

Barriers and Wooden Partitions in Al-Hara'a Village (Alshubuh), Taif: An Analytical Study of the Functional and Aesthetic Values of Heritage Architectural Elements

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Abstract

Al-Hara'a Village in Taif, Saudi Arabia, exemplifies a distinguished model of vernacular architecture that has evolved organically over more than five centuries. Its spatial

organization, architectural typologies, and material palette collectively reflect a deeply rooted cultural identity shaped by local traditions, climate, and social norms. Among its defining features are the wooden barriers and partitions, which serve as integral components within both the structural and symbolic fabric of the built environment.

This research investigates the functional and aesthetic significance of these wooden architectural elements as expressions of local craftsmanship, environmental adaptation, and spatial hierarchy. The methodology combines empirical fieldwork, semi-structured interviews with master craftsmen and community elders, and comparative typological analysis drawn from architectural literature and regional precedents.

The findings reveal that native timber species such as Juniper (Arar) and Sidr were traditionally utilized through indigenous joinery methods that eschewed the use of metal fasteners, thereby preserving material harmony and resilience. These elements fulfilled multiple roles: as thermal buffers, privacy devices, and aesthetic markers tied to cultural identity. However, their survival is increasingly threatened by material degradation, urban transformations, and the lack of structured conservation frameworks.

The Paper concludes that a viable preservation strategy must incorporate an integrated approach, including:

1. Digital heritage documentation systems.
2. Community-based technical training.
3. Preventive maintenance protocols aligned with sustainable conservation principles.

This framework not only ensures the physical preservation of these architectural features, but also reinforces their symbolic and cultural continuity within the broader discourse of heritage management in rapidly evolving urban contexts.

Keywords

Vernacular Architecture, Wooden Partitions, Indigenous Building Techniques, Al-Hara'a Village, Architectural Heritage, Material Culture, Sustainable Conservation.

