

EDITORIAL

The Asian School of Knowledge (ASK) is delighted to bring to you this issue of the ISVS e-journal Vol. 13 Issue 2 pursuant to the ISVS-14 in Vietnam in December 2025. This is while the world is in turmoil in the midst of a war between the West and the East. I am even more delighted to be writing this editorial living in Bahrain next to the American Base, around which Missiles and Drones are falling on a daily basis. In fact, they are falling around my apartment too. Nevertheless, life has to go on and the ISVS e-journal 13.02 is published as planned despite all odds including some terrorist acts in Indonesia against it.

This issue of the journal has nine papers in keeping with the scale-down approach it is following since the beginning of 2025. In the first paper, Rohan Chaturvedi presents how placemaking practices exist in the sacred landscapes in India and how understanding them will help the conservation of heritage there. He points out that sacred landscapes represent layered heritage where material structures, ritual practices, collective memory, and performative traditions together shape spatial identity. After examining these in Jeevant Braj, in India, he proposes a conceptual framework for heritage practices that could promote participation, ritual continuity and spatial storytelling, offering pathways for integrating contemporary interventions in order to sustain cultural resonance and community life.

In the second paper, Mahyar Hadighi et al. describe hybrid methodologies for documenting endangered wooden architecture, preserving knowledge and enabling continuity of traditions. This is a unique study, and it brings insights about these methodologies from a task accomplished in Indonesia, funded by the EVAW. They demonstrate that the hybrid methodology based largely on digitization reveal the coherence of Kamanasa vernacular architecture across structural, spatial, and symbolic dimensions. Digital scans, they argue, clarified the organizational logic of the "house-as-cosmos," while aerial imagery illuminated settlement orientation and ritual anchoring. Great insights indeed.

In contrast, Nguyen Hoai Vu takes us to Vietnam to demonstrate that vernacular values can be employed as a framework for contemporary architectural design. She proposes a framework that articulates the various levels of vernacular continuity: transformations: retained, evolved, and reinterpreted. It is a great conceptual framework to rethink the possibilities of employing vernacular for contemporary design.

Israa Mohammad et al. take us along the same path: digitization. They discuss the role of artificial intelligence in rejuvenating culture in local architecture bringing insights from Iraq. They point out that local Iraqi architecture designed by the architects as well as those generated by AI have similarities at the morphological level. They thus conclude that there exists a significant role in employing AI in rooting local architecture at the morphological level so that they can rejuvenate local culture.

Qurat-ul-Ain Rehman et al. on the other hand are interested in revitalizing cultural heritage in Pakistan. They examine the existing conditions of the Merewether tower there and how it can be revitalized in order to preserve its historical and cultural significance. They conclude that the revitalization of Merewether Tower is essential not only for the preservation of heritage but also for the cultural development of the locality.

Chindarat Malakul is not interested in preservation but observing the transformations taking place in her country. She examines the unique phenomenon of the emerging urban vernacular: the squatter settlements in Thailand and their transformations as Chumchons. She points out that the patterns of land tenure and housing tenure are similar in many of the sites which replace the Chumchons, and they resemble the previous patterns in the vernacular settlements.

In contrast, Zhengis Zhomart et al. are interested in the history of Kazakhstan. They examine the arrival and settlements of Islam in Central Asia and how the works of Western researchers depict them in literature. They conclude that Islam has attracted the attention of foreign researchers from the Middle Ages to the present day, but the importance of their work is not because they conducted field research, but because they mastered the Kazakh language by living among the people in the rural areas.

Leaving all this aside, Ajay Kumar et al. examine the Impact of tourism on the vernacular houses in Shimla, India. They conclude that planned interventions are needed to address this issue because the vernacular houses are changing fast in an undesirable direction.

Finally, Baghdad Saleh Al-Othman present the Influence of Islamic architectural elements on traditional and contemporary buildings in Bahrain. She argues that Islamic architectural elements remain highly relevant in Bahrain today, serving not only aesthetic purposes but also reinforcing community values.

Undeniably, these papers divulge the nuances of the manifestations of culture, traditions and the unique practices that exist in the human settlements bringing out insights hitherto not available. We are grateful to the authors for the insights shared. We look forward to their active contributions in the future too.

Dr. Ranjith Dayaratne
Editor-in-Chief