

Ethnohistory as a research strategy for traditional architecture history: A systematic literature review

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
<p><i>Article history:</i> Received March 01, 2024 Received in revised form May 25, 2024 Accepted July 12, 2024 Available online August 01, 2024</p> <p><i>Keywords:</i> Ethnohistory History Research strategy Systematic literature review Traditional architecture</p> <p>*Corresponding author: Muhammar Khamdevi Architecture Doctoral Program, Faculty of Engineering, Universitas Katolik Parahyangan, Bandung, Indonesia Email: m.khamdevi@gmail.com ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2945-800X</p>	<p><i>The history of Indonesian traditional architecture has not yet addressed the history of architecture itself; instead, it has only addressed national and regional universal history as a backdrop or ancestry. Furthermore, the sources mainly relied on Western paradigm-adhering written documents and literature rather than empirical sources from a specific cultural community, particularly oral traditions. As a result, the significance of historical context for the evolution of Indonesian architecture has diminished somewhat. Indeed, anthropology, archaeology, and history have long used ethnohistory as a research methodology. Furthermore, traditional architecture has been mentioned in these studies. How does one go about researching the history of traditional architecture using ethnohistory? The objectives of this research are to identify research trends on this topic as well as to discover novelty as a new direction for future studies. This study employs a systematic literature review (SLR) method to descriptively analyze a big dataset and examine the content of primary data selected from publications between 2013 and 2023. It indicates how very promising the research trend is for architecture science. Furthermore, this study develops three research focuses, approaches, implications and constraints in light of the data gathered and examined.</i></p>

Introduction

Traditional architecture of many ethnicities in Indonesia has a long history, paralleling the growth and development of each ethnic group's culture. It continues to be an essential component of ethnic communities' lives that have experienced both continuity and change from the past to the present. As times change, this iconic local architecture will encounter new difficulties in the future. Anticipating constructive steps toward its sustainability is therefore essential. Understanding the knowledge and architectural journey contained therein requires a stance that is derived from studying architectural history. This is consistent with Prijotomo's (2008) claim that rather than focusing only on pseudo-modernism,

the history of Indonesian traditional architecture can help us understand Indonesian architecture by encouraging reflection on the past and applying lessons, motivation, and assessment to architecture in the present and future.

Every ethnic group has a unique architectural style. Within each ethnic group, there are differences in architecture. There are similarities and differences among ethnic groups. This variation may arise from geographic disparities, cultural shifts, or cross-cultural interactions. As complex and varied as Indonesia's people and culture are, so too is its traditional architecture. History, including acculturation, cultural diffusion, and human migration, can also be used to explain this diversity.

Traditional architecture has been the subject of numerous architectural studies for a long time. These studies primarily employed ethnographic techniques, but they also occasionally utilized case study techniques and phenomenological approaches. However, this is only a background or genealogy (periodization) and does not contribute to understanding the history of traditional architecture. Nevertheless, some search for its past.

According to [Sudradjat \(2017\)](#), there are many challenges in writing the history of Indonesian architecture, and new perspectives, epistemologies, and methodologies that offer dynamic and multifaceted explanations and knowledge are required. He also emphasized that colonial influences, ethnocentrism from prevailing ethnic groups, and political elite control should not be present in the history of Indonesian architecture. Local history should be studied first when studying history, not national or regional history. Moreover, [Salura \(2001\)](#) highlighted that architectural history is not a sequence of brief narrative events at each point in time (historicism), but rather a fact that is in the context of space and time in the context of examining or searching for the meaning of architectural history, including the architectural theories and methods that accompany it. In the proposed research, the position of history in architectural science is not simply a background or mere genealogy (periodization), but rather the most important thing in architectural science is the history (object) of architecture itself, which is interpreted - utilized and experienced - by the subject in the context of space and time.

In Indonesia, various local universities have long perceived the growth of architectural history courses specialized in Indonesian architecture, as opposed to global architectural history.

Teaching resources for monumental structures like ancient temples and mosques, which exhibit knowledge of their architectural history, are different from those for historic local house architecture in Indonesia. History can be provided as background information or ancestry, and occasionally it is not mentioned at all. Possibly out of insecurity, "history" is no longer included in many of these courses' titles.

Efforts to write history (historiography) have been made, one of which is phenomenal: [Djauhari Sumintardja's \(1978\)](#) "*Kopendium Sejarah Arsitektur: Jilid I*". In the chapter on traditional architecture, he attempts to present historical

information as a foundation for entering architectural studies. Similar information can be discovered in the book "*Indonesian Heritage Volume 6: Architecture*," written by [Gunawan Tjahjono, John Miksic, Julian Davison, and Goh Geok Yian \(1998\)](#). The majority of the image data in this book comes from the "*Sejarah dan Teori Arsitektur Klasik: Arsitektur Tradisional*" textbooks used in Universitas Indonesia's architectural study programs. The same is true of [Dhani Mutiari's book "Sejarah Arsitektur di Indonesia" \(2018\)](#). The 2009 book "*Sejarah Kebudayaan Indonesia: Arsitektur*" by [Mukhlis Paeni](#), on the other hand, makes an effort to communicate history through periodization or genealogy. The history provided in architectural studies, despite efforts to write it, is still history rather than architectural history.

Although "time" or "history" are believed to have never existed, anthropology has through to this point only examined the cultural diffusion and evolution of indigenous people from an ethnographic perspective. Even though they initially had a nominal interest in history, they never fully rebuilt a culture's past or relied on important historical documentary data, and they never studied history for its own sake. Anthropology does not include history, and historical document sources are frequently viewed as myths, which results in synchronic or ahistorical analysis ([Trigger 1982; Fogelson 1989; Krech 1991](#)). Indeed, according to [Evans-Pritchard](#), the notions of structure and function can only be validated in the context of history. Additionally, [Eggan](#) urges cautious comparisons of functional-structural systems in light of historical and geographic contexts ([Carmack 1973](#)).

In contrast, [Jan Vansina](#) was the first to establish the use of oral traditions in historical cultural studies, as a convincing source other than papers and artifacts, in reconstructing cultural history (ethnohistory) of cultural groups. For [Vansina](#), the oral narrative contains the truth about diffusion. Future research on acculturation, such as that conducted by [Immanuel Wallerstein](#) and [Eric Wolf](#) on the European example, emphasized this more and more. Furthermore, [Sahlin](#) argues that cultural institutions are perceived by outsiders and altered by their inhabitants, which is only possible through historical replication ([Trigger 1982; Fogelson 1989; Krech 1991](#)).

The use and analysis of empirical data, such as memories and experiences passed down from generation to generation, written traditions, artifacts, houses as artifacts, and researcher observations, can be accomplished with greater flexibility when using the ethnohistory strategy. A research method identified as ethnohistory provides use of historical, ethnographic, and even archaeological data. His historical approach goes beyond the conventional application of documents and manuscripts. Maps, music, art, photography, folklore, oral traditions, site research, archaeological materials, museum collections, surviving customs, language, and place names are just a few of the data sources that researchers can use (Axtell 1979). This research is frequently utilized when studying the history of ethnic or indigenous communities in America and Polynesia that may or may not still exist today as a result of colonization (Harkin 2010).

It is critical to research the history of Indonesian traditional architecture to provide a deeper understanding and development of architectural knowledge that can be applied to education, research, decision-making, and design practice in Indonesia. The examination of traditional architecture's history is crucial to the field of architecture, especially when it pertains to examining and expanding our understanding of the evolution and diversity of traditional architecture. Thus, the use of a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) approach to ethnohistory as a research strategy for traditional architectural history makes this study noteworthy and pertinent. This research project aims to examine the topic's trends and innovations in architectural science and related fields architectural science and related fields is the aim of this research project.

Methods

Research questions are addressed through the process of collecting, evaluating, and understanding any relevant study data (Kitchenham and Charters 2007). It employs strategies to compile secondary data, assess research critically, and combine qualitative or statistical findings (Armstrong et al. 2011). The objective is to present a comprehensive, methodical, transparent, and repeatable review of recent published and unpublished research

findings (Siddaway et al. 2019). Moreover, SLR decreases bias and increases objectivity in data (Egger et al. 2001). Research questions were developed specifically to keep the review focused. The following research questions are predicated on the subsequent research objectives: RQ1: What types of study focuses do scholars choose while researching the topic of ethnohistory as a research strategy for traditional architecture history? RQ2: What research approaches are employed to study the topic of ethnohistory as a research strategy for traditional architecture history? RQ3: What are the implications and limitations of researching the topic of ethnohistory as a research strategy for traditional architecture history?

High-level methodological detail is important to provide when describing systematic reviews. Consequently, this study utilizes the PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis) protocol approach (Haddaway 2022). The identification, screening, and inclusion phases comprise this process (see figure 1).

First step: Search strategy

Using the Publish or Perish (PoP) program, scientific literature was selected from the OpenAlex database for this study. Intending to create an extensive library of scholarship, OpenAlex is a free and public inventory of the global system of scholarly research. "Ethnohistory," "architecture" and "culture" as well as "*etnohistor*," "*arsitektur*" and "*budaya*" were the keywords in both Indonesian and English. The data utilized during the search was from 2013 to 2023. The final dataset was saved in *.csv and *.ris formats before being converted to *.xlsx format. The following tools were employed to assist with data identification, appraisal, and descriptive analysis: VOSviewer and Microsoft 365 Excel version 2212.

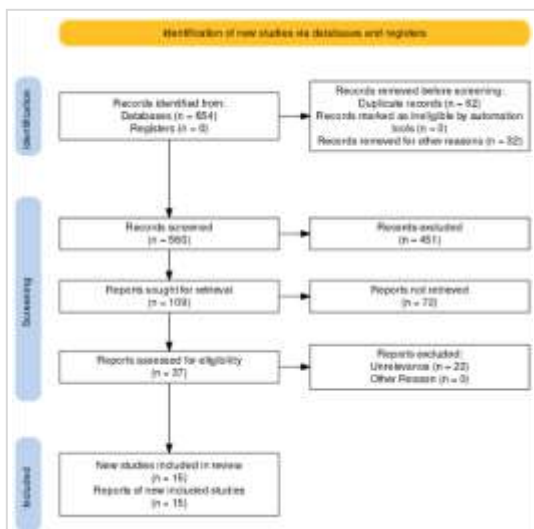


Figure 1. PRISMA flow diagram for primary study selection and search

Second step: Inclusion and exclusion

A dataset of 654 was obtained by conducting OpenAlex and PoP searches (648 in English and 6 in Indonesian). There were 62 duplicate data and 32 corrupted data required to be eliminated during pre-screening. That left 560 data to enter the screening stage.

Third step: Data extraction

Because 451 of the data had fewer than four citations, they were excluded from the initial screening. Then, 72 data were not used because they could not be accessed (they were not publicly available, nor could they be found on Academia or ResearchGate). Following an evaluation of the title and abstract, 22 published data from the subsequent screening were excluded due to their lack of architectural relevance. Ultimately, 15 primary data were included in the review after this screening process.

Fourth step: Descriptive and content analysis

After reading 15 primary publications through to the end, both content analysis and descriptive methods were applied to the analysis. The objective of descriptive analysis is to identify research patterns shown in tables and figures. To identify research novelty, content analysis is employed to ascertain the research focuses, methodologies, implications, and limitations of the articles.

Results and discussion

Descriptive analysis

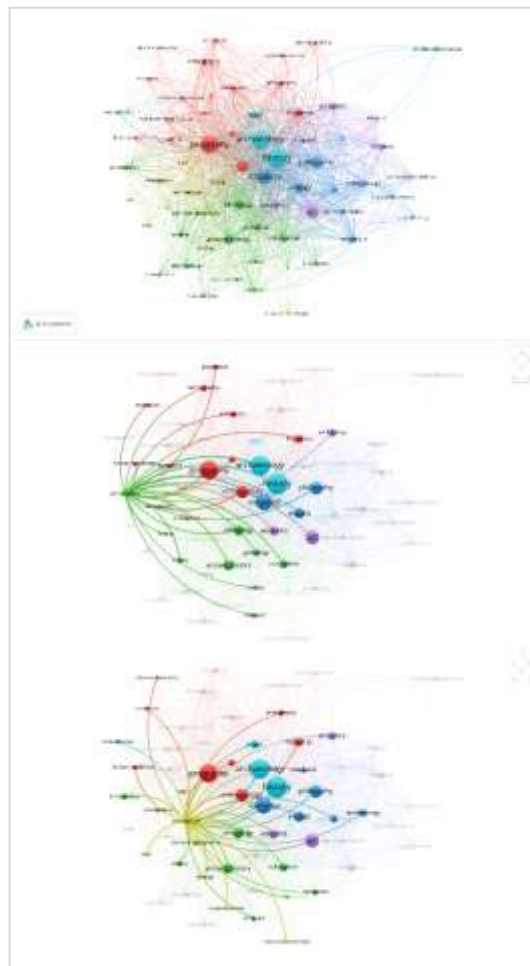


Figure 2. Keyword occurrences on topic in 2013-2023, overall relationship (top), relationship to ethnohistory (middle), and relationship to architecture (bottom)

The VOSviewer program is then used to process the search data that OpenAlex has gathered. Employing this processed data, a keyword search is conducted across all of the obtained publication data to identify the most frequently occurring terms. It is determined that each keyword must appear at least five times. Six clusters and 64 keywords were produced by this bibliometric analysis (figure 2). Additionally, this analysis demonstrates the correlation between the keyword's "architecture" in the yellow cluster and other keywords, and the keywords "ethnohistory" in the green cluster and other keywords. Furthermore, both keywords are connected. This

indicates that research on this subject employs an ethnohistorical approach to architectural studies.

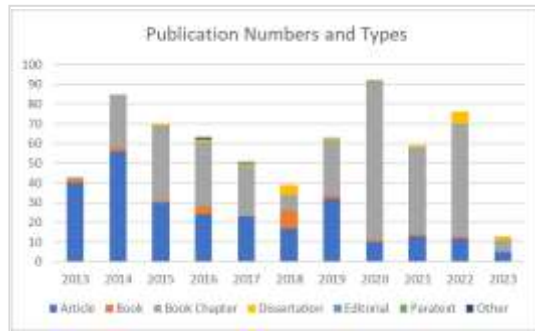


Figure 3. Publication numbers and types in 2013-2023

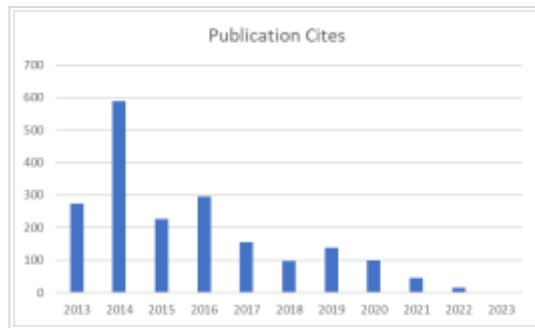


Figure 4. Publication cites in 2013-2023

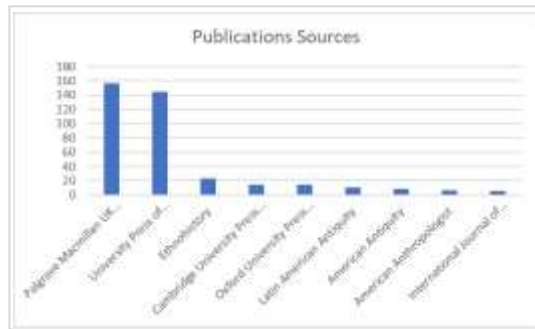


Figure 5. Publication sources in 2013-2023

Research on the history of traditional architecture utilizing ethnohistorical methodologies resulted in 654 publications between 2013 and 2023. There are several types of publications, including books, book chapters, journal articles, and others. With 92 publications, 2020 had the highest number of publications (refer to figure 2). This indicates that the research trend is highly consistent and will continue to grow. Nonetheless, 2023 has the fewest publications overall. 1935 citations were produced by these 654 publications. The year with the most citations was 2014. The citation trend

has, however, sharply declined since then (figure 3). The most active publisher is Palgrave Macmillan UK eBooks, which released 156 books between 2013 and 2023. It is followed by the University Press of Colorado eBooks, which has 145 titles. Publication sources that are acknowledged for using ethnohistorical methods like the International Journal of Historical Archeology and Ethnohistory rank substantially lower than the first two sources. (see figure 4). Overall, the research trend in the publications indicates that this topic remains in demand.

Research focuses

The 15 primary publications are dominated by scientific backgrounds in anthropology, archeology, and history. This ethnohistory strategy appears to be foreign to architecture science, especially traditional architecture history. However, research has already been conducted using architectural artifacts. From these publications, three research areas have been identified.

Historicity or memory studies on traditional architecture

This research focuses more on the state of knowledge of ethnohistory strategy in anthropology, archeology, and history science, which has a connection with architectural science, particularly the study of the history of traditional architecture.

Stewart (2016) conversed about the significance of historicity in anthropology, how societies and individuals deal with it, and how it relates to memory, temporality, and social change. The importance of considering historical context in research and analysis was emphasized. This concept is opposed to the meaning of the term “factuality” in the general field of history, particularly in the Western paradigm. Based on temporality, historicity provides a nonlinear way to examine the history of other cultures. Van Dyke (2019), on the other hand, investigated the connection between social memory and archaeology, emphasizing how objects, customs, and rituals shape social identities across time. He employed theoretical and anthropological methods to demonstrate how social memory is multifaceted and how archaeology can benefit from it. Contrarily, Guiliano and Heitman (2019) examined the challenges related to handling indigenous data, highlighting the deficiencies of colonial data collection methods and the demand

for a more complex comprehension of translation as a cultural process.

This is relevant to the study of traditional architectural history in architecture science. As a form of material culture, traditional architecture has the power to preserve cultural values and send social messages. An ethnohistorical perspective on traditional architecture allows us to comprehend its relationship to identity and social memory. Interacting with indigenous communities can be difficult, which emphasizes how important it is to understand their practices and epistemologies when handling their data.

Human migration, cultural diffusion, colonization, and traditional architecture history

Dixon (2014) focused on issues including colonization, migration, landscape modification, and industrial capitalism in his discussion of historical archaeology in the American West. He demonstrated how historical and modern events shaped the region's topography, population, and culture by drawing on a wide range of sources. Piezonka et al. (2019) used ethnoarchaeological research to examine the subsistence methods of the Selkup people of Siberia, with a particular emphasis on the effects of migration on life. The changes and continuity that occurred in rural Cuzco during the Inka colonial encounters were examined by Quave et al. (2019).

Although not all of them discussed architecture explicitly, some of their discussions may be important to studying traditional architectural history in architecture science. The topics of human migration, cultural diffusion, and colonization are inextricably linked to the transformation of traditional architecture. Certainly, cultural transformation and change impact traditional architecture and its diversity.

Traditional Architecture as a Historical Artifact

Several studies examined architectural artifacts from the ancient and classical periods. Covey (2015) focused on family rituals and institutional organization while studying the architecture and artifacts of the Inca Empire. It examined colonial chronicles, archeological findings, and oral traditions to demonstrate how Cuzco's political power was concentrated. De Souza et al. (2016) examine how funeral monuments developed in South America during times of rapid sociopolitical change, emphasizing identity negotiation and resistance a pattern that has been observed all over the world. Cecil and

Pugh (2018) explore the concept of "soul" in Postclassic Maya culture and its connections to ancestor worship, ritual specialists' legitimacy, buildings of worship, and mana transfer. Santillo (2021) examined the functions and significance of the tholoi buildings, which are the monumental structures of Mycenae, concentrating on their intended audience and propaganda value.

Colonial era architectural artifacts were the subject of other investigations. According to Arnould et al. (2013), marital preparation may have had an impact on co-residence patterns in multi-room homes in the Río Bec region of Mexico. Cohen (2014) focused on the hybrid identities of Ottoman Jews and examined how Orientalist aesthetics affected their social and cultural identities in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Voss (2015) emphasizes Chinese migration and colonization in the nineteenth century as she examines how transpacific interactions have shaped North America over the last five centuries. It highlights the exclusion of significant transpacific connections and the division among academics studying Chinese colonies abroad. Marić's (2016) study on the Society Islands in the 18th century combines archaeological data, ethnohistorical sources, and toponymy to reconstruct territorial spaces, social classes, and temple design, leading to a deeper understanding. Murawski (2018) investigated the triumphs and failures of socialist economies, the impact of post-socialist cultures on urban property communication, aesthetics, and architecture, and the impact of state socialism on former Eastern Bloc countries.

Studies have examined the architectural design and construction methods of the buildings to determine their cultural and social identity-marking significance. Some talked about how elites or power are represented in architecture and design. Some examined the connection between kinship customs and the structure of the institution, assessing the remains through historical narratives and oral histories. Some concentrated on the idea and architectural manifestations of culture. These studies have considerably to contribute with the history of traditional architecture.

Research methodologies

In the articles collected, scholars mostly employ a combination of ethnographic and historical data, which is evaluated using ethnohistorical methodologies tailored to their

unique research and scientific objectives (exploratory, descriptive, and explanatory).

Arnauld et al. (2013) investigated into developments using descriptive analysis of architectural attributes on architectural documents. Dixon (2014) studied a variety of sources in-depth, such as historical records, archeological investigations, and cultural analyses. Historical transdisciplinary analysis was employed by Cohen (2014) on a range of sources, including literary works, memoirs, newspapers, and archival documents. Oral history, ethnography, archaeology, public history, and archives were all employed by Voss (2015). Material evidence was interpreted and archaeological analysis was used by De Souza et al. (2016). Marić (2016) used an interdisciplinary approach to examine toponymy, ethnohistorical documents, and archeological evidence. Murawski (2018) employed a critical evaluation of experiences and systems by utilizing data from ethnographic observations and archives. Gecil and Pugh (2018) utilized a literature evaluation of past research on sources, which included archaeological results, epigraphic documents, ethnographic descriptions, and other scholarly publications. Piezonka et al. (2019) employed an ethnoarchaeological study on sources, encompassing interviews, observations, and artifact examination. Quave et al. (2019) evaluated ethnohistoric and archaeological evidence using the changes and continuities framework. Santillo (2021) researched architectural and construction processes using a variety of sources such as archeological evidence, scholarly journals, and other building-related texts.

Implications and limitations

In the publications gathered, the ethnohistory strategy primarily provides flexibility in establishing data collection and analysis methods based on research needs, particularly research objectives. A multitude of supplementary data can support empirical data. Furthermore, oral traditions serve as crucial empirical data about memories that are passed down through the generations. However, biased analysis and inaccurate data are still present in this technique. As a result, developing a more thorough methodology is essential going forward, particularly concerning empirically based research. There are unique qualities to every research project, research case, place, and period.

The actual difficulty, though, is finding data in the field, particularly informant willingness.

Arnauld (2013) discovered that Río Bec house designs might reveal social relationships and organization. According to the document, architectural features and social status are related. Nevertheless, considering the cultural context and historical era, it might not have encompassed all Mesoamerican locations because it was limited to architectural evidence. Historical archaeology is the focus of Dixon's (2014) research, which also focuses on colonialism, landscape transformation, adaptation, resilience, and sustainability. It encourages community engagement and traditional ecological knowledge to be part of an interdisciplinary, cooperative approach. Nevertheless, it only offers a cursory review; it does not include extensive case studies or a wide range of sources, the majority of which are English-language journals. Cohen's (2014) paper investigated the impact of Orientalism on Ottoman Jews' social and cultural identities in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, emphasizing the cosmopolitanism of Jewish culture. However, it had limitations, encompassing a narrow concentration on the Ottoman Jewish population and limited debate on gender and class concerns.

Covey (2015) examined the institutional structure and power dynamics of the Inca Empire, emphasizing Cuzco's concentration of political and ideological power and the use of public spaces for political agendas. The author asserted that there was no priority placed on replicating particular locations at lower-level administrative sites. The focus on particular traits, potential bias, and the conclusions' limited scope were among the paper's shortcomings. Voss (2015) examined transpacific ties throughout the history of North America, concentrating on Chinese immigration and colonization. It challenged conventional wisdom and suggested global research techniques for more inclusive histories. It acknowledged language barriers and cultural norms as barriers to transpacific cooperation, but it was restricted to Chinese railroad workers. De Souza et al. (2016) claim that migration, ethnic conflict, and sociopolitical change resulted in the creation of funerary monuments in South America. These groups established authority, negotiated identity, and defined boundaries. Although this phenomenon is not unique to South America, the author highlighted that further research may be necessary to determine whether it applies to other

areas or eras. The 18th-century Society Islands were thoroughly studied by [Marić \(2016\)](#), who also offered insights into historical developments and former social locations. The author examined social group dwellings, ceremonial architecture, and settlement patterns; however, some of its flaws included a limited focus on a single era, innate interpretive biases, and an inability to provide insight into the impact of interactions of colonization.

[Murawski's \(2018\)](#) paper examined the intricacies and challenges of socialist and post-socialist economic systems, highlighting both their accomplishments and failings. It highlighted how some economies support social equality and collective ownership, while others find it difficult to allocate resources and meet basic needs. The concept of "soul" and its significance in the Postclassic Maya civilization's culture and belief system became completely clear because of [Gecil and Pugh's \(2018\)](#) research. Furthermore, it examined the legitimacy of ritual experts and their role in mana transfer. It might require more research, though, as it relied on distorted sources. A lack of an integrated approach in hunter-gatherer societies was highlighted by [Piezonka et al. \(2019\)](#), who discovered that aDNA and ethnoarchaeological research can provide new insights into migration, modifications to subsistence strategies, and archaeology. In [Quave's \(2019\)](#) work, identity formation and social changes during the Inka colonial encounter were examined.

It may have missed social differentiation based on economic status and other pertinent domains because its focus was restricted to two locations within the Inka imperial province. To comprehend the social and cultural influences on the construction of monumental buildings, [Santillo's \(2021\)](#) research examined the function of architecture in archeology, emphasizing the value of technical expertise. It recognized certain drawbacks, including its focus on Mycenaean tholoi structures and the potential for mistakes in the documentation.

Conclusions

The objective of this research is to highlight trends that apply ethnohistorical strategy in the history of traditional architecture, as well as to identify novelty from research published between

2013 and 2023. Architectural research can explore new avenues, especially in historical studies of traditional architecture, with this topic proving to be highly promising in the future, according to descriptive analysis. Three future research areas were also identified by content analysis: traditional architecture as a historical artifact; human migration, cultural diffusion, colonization, and traditional architecture; and history or memory studies on traditional architecture. When it comes to methodology, ethnohistory offers a flexible approach that combines historical and ethnographic data for explanatory, descriptive, and exploratory research. The research materials may include oral traditions in addition to a variety of sources. The biggest challenge, though, is biased interpretation and data inaccuracies. Thus, independent of the Western perspective, the use of empirical evidence is highly valued in historical research. Several architectural objects in the same area or, in multiple cases, objects in separate but adjacent locations must be compared to cross-check the data, for the analysis and data to be extensive and reliable. This guarantees that the study's findings accurately reflect the specific cultural community in question.

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Author(s) contribution

Muhammar Khamdevi contributed to the research concepts preparation, methodologies, investigations, data analysis, visualization, articles drafting and revisions.

Iwan Sudradjat contribute to the research concepts preparation and literature reviews, data analysis, of article drafts preparation and validation.