DOCUMENTATION OF TRADITIONAL ARCHITECTURE ON NIAS ISLAND BEFORE AND AFTER THE DISASTERS

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ABSTRACT: On December 26th 2004 a major earthquake caused a Tsunami in the region of the Indian Ocean. The epicentre of the quake lay offshore the Indonesian Island of Sumatra close to its neighbouring island Nias. 3 months later Nias was again hit by a series of earthquakes causing death of 900 people. Besides the human tragedy the earthquake the natural disasters showed that outstanding resilience of the vernacular buildings: whereas 80 percent of the modern style houses collapsed few old buildings where damaged, causing less harm to the inhabitants.

The traditional architecture of the Island of Nias is an outstanding example of the adaptation to specific environmental conditions. The design and the location of the settlements, used materials, building construction and techniques result from development over centuries. Even though, the knowledge and application of these techniques is endangered due to different reasons.

The authors undertook a first field trip to Nias in 2003, and another excursion in summer 2005. The building surveys and results of ongoing interdisciplinary research show the impact of the disasters on the settlements and shall finally lead to the development of earth quake resistant architecture in Nias for the 21st century considering indigenous principles, knowledge and techniques.

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