   LONG-TERM STRUCTURES FOR SHELTER: ARCHITECTURE

The European tradition of thought about shelter is unusual in that a kind of shelter-making has grown up to which many within that tradition lend a particular kind of privilege under the heading *architecture*. Architecture can encompass non-sheltering structures, but sheltering ones predominate. Specialist, privileged practitioners are called *architects*, in contradistinction to builders or, from the nineteenth century onward, engineers.

Architects, who plan their building designs for others to execute, emerged as a distinct type in fifteenth-century Europe, looking back to the forms inherited from Greece and Rome in emulation of Vitruvius, the first-century BC author of the treatise, *De Architectura* (of which the first known printed edition was published in 1486; see Vitruvius 1999). These Renaissance building designers—architects—Leon Battista Alberti, Donato Bramante, and Filippo Brunelleschi prominent among them, claimed that aesthetic and intellectual components, notably mathematics, characterized their invention of shelters. Alberti set the precedent with *De re aedificatoria*, written between 1443 and 1452, which was the first book printed on architecture in 1485 (see Alberti 1988; Wittkower 1988). Alberti based architecture on mathematics. In the sixteenth century, this led to the claim that architecture was the highest visual art form, epitomized by the works of Michelangelo Buonarroti, most famously his staircase vestibule for the Laurentian Library, Florence, first designed in 1524, but not opened until 1571, and his design for the Piazza del Campidoglio and its surrounding palaces, Rome, from 1536 onward (see Ackerman 1986). On this account, architecture is an abstract rather than a practical pursuit, according privilege to the work of the mind, rather than the hands, expressed, in the first instance, in drawing. In the extended European world, architecture has been professionalized as an intellectual activity, with admission to the body of architects strictly controlled. This is a familiar story. What is not so familiar to those who live unquestioningly in the extended European world is that, in terms of the totality of human shelter-making, architecture is an aberration.

To describe a wide range of building practice as architecture, from the Parthenon in Athens, built

under the supervision of Phidias between 447 and 431 BC, to the expansions of the Clark Art Institute in Williamstown, Massachusetts, by Japanese architect Tadao Ando, built between 2001 and 2014 (an example chosen at random) is appropriate but limited in its address of human-made shelter. The designation *architecture* emphasizes the contribution of a privileged individual as someone who conceives and plans rather than executes. This designation also lends privilege to forms of shelter that impose upon the land in a heavy, long-term manner. Such an imposition is part of the way of life of *sedentary* peoples, as opposed to that of those who move regularly, whom I shall call *peripatetic* peoples. I acknowledge that anthropologists use the term *peripatetic* to describe that subset of nomadic peoples who offer goods and services to sedentary communities (see Casimir and Rao 1992; Berland and Rao 2004). I use *peripatetic* because the term *nomadic* (which I used above owing to its familiarity) carries a tinge of denigration. The temporary or movable shelters of peripatetic peoples lie lightly on the land.

Members of sedentary communities dominate both scholarly and popular discussion. Their assumptions shape descriptions and debate. They accord the status of civilization to themselves and to other sedentary peoples selectively but denigrate peripatetic peoples as undeveloped or primitive. In the sedentary peoples' scheme of things, urbanism, not movement, characterizes high civilization, and urbanism depends on building for the long term. In this schema, building for the long term produces many nonarchitectural buildings, but, as its superior achievement, it alone produces architecture.

Theorists, practitioners, and clients predominantly invest in architecture with high social status. Architects design buildings for those at or toward the top of a social hierarchy comprising political, corporate, or religious entities or wealthy and powerful individuals. Places of work where people lower on the social ladder predominate, such as factories, are usually not examples of architecture. Architectural historians usually ignore factories, even in authoritative surveys. For instance, the 948-page *Oxfordshire* volume of the *Buildings of England* (published in forty-six volumes between 1951 and 1974) by Jennifer Sherwood and Nikolaus Pevsner (1974), discusses thousands of buildings, giving architects' names wherever possible. Yet they make no mention of buildings that are

among the most prominent in Oxford: the Morris Motors factory and the adjacent Pressed Steel factory (both part of British Leyland at the time of the publication of *Oxfordshire*; now BMW Group Plant Oxford).

Factories acknowledged as architecture are rare exceptions. One is the Fagus shoe last factory in Alfeld, Germany, designed by Walter Gropius and Adolf Meyer and built between 1911 and 1913, with additions completed in 1925. Not only did Gropius and Meyer conceive of a complete façade for the first time in glass, leaving the corners open for glazing, but with great subtlety they placed the entire structure on a low plinth of deep red bricks to make it seem to float. They also gently inclined the brick piers between the window frames inward to subvert the appearance of pure verticals and horizontals (see Jaeggi 2000). In contradistinction to many industrial buildings, the Fagus Werk is a factory as architecture. But it derives this distinction not only from its physical characteristics, which are subtle, inventive, and extraordinary, but from the professional and social standing of its designers as architects.

Although often still associated with single creative figures, architecture is usually created by teams. For instance, even though the website of the practice founded in 1969 by Tadao Ando, the architect of the Clark Art Institute's expansions, Tadao Ando Architect and Associates, focuses relentlessly on Ando himself, he works with a number of associates and employees that fluctuates over time, comprising no more than about twenty (see Ando 2018). This is a small practice. Architecture is increasingly a multinational corporate activity. For instance, the American firm Gensler, responsible for the Shanghai Tower, the world's second tallest building, completed in 2015, employs more than 5,000 people in forty-six offices in sixteen countries (Gensler 2018). Gensler also played a role in the Clark Art Institute's expansions, the New York office serving as architect of record to implement Tadao Ando Architect and Associates' designs for the Clark Center, which opened in 2014.

Just as commentators today ascribe the work of architectural teams to those individuals who lead them, such as Tadao Ando, so they project the assumption that an individual, whether identified or not, must be responsible for any structure accorded the dignity of architecture from an earlier era or other culture regardless of how the structure

concerned might actually have been made. For example, with no evidence whatsoever beyond the structure itself, William MacDonald assumes that an individual architect must have been responsible for the Pantheon in Rome, built soon after 120 AD: "A thorough-going professional would have had to make drawings and models, calculate all the details of design and construction, and supervised the complicated, exacting work as it progressed" (MacDonald 1976, 12).

V. ARCHITECTURE: LONGEVITY AND OBSOLESCENCE

Those who subscribe to the idea that architecture is the most developed form of human building value the longevity of architectural structures, even if sustaining it entails the radical adaptation of a given building or the regular renewal of perishable parts. For instance, a significant part of the Clark Art Institute project entailed renovating and adapting two existing buildings: the original 1955 white marble Museum Building and the 1973 red granite building that houses administrative offices, research and academic programs, and the library, which was renamed the Manton Research Center. Its renovation was designed by Selldorf Architects, New York, led by Annabelle Selldorf. The Museum Building and the Manton Research Center at the Clark Art Institute are just two among many buildings worldwide that have changed over time. Such change can take many forms in various places for various purposes at various times. On occasion, a conversion can be a single major event, such as the adaptation of the Pantheon, Rome, built in the second century as a temple to the Roman gods and converted into a Christian church—the Basilica of St. Mary and the Martyrs—in about 609 AD (MacDonald 1976, 11–24). In other instances, a building can be subject to repeated renewal, sometimes in the self-same form. An example is the seventh-century Shintō shrine complex Ise Jingū, in Japan, rebuilt from new timber every twenty years (Bock 1974).

Even a long-term building that has succumbed to the elements or to the human propensity for destruction, outliving its original cultural circumstances, can retain cultural value in the eyes of sedentary peoples. The great pyramids at Giza, Egypt, and the Yuanming Yuan (Old Summer Palace) in Beijing, destroyed by a British and French punitive expedition in 1860, are examples of damaged edifices that retain cultural value even though that value is quite different from that which they had when first built. Even though it is not possible to identify all those responsible for the design of these long-term structures—the Italian Jesuit missionary Giuseppe Castiglione designed the Western Mansions of the Yuanming Yuan—they are canonical items in various sedentary peoples' schemas of world architecture (see Wong 2001).

One considerable change in sedentary building practice, including architectural practice, is the increasing incidence of expendability and even planned obsolescence. Architectural historian Daniel Abramson has pointed out the origins of the obsolescence of built structures in early twentieth-century America for real estate investment purposes. Tax deductibility for building depreciation was incorporated in the federal income tax code, introduced in 1909. The Department of the Treasury relied on the National Association of Building Owners and Managers to advise it on "reasonable rates." These were settled—to its members' own advantage—by 1930 (Abramson 2016, 20–37). Building obsolescence for purely economic reasons—owners could realize a greater profit by demolishing and rebuilding than by retaining a structure—led to a decreasing life span for buildings, especially commercial buildings, in American cities from the early twentieth century onward. One can view this phenomenon—far from limited to the United States from the twentieth century onward—as benefiting financially those who control real property by affording them repeated opportunities to commission architecture on the same site: a perverse form of permanence.

A prominent but by no means isolated example of obsolescence is the destruction in 1910 of the thirteen-year-old Gillender Building in New York, once the second tallest building in the world, to make way for a taller skyscraper (Abramson 2016, 1–2, 17). While many building owners and investors continue to claim a right to demolish obsolescent structures, a growing contemporary concern with adaptability and green sustainability has challenged their relentless pursuit of profit by this means. Sustainability is complemented by preservation regulations, whereby buildings deemed historically and aesthetically notable are identified for protection in perpetuity. This is the case with the Bankers Trust Company Building (now called

14 Wall Street), which in 1912 succeeded the Gillender Building on the same lower Manhattan site and which still stands, protected by historic landmark status conferred by the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission in 1997 (New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission 2018).

Whether demolished and replaced or sustainably renewed or protected, many such buildings are the work of architects, identifiable people accorded the status associated with their profession. The Gillender Building, for instance, completed in 1897, was designed by accredited architects, the partners Charles I. Berg and Edward H. Clark (Korom 2008, 219–221). They limited their profuse decoration to the three lower floors, but then reintroduced decorative elements higher up the building surmounted by an ornate drum and cupola. This was derived from the pair of subordinate domes after Michelangelo's original design for St. Peter's Basilica, Rome, built from 1564 onward. The Bankers Trust Company Building, which replaced the Gillender Building in 1912, was designed by architect partners Samuel Beck Parkman Trowbridge and Goodhue Livingston. They worked on this project in a neoclassical style, topping it with a version of the Mausoleum of Halicarnassus, one of the seven wonders of the ancient world (Dolkart and Postal 2009, 14). Formal analysis of architectural allusion reveals ambition: starting in 1913, the Bankers Trust Company adopted the mausoleum as its logo, advertised itself as the "Tower of Strength," and registered a rendering of the mausoleum as its trademark (The Skyscraper Museum, 2018).

VI.   LONG-TERM STRUCTURES FOR SHELTER: NON-ARCHITECTURE

I want to draw back from architecture in order to establish the desirability of contrasting, in the first place, architecture, in the sense outlined above, with fixed buildings to which no one accords the dignity of architecture. Then I propose to contrast fixed buildings, including architecture, with those temporary or moveable structures associated with peripatetic peoples. Only then will the contingent and extremely limited scope of architecture become apparent. I shall begin to discuss nonarchitectural structures by drawing some categorical distinctions among nonarchitectural structures.

There are numerous instances of long-term sedentary nonarchitectural structures. Nonarchitectural structures are buildings conceived by people other than architects. That they constitute by far the greater quotient of built structures in the settled world is obvious, but usually ignored. In many jurisdictions, the use of the term *architect* is strictly controlled and limited to those who have obtained state-recognized or state-granted licenses following professional examinations. Government boards or professional bodies regulate practice, investigate complaints, and discipline violators (see, for example, Commonwealth of Massachusetts 2018). Contractors of various kinds who can design and build structures for third parties are usually themselves licensed, though they are legally prohibited from using the title *architect* (see, for example, Construction Certification Institute 2018). Obviously, this state of affairs is contingent and does not inhibit later commentators from retrospectively attempting to dignify building designers who may not have had social recognition as architects (or some equivalent, if such existed) in their own societies from being described as such.

Structures designed and built by nonarchitects, including contractors, are sometimes termed *vernacular architecture* to lend them dignity. This designation covers a vast range within the built environment comprising by far the majority of long-term human-made structures. In the United States, the Vernacular Architecture Forum is dedicated to the "appreciation and study of ordinary buildings and landscapes" (Vernacular Architecture Forum 2018). The scope of vernacular architecture worldwide is huge. It includes, but is not limited to, a vast range of domestic dwellings from high-end to shanty towns; artisanal workshops; farm buildings; pioneer cabins; and industrial plants. Some are constructed for clients by qualified professionals (contractors) or by others who claim to have building skills. Some are well-built, others jerry-built. Yet others are built by their occupiers themselves and are often provisional, having been improvised by members of impoverished communities spurred by the ingenuity of desperation.

Another form of vernacular architecture is the creative adaptation of architecturally designed buildings for new purposes. For instance, a palace designed by an architect can be turned into an improvised apartment building. Tagore Castle was

built in 1896 in Kolkata, India, by Mackintosh Burn for its owner, the arts patron and philanthropist Maharaja Bahadur Sir Jatindramohan Tagore (see Banerjee 2017). It was designed with battlements, turrets, and a 100-foot-tall castellated tower and was reputedly meant to evoke Windsor Castle, the seat of Queen Victoria in England, who also reigned as empress of India. It began as an architectural edifice. Although still owned by a member of the Tagore family and the subject of a long-running legal dispute with the principal tenant, it is now occupied by several hundred informal tenants. Over recent decades, these occupants have divided the rooms, making their own modifications inside and out. The result is a radical change to the appearance of the building. Original features have degraded and been overlaid with improvised accretions so that the exterior now has an informal, haphazard appearance. Such a designation may appear to blur ideal taxonomic boundaries by evoking an apparent paradox: an architectural structure (in the narrow sense) modified so as to cease to be one. But when considering an issue such as shelter, the tidy, ideally stable taxonomy of the philosopher and biologist must give way to the messy and frequently blurred taxonomy of the historian. This historical imperative is not without philosophical sanction: Ian Hacking contends that "what is confused is sometimes more useful than what has been clarified" (1999, 29).

From an aesthetic standpoint, it seems important to note that vernacular, improvised, and informal buildings exhibit properties worthy of attention. These properties may differ from those of buildings accorded the status of architecture that are the result of detailed planning to produce structures of harmonious integrity. They frequently exhibit characteristics of the kind to which Yuriko Saito has drawn attention: informality, improvisation, and disunity that cannot be reduced to nor reconciled with the dominant aesthetics of architecture (Saito 2007, 2017).

Although it is impossible to draw a neat racial distinction between architects and vernacular builders, most architects occupy a position of professional privilege in all societies. So, too, do licensed contractors and other professionally recognized builders who work for clients, though most occupy a lower rung on the ladder of social privilege than architects. These are positions of relatively high status that architectural historians and other commentators can apply retrospectively to the actual and supposed builders of structures in order to validate them selectively. In contrast, the majority of—though far from all—building improvisers, usually creating or adapting structures for their own use, are relatively socially disadvantaged. Therefore, even while acknowledging *race* to be a social fantasy, however potent, it is hardly surprising that the world's majority of building improvisers inhabit polities where building regulation is relatively lax or unenforced. They are predominantly, though far from exclusively, South and Southeast Asian, African and African diasporic, or Latin.

All the sedentary building types examined above, whether formal architecture, vernacular architecture, or adaptations of the one to the other, depend on three factors common to all sedentary societies. The first concerns conceiving of land as real property over which a sovereign entity, tenant-in-chief, tenant, grantee, or proprietor exercises control in respect of occupation, heritability, assignment, or alienation. The second concerns conceiving of land as subject to regulation, whether observed or flouted, in terms of what can be built upon it and how such buildings might be used, including their modification or renewal. The third, closely related to the second, concerns conceiving of land, its produce, and buildings erected on it as subject to taxation by a governing authority and, consequently, subject to all applicable culturally specific means of registration and oversight.

VII.   SEDENTARY VERSUS PERIPATETIC PEOPLES

Peripatetic peoples conceive of land in quite different ways from sedentary peoples. They may acknowledge exclusive rights on the part of a clan or larger social unit to certain specific resources of a tract of land, while acknowledging the right of others to other resources on the same land. They may claim exclusive or partial use of a tract of land at one period of the year but not at others. They are unlikely to claim exclusive tenancy and occupation and the right to exploit all resources, subject to occupation or improvement, such as one finds among sedentary peoples.

These definitions still obtain if one acknowledges that all human use of land is about access to material and immaterial resources, whether water and food or the presence in particular places

of ancestors or sacred beings. Furthermore, the same is true if one recognizes that notions of territory and tenure concern, in the first instance, relations among people rather than the character of any given tract of land (Casimir and Rao 1992, 3–8; Ingold 1986, 130). Various communities conceive of those human relationships in different ways, expressed by different conceptions of land. Different conceptions of land use have caused innumerable disputes among peoples who adhere to their own particular conventions. These disputes have arisen between different communities of sedentary peoples no less than between communities of sedentary and peripatetic peoples. The most conspicuous mutual misconceptions of the last five centuries have occurred and continue to occur in the context of European expansion and colonial settlement throughout the Americas, Oceania, Africa, South and Southeast Asia, Australia, and the central and northeastern portion of the Eurasian land mass within successive Russian polities (see, for example, Cronon 2003; Banner 2007).

The key point to make before turning to the kinds of structures made and used by peripatetic peoples is that peripatetic and sedentary peoples often come into conflict when they encounter one another. Their respective interests over land are irreconcilable. The same land cannot be subject to settled agricultural or urban use and the needs of peripatetic hunter-gatherers or pastoralists simultaneously. In the past, some peripatetic peoples have seriously disrupted the lives of entire communities of sedentary peoples, sometimes over many centuries. For example, invasions and raids by successive peripatetic peoples of the western steppes of Eurasia into Russia, the Balkans and, at times, parts of western Europe, occurred regularly between the eighth century BC and the fifteenth century AD. The sedentary peoples of Han China were overwhelmed in the course of the thirteenth century by then predominantly peripatetic Mongols from the north and west.

The principal requirement of state formation is the imposition of taxation, initially on agricultural produce, to secure revenues reliably (see Scott 2009). This consideration takes precedence over the seductions of physical comfort that can be afforded by a built environment. The discipline that states seek to impose, rather than the pretended conveniences of long-term shelter, may be the principal reason that peripatetic peoples

have tended to adopt sedentary habits, gradually or peremptorily, as a result of contact, whether cordial or antagonistic, with sedentary peoples. Over the course of human history, the long-term advantage has been with sedentary peoples whose ways of life more readily permit the creation of complex social mechanisms leading to the sustenance of ever-increasing populations. In their encounters, sedentary peoples have usually attempted to convert peripatetic peoples to their own ways of life, if exclusion, expulsion, or extermination either fail or are not viable options. Yet peripatetic lifeways still exist, notably in parts of West Asia, South Asia, and Africa (see Berland and Rao 2004). In these places and others, they are under long-term and increasing threat. For instance, the 313 recognized "nomadic tribes" and 198 "denotified tribes" in India have continued to exist under a stigma of imputed criminality since at least the passage of the Criminal Tribes Act in 1871 and subsequent legislation. The act was repealed in 1949 (leading to the tribes listed in it being "denotified") but was succeeded by the Habitual Offenders Act of 1952 (see Simhadri 1979; D'Souza 2001). In 2007, the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination called on India to repeal the Habitual Offenders Act because the "so-called denotified and nomadic tribes ... continue to be stigmatized" (*Report of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination* 2007, 36, paragraph 169).

The antagonism of sedentary peoples toward peripatetic peoples can be extreme. One of the worst genocides of the twentieth century was committed by the Nazi regime of Germany against the Roma and Sinti. Estimates vary widely, but it is likely that at least twenty-five percent of the pre-1939 population of just under one million were murdered in the death camps and elsewhere (see Lewy 2000). This was the culmination of antagonism on the part of most of the sedentary population of western and central Europe toward the itinerant strangers who had first appeared there in the early fifteenth century, reportedly claiming to be pilgrims who had come from Egypt, although they were of Indian origin. Between 1420 and 1530 their status was reduced throughout western Europe from that of protected pilgrims to hated vagabonds (van Kappen 1965, 550). They were subject to legal and extra-legal persecution and remain so to this day. A major aim of most European states is to entice or to force Roma to

abandon their peripatetic way of life and adopt sedentary habits.

In the case of the Roma and Sinti in Europe, as in that of the so-called "nomadic" and "denotified" tribes of India, sedentary distrust of peripatetic peoples largely coincides with racial discrimination. It is tempting to see the former as more fundamental than the latter; that is, although not necessarily a consequence of distrust between settled and peripatetic communities, that distrust can give rise to racial antagonism. However, one should be cautious in the face of historical contingency. It seems quite likely that the various factors—racial antagonism, distrust between settled and peripatetic communities—can have different weights in different circumstances, so it is not possible to make a general claim about which of the two factors precedes the other when both are present. It seems likely, though, that in a case such as that of the Roma and Sinti in Europe, racial antagonism was a consequence of distrust between settled and peripatetic communities rather than as an originating cause of that distrust.

VIII.   SHORT-TERM STRUCTURES FOR SHELTER

With these dynamics no more than sketched, I turn to the built structures of peripatetic peoples. The first type to be distinguished comprises those that are repeatable, made from new materials in each new place. On arrival, builders gather appropriate materials from the immediate surroundings and construct a shelter that they leave behind when they depart. It may remain intact or reparable for repeat visits, or it may disintegrate relatively swiftly. Such structures are or were found among the Sámi of northern Scandinavia and northwest Russia, the Afar of Ethiopia, and various Aboriginal Australian communities, among many others. Second, some peripatetic peoples make repeatable structures wholly or in part from materials they carry with them for the purpose. They may use pack animals to carry made parts, such as textiles, exterior matting, prepared hides, and poles, that they integrate with locally found replaceable materials. Such structures are usually more elaborate than the first kind of peripatetic structure, being the result of considerable labor and investment of aesthetic care to produce the prepared parts. Such elaborate structures include Bedouin and Taureg tents, matting roofed shelters in the

Horn of Africa, Plains Indian lodges, central Asian yurts, and Roma tents. For instance, the European American traveler Francis Parkman Jr. gives a vivid account of witnessing in 1846 the preparation, transportation, erection, and disassembly of lodges by the Oglala Lakota in present day Nebraska and Wyoming (Parkman 1849, 240–241, 294, 297). Third, it is worth considering moveable structures that remain intact while on the move, thanks to technologies of transportation. These include houseboats of various kinds, such as those on lakes in Jammu and Kashmir, and horse- and automobile-drawn trailers, including Roma *vardos* (horse-drawn trailers) in Europe.

For added complication, it should be noted that sedentary peoples can, in some instances, move their buildings. In some parts of the world, some buildings that would seem to be rooted to the spot, often with basements and foundations, can be moved from one place to another. This is sometimes done to preserve historic houses threatened by new developments and at others simply to initiate a new settlement site.

IX.   CONCLUSION

We should now be in a better position to see how many distinctions in the characteristically European, sedentary, cultural schema serve to exclude entire categories of built things from aesthetic and historical consideration. We only understand a practice such as architecture in implicit contradistinction to other kinds of building practice often excluded from aesthetic and historical discussion. These excluded practices encompass the work of professional builders or of amateurs and improvisers within the sedentary schema as well as the work of peripatetic peoples against whose cultural practices sedentary peoples harbor a deep prejudice. That prejudice can coincide with, or prompt, racial discrimination but need not do so. Neither is racial discrimination clearly at the root of the frequently mutual antagonism of sedentary and peripatetic peoples whose respective interests in exploiting resources—principally those derived from the land—are often irreconcilable, although antagonism, whether one-sided or mutual, can find expression in racist language and actions.

It should be noted that a taxonomy of exclusion not only dominates the province of building—here

I have focused on shelter—but applies to many areas of human making. Just as in the case of architecture, so painting in the European manner within the art world functions as a category of practice in contradistinction to other forms of painting excluded from the art world: certain kinds of religious paintings, "mall" paintings, handmade copies of art paintings made to order in Asia, amateur work, and so on (see Gaskell 2019). Yet distinctions among types within different media of creativity most likely vary so that there is unlikely to be a shared "aesthetic template" to which all practices susceptible to aesthetic consideration, including building design and painting, conform.

Can formal properties help scholars to establish criteria of differentiation within all or any of these practices, including the conception and making of sheltering buildings? The consideration of formal properties in the study of architecture is certainly sophisticated. An example is the apprehension and appreciation of different builders' uses of the classical orders (see Onians 1988). Yet to confine attention to such matters is cripplingly limiting, even though the prospect of extending formal analysis to built things in any comprehensive sense is forbiddingly daunting. Consider, for instance, the classical orders defined by Vitruvius in Roman antiquity and Giacomo (or Jacopo) Barozzi da Vignola (whose *Regola delle cinque ordini d'architettura* was first published in 1562) as stylized means of providing or implying vertical support (see Vitruvius 1999; Vignola 1999). More expansive attention would relate them to other instances of the provision of vertical support in other societies. Yet by what criteria might we consider means of vertical support in relation to one another, such as the classical orders, Māori house posts from Aotearoa New Zealand, and Tuareg tent poles from the Sahara? As things stand, I am in no position to answer this or any other question of this kind. Rather, I propose that we begin by developing a postcolonial taxonomy of building based on function, use, and material specifics (which includes formal properties), all of which should be understood historically. Such a postcolonial taxonomy should take as many different kinds of building as possible into account—those of both sedentary and peripatetic peoples—without prejudice. In doing so, we might do well to bear in mind Henry David Thoreau's strictures about architecture and the construction of shelters more generally:

What of architectural beauty I now see, I know has gradually grown from within outward, out of the necessities and character of the indweller, who is the only builder,—out of some unconscious truthfulness, and nobleness, without ever a thought for the appearance; and whatever additional beauty of this kind is destined to be produced will be preceded by a like unconscious beauty of life. (1854, 52)

Such an approach recognizes the role of all who occupy buildings of whatever kind, from temple to tent, regardless of their lifeways, whether sedentary or peripatetic. In the absence of a comprehensive historical taxonomy of buildings that takes Thoreau's indwellers into account, we are condemned to repeat existing limited analyses that exclude vast swathes of human creativity found among all the ethnically varied peoples of the world. Such unreflective selective promotion of a minority of sedentary peoples through approval of their shelters and penalization of the majority of sedentary peoples as well as peripatetic peoples through disapprobation of theirs should have no place in our thinking.[1]

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