VERNACULAR ARCHITECTURE IN SECOND HOME DESIGN
IN KISH ISLAND, IRAN

ALI AFSHAR

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VERNACULAR ARCHITECTURE IN SECOND HOME DESIGN
IN KISH ISLAND, IRAN

By

ALI AFSHAR

Thesis submitted to the School of Graduate Studies, Universiti Putra Malaysia,
in Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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Blind imitation of them has undone me
Cursed be that blind imitation

A Persian Poem by Mulana Jalaluddin Mohammad Rumi
13th Century A. D.
DEDICATION

To Mona,

for her continual support and encouragement throughout the study
Abstract of thesis presented to Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia in fulfilment of
the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

VERNACULAR ARCHITECTURE IN SECOND HOME DESIGN IN KISH
ISLAND, IRAN

By

ALI AFSHAR

January 2013

Chairman: Associate Professor Ar. Azizah Salim Syed Salim, PhD

Faculty: Design and Architecture

Kish, which is located in the south of Iran, is an island that has more than one
thousand year history of architecture. It is known as one of the most important free
trade-tourism zones and holiday destinations of the country, and it has become an
increasingly popular destination for investment in housing. According to official
statistical reports, all the houses in the island are generally known as second homes
for their owners. Modern development in Kish Island has led to the destruction of
vernacular architecture and the loss of intellectual capital that flows from this. The
main issue in this context is that most of the houses do not correspond with their
owners’ requirements especially in the context of local circumstances. This research
posits that the vernacular architecture of Kish Island, through its adaptation over a
long time to local context, has the potential to provide a more appropriate response
than the mis-constructed styles that are currently undermining the architectural
design of the second homes in the island. It also emphasizes on the physical and
socio-cultural aspects of the vernacular architecture in relation to second homes, the
owners and their interaction. Therefore, the study utilized qualitative or quantitative research methods although preliminary qualitative methods were used to answer the research questions, “How can vernacular architecture be applied in designing the contemporary second homes in Kish Island?” The research used a qualitative research methodology to identify the features of the Kish Island’s vernacular architecture as well as to find the relationships between the vernacular architecture and second homes. The research also used the quantitative method to support the qualitative methods and to select units of analysis. As a case study, this study selected Kish Island in Iran and sought to develop architectural solutions to contemporary second home design problems with using adapted vernacular solutions. The research outcome is a series of guidelines for developing second home design solutions to address the contemporary design problems. The suggested outputs for second home design not only improve its quality for answering owners’ requirements but also employ second home design for enhancing local architecture. Finally, the research provides a theoretical and experimental approach to support the development of practical and competent constructions in the architectural design field. The implications of the research to the design of second homes are important while advocating the suitability of human requirements which has not been completely investigated and the expected results could be contributed to a specific cultural and geographical domain of Iran, as well as countries in the Persian Gulf region.
Abstrak tesis yang dikemukakan kepada Senat Universiti Putra Malaysia sebagai memenuhi keperluan untuk ijazah Doktor Falsafah

REKA BENTUK VERNAKULAR DALAM SENI BINA RUMAH KEDUA DI PULAU KISH – IRAN

Oleh

ALI AFSHAR

Januari 2012

Pengerusi: Profesor Madya Ar. Azizah Salim Syed Salim, PhD

Fakulti: Reka bentuk dan Senibina

Pulau Kish yang terletak di selatan Iran memaparkan sejarah seni bina lama yang menjangkau lebih satu alaf yang lalu. Ia dikenali sebagai zon pelancongan bebas niaga yang terpenting di Iran. Di samping itu ia juga dikenali sebagai destinasi percutian yang semakin terkenal sebagai tempat strategik bagi pelaburan dalam sektor perumahan. Secara amnya semua kediaman di pulau ini merupakan rumah kedua bagi pemiliknya. Pembangunan semasa di sini telah merubah reka bentuk vernakular serta harta intelek yang terkandung dalam dalamnya. Tambahan pula semua kediaman ini tidak sejajar dengan kemahuan pemilik terutamanya dalam konteks keadaan setempat. Kajian ini menyarankan agar reka bentuk vernakular di Pulau Kish berpotensi untuk menghasilkan reaksi yang lebih sesuai dengan mengadaptasi binaan dalam keadaan setempat dalam jangka masa yang lama. Ini dianggap penting daripada hanya sekadar gaya yang tidak bermakna yang semakin melemahkan seni bina rumah kedua di pulau ini. Ia menekankan keadan fizikal dan sosial reka bentuk vernacular rumah kedua, pemilik dan hubung kait di antara keduanya. Oleh itu,
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Last but not least, I thank Mona; my dearest wife, for all the love and helps and Mani; my son, for his patience that were indispensable for me to survive the last six years.
I certify that a Thesis Examination Committee has met on 30 January 2013 to conduct the final examination of Ali Afshar on his thesis entitled "Vernacular Architecture in Second Home Design in Kish Island, Iran" in accordance with the Universities and University Colleges Act 1971 and the Constitution of the Universiti Putra Malaysia [P.U.(A) 106] 15 March 1998. The Committee recommends that the student be awarded the Doctor of Philosophy.

Members of the Thesis Examination Committee were as follows:

Osman bin Mohd Tahir, PhD
Associate Professor
Faculty of Design and Architecture
Universiti Putra Malaysia
(Chairman)

Mohamad Fakri Zaky bin Ja'afar, PhD
Senior Lecturer
Faculty of Design and Architecture
Universiti Putra Malaysia
(Internal Examiner)

Julaihi Wahid, PhD
Professor
Universiti Sains Malaysia
Malaysia
(External Examiner)

Roger Fay, PhD
Professor
Faculty of Architecture and Design
University of Tasmania
Australia
(External Examiner)

NORITAH OMAR, PhD
Assoc. Professor and Deputy Dean
School of Graduate Studies
Universiti Putra Malaysia

Date: 26 June 2013
This thesis submitted to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia and has been accepted as fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy. The members of the Supervisory Committee were as follows:

Azizah Salim Syed Salim, PhD  
Associate Professor  
Faculty of Design and Architecture  
Universiti Putra Malaysia  
(Chairman)

Elias @ Ilias Bin Salleh, PhD  
Professor  
Faculty of Design and Architecture  
Universiti Putra Malaysia  
(Member)

Nurizan Yahaya, PhD  
Professor  
Faculty of Human Ecology  
Universiti Putra Malaysia  
(Member)

Suhardi Maulan, PhD  
Senior Lecturer  
Faculty of Design and Architecture  
Universiti Putra Malaysia  
(Member)

BUJANG BIN KIM HUAT, PhD  
Professor and Dean  
School of Graduate Studies  
Universiti Putra Malaysia

Date:
DECLARATION

I declare that the thesis is my original work except for quotations and citation which have been duly acknowledged. I also declare that it has not been previously, and is not concurrently, submitted for any other degree at Universiti Putra Malaysia or at any other institution.

__________________________

ALI AFSHAR

Date: 30 January 2013
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DEDICATION</td>
<td>iv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABSTRACT</td>
<td>v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABSTRAK</td>
<td>vi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</td>
<td>ix</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPROVAL</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DECLARATION</td>
<td>xii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF TABLES</td>
<td>xvii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF FIGURES</td>
<td>xviii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS</td>
<td>xxii</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## CHAPTER

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction ................................................. 1
1.2 Problem Statement ........................................... 1
1.3 Research Questions .......................................... 4
1.4 Aim of the Study ............................................. 5
1.5 Objectives of the Study ..................................... 5
1.6 Key Concept .................................................. 6
  1.6.1 Kish Island ............................................. 6
  1.6.2 Vernacular Architecture .............................. 8
  1.6.3 Second Homes ........................................... 10
1.7 Significance of the Study ................................. 11
1.8 Scope and Limitations of the Study .................... 12
1.9 Organization of the Thesis ................................. 12

2 AN OVERVIEW ON SECOND HOME IN GENERAL, IRAN AND IN KISH ISLAND

2.1 Introduction .................................................. 17
2.2 Definitions of Second Homes ............................... 18
  2.2.1 Categorization of Second Homes ....................... 19
  2.2.2 Aspects of Second Homes ............................... 22
  2.2.3 Second Home Plans and Strategies ................... 25
  2.2.4 Second Homes in Iran .................................. 25
2.3 Kish Island ................................................... 30
  2.3.1 The Social Features of Kish Island .................. 31
  2.3.2 An Overview of the Housing Development in Kish Island .................. 32
  2.3.3 Second Homes in the Island ........................... 42
2.4 Conclusion .................................................... 49

3 BACKGROUND STUDY ON THE VERNACULAR ARCHITECTURE AS A PROPER RESPONSE TO CONTEMPORARY DESIGN

3.1 Introduction ................................................... 54
6.2.1 Procedure of the Interview ......................................... 138
6.2.2 Respondents’ Backgrounds ........................................ 139
6.2.3 Respondents’ Opinions on the Issues Related to the Second Home Architectural Design in Kish 139
6.2.4 Today’s Housing Design in Kish and Adaptable Vernacular Architecture Characteristics 144
6.2.5 Selection of the Residential Complex with Correct Correspondence with the Owners’ Requirements 153

6.3 Application of the Vernacular Architecture in the Existing Second Homes at Kish Island 155
6.3.1 The Recording Observation Sheets ................................ 155
6.3.2 Topics Studied in Site Planning .................................... 157
6.3.3 Topics Studied in the Building Elements ..................... 159
6.3.4 The Topics Affected Building Design ......................... 160
6.3.5 Categorizing the Characteristics on the Basis of the Findings 161
6.3.6 Ranking of the Adaptability of the Second Homes with Vernacular Architecture of Kish Island 163

6.4 An Investigation into Kish’s Residential Buildings Regulation ......................................................... 164
6.5 Conclusion .............................................................................. 169

7 SECOND HOME OWNERS’ REQUIREMENTS THAT VERNACULAR ARCHITECTURE CAN ANSWER
7.1 Introduction ................................................................. 180
7.2 Physical Observation of the Two Selected Cases ............... 181
7.3 Procedure of the Interviews with the Owners of Two Selected Cases .............................................. 181
7.4 Eram Residential Complex ............................................. 182
7.4.1 Physical Observation of Eram Residential Complex 183
7.4.2 Interviews with the Owners of the Eram Residential Complex ..................................................... 186
7.5 Damoon Residential Complex ....................................... 192
7.5.1 Physical Observation of Damoon Residential Complex ............................................................. 192
7.5.2 Interviews with the Owners of Damoon Residential Complex ..................................................... 195
7.5 Conclusion .............................................................................. 201

8 SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS
8.1 Introduction ................................................................. 208
8.2 Research Outline ......................................................... 208
8.3 Major Findings of the Research and Answers to the Research Questions ............................................. 212
8.3.1 The Features of the Kish Island’s Vernacular Architecture ............................................................. 213
8.3.2 The Extent of the Vernacular Architecture in Second Homes at Kish Island 215
8.3.3 The Second Homes Owners’ Requirements that Vernacular Architecture Could Answer 222
8.4 Architectural Solutions to Contemporary Second Home Design Problems Using the adapted Vernacular Architectural Characteristics at Kish Island 226
8.4.1 Solutions to Site Planning 227
8.4.2 Solutions to Building Elements 228
8.4.3 Solutions to Architectural Design 228
8.5 Recommendations and Implication of the Policies 229
8.5.1 Improving Policies and Planning Tools to Apply the Vernacular Architecture in Constructing Second Homes at Kish Island 229
8.6 Limitations and Improvement of the Study 232
8.7 Research Contributions 234
8.8 Future Research and Considerations 236

REFERENCES 237
APPENDICES 247
BIODATE OF STUDENT 263
LIST OF PUBLICATIONS 264
LIST OF TABLES

Table                                    | Page  |
---                                       |-------|
2-1 The Housing Development in Kish Island since 1969 to the present time (prepared by Afshar, 2011) | 41    |
3-1 The characteristics of the vernacular architecture of Iran which Diba applied in his works | 79    |
4-1 The phases and techniques of data collection | 93    |
4-2 Construct validity (Source: Yin, 1994, p. 33) | 109   |
4-3 External validity (Source: Yin, 1994, p. 33) | 111   |
4-4 The Coastal City of Lengeh (Sh. Arfaei, 2006) | 111   |
5-1 The characteristics of the vernacular architecture of Iran based on the architecture of Diba and with the expansion of Pirnia's definition | 134   |
5-2 The characteristics of the vernacular architecture of the region and Kish Island (prepared by Afshar, 2011) | 136   |
6-1 Evaluating the existing architecture of the houses at Kish Island | 141   |
6-2 The application of the Vernacular Characteristics at the Site Planning of the Existing Second Homes in Kish | 172   |
6-3 The application of the Vernacular Characteristics in the Building Elements of the Existing Second Homes in Kish | 174   |
6-4 The application of the Vernacular Characteristics in the Building Design of the Existing Second Homes in Kish | 177   |
7-1 Findings of the interviews with owners of Eram and Damoon Residential Complexes | 203   |
# LIST OF FIGURES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1-1</td>
<td>Kish as a part of the system of Islands (lib.utexas.edu., 2005)</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-2</td>
<td>An aerial photo of Kish Island (DSIEC, 2007)</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-3</td>
<td>The Coastal City of Lengeh (Sh. Arfaei, 2006)</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-4</td>
<td>The Old Saffein Village in Kish Island (earth.google.com, 2010)</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-1</td>
<td>The Persian Gulf Mix Residential Complex by private developer, 2010</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-2</td>
<td>The Setareh Kish Mix Residential Complex by semi-private developer, 2010</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-1</td>
<td>The University of Jondi Shabour, Ahwaz, Iran (Abolghasem, 2002)</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-2</td>
<td>The Museum of Contemporary Arts, Tehran, Iran (Abolghasem, 2002)</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-3</td>
<td>A drawing of the site plan of Shushtar New Town, Iran (Abolghasem, 2002)</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-4</td>
<td>Ground Floor Plan, the mosque and the houses in Shushtar New Town (Diba, 1980)</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-5</td>
<td>The Interior Courtyard and Exterior Facades of the houses, Shushtar New Town (Diba, 1980)</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-6</td>
<td>Traditional hierarchy system and its relation to use of chador; illustrated by Diba (1980)</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-7</td>
<td>An internal pedestrian street between houses, Shushtar New Town (Aga Khan Trust for Culture)</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-8</td>
<td>A view of roofs and upper courtyards, Shushtar New Town (Aga Khan Trust for Culture)</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-9</td>
<td>A flow chart of overall study on vernacular architecture in Chapter 3</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-1</td>
<td>The phases of the study, relationship and hierarchy</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Page</td>
<td>Image Description</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------</td>
<td>-------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-1</td>
<td>The Location of Masheh village and Old Saffein village in Kish Island (1975)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-2</td>
<td>The hot and humid region of Iran on the northern side of the Persian Gulf</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-3</td>
<td>A photo of the coastal city of Bandar Lengeh (source: Afshar, 2006)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-4</td>
<td>A photo of Laft in Qeshm Island (Afshar, 2012)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-5</td>
<td>The coastal city of Kong (source: Afshar, 2006)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-6</td>
<td>A street in Old Saffein, Kish (Afshar, 2008)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-7</td>
<td>A street in New Saffein, Kish (Afshar, 2008)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-8</td>
<td>Summer and Winter sections in a Vernacular house, Old Saffein (drawn by the Afshar, 2009)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-9</td>
<td>The Jam’e Mosque in the centre of the village, Old Saffein (drawn by the Afshar, 2009)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-10</td>
<td>The main yard of a house, Old Saffein (drawn by Afshar, 2009)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-11</td>
<td>A mozif (guest room) in a vernacular house, Old Saffein (photo by the Afshar, 2009)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-12</td>
<td>The ground floor plan of a house, Old Saffein (drawn by Afshar, 2009)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-13</td>
<td>The local trees in Kish Island: a) nakhl’e khorma, b) kahoor and c) loor (Afshar, 2009)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-14</td>
<td>An estar in the ground floor of a house, Old Saffein (drawn by Afshar, 2008)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-15</td>
<td>A photo of an estar in a vernacular house, Old Saffein (Afshar, 2008)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-16</td>
<td>The main entrances have sunshades, Old Saffein (Afshar, 2008)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-17</td>
<td>Sabat as connector between rooms and yard (drawn by Afshar, 2008)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-18</td>
<td>The dominated specific wind-catchers (bad-gir) a, b and c (Afshar, 2009)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5-19 Rural compactness fabric, Old Saffein (drawn by the Afshar, 2009)

5-20 Shadowing narrow streets towards the gulf, Old Saffein (Afshar, 2009)

5-21 The natural ventilation inside the rooms in a section, Old Saffein (drawn by Afshar researcher, 2009)

5-22 Reducing temperature by making shadow through vegetation, Old Saffein (drawn by Afshar, 2009)

5-23 A photo of a ruined external wall of a house, Old Saffein (Afshar, 2008)

5-24 A drawing of an external wall section of a vernacular house, Old Saffein (drawn by Afshar, 2009)

6-1 Most of the existing residential apartments have sloping roofs, Kish Island (Afshar, 2010)

6-2 Different scales of the residential complex which do not care about the local architecture (Afshar, 2010)

6-3 Three photos of the medium-sized residential complexes, Kish Island (Afshar, 2010)

6-4 Using of vernacular architecture orientation in contemporary design (drawn by Afshar, 2013)

6-5 Facilitated court yard for creating public and semi-public spaces (drawn by Afshar, 2013)

6-6 Privacy is an important principal for Iranian families (drawn by Afshar, 2013)

6-7 Transitional space as a filter between outside and inside of the house (drawn by Afshar, 2013)

6-8 Shading devices, appropriate size of openings and bright white colour of facades are main characteristics for Kish today’s architecture (drawn by Afshar, 2013)

6-9 Using of cross ventilation inside the houses (drawn by Afshar, 2013)

6-10 Photos of three medium scale residential apartments at Kish Island (Afshar, 2010)
7-1 A drawing of the site plan analysis and photos of Eram Residential Complex, Kish Island (drawn and photograph by Afshar, 2011) 184

7-2 A drawings of the typical ground and first floor plan of the Eram Residential Complex, Kish Island (KFZO, 2001) 185

7-3 Most of the existing residential apartments have sloping roofs, Kish Island (Afshar, 2010) 189

7-4 Most of the existing residential apartments have sloping roofs, Kish Island (Afshar, 2010) 190

7-5 Different scales of the residential complex which do not care about the local architecture (Afshar, 2010) 190

7-6 A drawing of the site plan analysis and photos of Damoon Residential Complex, Kish Island (drawn and photograph by Afshar, 2011) 193

7-7 A drawing of the typical ground and first floor plan, Kish Island (Damoon Construction Company, 2005) 195

7-8 Most of the existing residential apartments have sloping roofs, Kish Island (Afshar, 2010) 197

7-9 Most of the existing residential apartments have sloping roofs, Kish Island (Afshar, 2010) 198

7-10 Different scales of the residential complex which do not care about the local architecture (Afshar, 2010) 198
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BSCEC  Baft-e-shahr Consultant Engineering Company
DCIEC  Dress and Sommer International Consultants Engineering Company
GCEC   Geno Consultant Engineers Company
KFZO   Kish Free Zone Organization
KUDCS  Kish Urban Development and Services Company
MCC    Mercury Consultant Company
PMCEC  Pajoohesh and Memari Consultant Engineers Company
CHAPTER 1

INRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

Kish Island, due to its natural-geographical features, was selected as the first tourism free zone of Iran in 1968 (Monsef, 1978; Ameri, 2011). In order to promote tourism and ensure its development, massive changes have been made on this historical island and its vernacular settlements. In addition, Kish Island also forms a part of a system of Islands in the north of Persian Gulf. It is the most urbanized island and has a key role in its own territory (Razmara, 1962; Moradi, 2010). According to the 2007 Master Plan of the Island, Kish would be an increasingly popular destination for second homes investment by 75 million Iranians and Iranian expatriates (3.5 million Iranians who have immigrated worldwide). This thesis emphasizes on the characteristics of vernacular architecture in relation to second homes and their owners. In this chapter, the thesis introduces the field, vernacular architecture, second home and also the aims of this research.

1.2 Problem Statement

At present, many critics in the Persian Gulf region are becoming increasingly concerned about the inappropriate adoption of international architectural styles (Ardalan, 2004; Mahgoub, 2007). In contrast and according to Dress and Sommer International Consultant Engineering Company (DSIEC) in 2007, the present situation of Kish in comparison to the ones in the neighbouring countries is of greater
concern. As compared to the neighbouring countries, Kish has its own special circumstances due to its designation as a free zone area (Taebi, 2008; Monfared, 2009). Therefore, the existing architecture in Kish Island does not follow the architectural movements in the southern side of the Persian Gulf. Additionally, it does not have a logical connection to the vernacular architecture of the region (Mohebbi, 2011).

Iran, with its long and eventful history, has a strong tradition in the organization and generation of urban centres and settlement units (Pope, 1965; Manzoor, 1989). In the northern edge of the Persian Gulf as a part of Iran, the component of the built environment is paramount and this should be seen in its vernacular context. This will contribute to a better understanding of both the objective and subjective dimensions of the built environment which constitutes its traditional context. Moreover, since the first centuries and after the appearance of Islam, Kish has been a habitable Island (Mokhtarpour, 1996). Therefore, the vernacular houses of Kish are the best examples of the harmony among human behaviour, construction and the natural environment and thus, it has a potential to improve appropriate response of contemporary architectural design in the island.

According the Tourism Master Plan of Iran (2001), Kish Island is one of the country’s main tourism destinations and the tourism centre of the Persian Islands in the Persian Gulf. As a result and based on to DSIEC (2007), within the next 20 years, the market for second homes (vacation residences, condominiums, time share style apartment complexes) in the island will achieve high growth rates. The demand for these second homes is significant due to the fact that Iranian families prefer
private atmosphere and privacy within these holiday apartments (Annabestani, 2011). Another reason for the popularity of the second home units in Kish is their respective affordability, self-catering, and sharing of apartments with other families turn these units into an economical vacation alternative.

The existing second homes in Kish Island are not matched with owner’s requirements, especially in the context of vernacular condition (Mohebbi, 2011). Due to this reason, the principal objective of this study was to recognize the physical and socio-cultural aspects of the vernacular architecture in relation to second homes, the owners and the interaction between the owners and their homes. Furthermore, it also intended to elucidate the relevance and the necessity of the vernacular architectural patterns to the contemporary requirements and methods for architecture and also, the second home development in Kish Island.

The key issues of the study are as follows:

1. The vernacular architecture of Kish Island and the region generally demonstrates an adaptation to the local environment and culture.

2. Modern development at Kish Island, in which most of the buildings are second homes, leads to the destruction of the vernacular architecture and the loss of intellectual capital that flows from this. Moreover, these homes do not correspond with the owners’ requirements, especially in the context of local circumstances.

3. Contemporary buildings in Kish Island have not a sustainable form due to their un-harmoniously integrate with the existing urban context.
The main problem can thus be summarized as follows:

Most of houses on Kish Island which generally are known as Second homes for their owners do not correspond with their owners’ requirements especially in the context of local circumstances.

The vernacular architecture of Kish Island, through its adaptation over a long period of time to local environment and culture, can be translated into a contemporary architectural response that has the potential to provide a more appropriate response to the second homes owners’ requirements than the imported styles which are currently undermining Kish Island’s culture and architectural coherence.

1.3 Research Questions

This study focuses on the application of the vernacular architecture in second home design in Kish Island. Thus, the following research questions were formulated for the purpose of this study:

General Research Question

How can vernacular architecture be used in the contemporary second homes design at Kish Island?

Specific Research Questions

1) What are the characteristics of the vernacular architecture at Kish Island?
2) What are the vernacular architecture characteristics that have been applied in the existing Kish Island's second homes?
3) How can the vernacular architecture meet the second home owners’ requirements?
1.4 Aim of the Study

The main aim of this study was to develop architectural solutions to the design of the contemporary second homes using the adapted vernacular architectural characteristics at Kish Island.

This study also aimed at introducing the adapted vernacular guideline for the architectural design of contemporary second homes at Kish Island in Iran. These new guidelines will protect all the new second homes from defective architectural design and have the most connection with the physical and socio-cultural requirements of owners. The proposed guidelines could be initiated by the Kish Island authority in implementation of by architects and builders for all the new second homes. Furthermore, some of the lessons learned through this research may well have application to other developing countries.

1.5 Objectives of the Study

The primary goal of this research was to apply the vernacular architecture features for the second homes in Kish Island. Thus, it is necessary to understand the historical vernacular architecture of Kish Island and the principles which are applicable for these second homes. In more specific, the study has three objectives:
i. To identify the characteristics of the vernacular architecture at Kish Island.

ii. To explain the extent of the vernacular architecture in the existing second homes.

iii. To recognize the second homes owners’ requirements in term of vernacular architecture can answer.

1.6 Key Concept

In this research, the vernacular architecture in Kish Island is introduced according to a new perspective as well as Kish’s building regulations in second home design is explained. Moreover, this study describes different definitions of vernacular architecture and second home in international context. It also makes a bridge between vernacular architecture and second home criteria, in a tourist island, in south of Iran.

1.6.1 Kish Island

Kish is a beautiful and attractive island that is located in the south of Iran; it is known as one of the most powerful tourism area of the country. This island has a long history of more than 1300 years (Nasr, 1971; Hamidi, 1999; Mahmoudian, Varjavand, Ghasemi, Ghasemi, & Artidar, 1998). It was selected as a tourism free zone in 1968 due to its natural-geographical features (Monsef, 1978). In order to increase tourism development, massive changes were made on this Island. In the
1970s, a luxury resort for the international elite was completed with a Grand Casino (now known as the Shayan International Hotel) and an airport designed to handle the Concorde (Monsef, 1978). Until 1969, the number of settlements in Kish was limited to some sparse villages (Mokhtarpour, 2002). After the Islamic revolution in 1979, Kish was chosen as the first free zone of Islamic Republic of Iran and by 1986, there was no building activity in the island because of the war with Iraq. From 1993 to 2001, development process gained speed all over the country. Thus, organizing the management structure clearly caused an increase in constructional activities and as a result, the number of tourists also increased. However, this island is known as an area which adopts the standard laws of the country, which were far more relaxed compared to those at the main land (Mahmoudian, Varjavand, Ghasemi, Ghasemi, & Artidar, 1998).

At the present, Kish is the most important beach recreational holiday and tourist destination in Iran; located in the northern part of the Persian Gulf (see Figure 1-1 and Figure 1-2). Based on the unique potentials of the Island, there are two noteworthy implications for it in the “Tourism Master Plan of Iran” (2001). The willingness of the Iranian Government to invest in tourism is a favourable sign for Kish. Thus, Kish Free Zone Organization (KFZO) makes it their objectives to develop tourism and be noticed in the budget allocation for improving the tourism conditions in the island. In addition, KFZO also needs to make itself known in the development of Iran’s plans and to involve itself more in the development of the country in the first years of this decade so that the overall vision was to create a new destination image with a new “brand”, or leitmotif which guides the design of the
other Master Plans. On this basis, the new plan was named “Destination Master Plan-Kish Island-Persian Garden in the Persian Gulf”.

![Figure 0-1: Kish as a part of the system of Islands (lib.utexas.edu., 2005)](image1)

![Figure 0-2: An aerial photo of Kish Island (DSIEC, 2007)](image2)

Based on the classification of this Master Plan, tourism is one of the significant economic opportunities for this Island that can be cited in two main contexts, namely, five star luxury and second home ownership. The master plan of Kish also mentions the need to promote the value of this particular industrial sector which should be paramount in the strategic direction of any industry. It emphasizes that the industry focuses on the social and environmental, as well as the economic benefits of tourism.

### 1.6.2 Vernacular Architecture

Vernacular architecture is defined as architecture by people and it is not designed for people by architects. It is related to environmental and socio-cultural context and available resources, as well as traditional materials with its appropriate technologies. It usually meets specific requirements, accommodates the cultural and social values, and also relates to the existing economic possibilities (Oliver, 1998). In particular,
the Iranian vernacular architecture is a result of a long-time practice of social, cultural and environmental development which extends all over the country. Pirnia (1992) noted that it is based on five fundamental characteristics: compatibility with the needs of people, inward-looking, avoiding un-necessities, self-efficiency, and structural rigidity. These codes concern building quality from two aspects: firstly, concepts and ideas, and secondly, construction and technology (Vakili-Ardebili & Boussabaine, 2006).

The hot and humid region of Iran is situated in the long and narrow coastal strip on the northern side of the Persian Gulf (Babakrad, 1985; Azari-Najafabadi, Daneshvar, Pakseresht, & Pooryousefnejad, 2006). Kish Island, which is located in this region, also has the same social and environmental factors. Here, the summers are long hot and humid, while winters are short and mild. Meanwhile, humidity in all seasons is high throughout the year. Its annual precipitation is extremely low, most of which is during fall and winter (Mahmoudian, Varjavand, Ghasemi, Ghasemi, & Artidar, 1998). Sub-ground waters are saline in much of the region, while vegetation all around this region is limited. The most prominent features of the vernacular architecture in this area are an adaptation to the environment and consideration of the socio-economic factors through energy saving techniques (Babakrad, 1985; Pourjafar, 1996).

The characteristics of the vernacular architecture of the region are generally reflected by one-storey dwelling units with courtyards, high surrounding walls and large windows facing the courtyard (Azari-Najafabadi, Daneshvar, Pakseresht, & Pooryousefnejad, 2006), as shown in Figure 1-3. Meanwhile, natural ventilation and
breeze are the main ways to reduce high temperature and to cool the spaces (Babakrad, 1985). The roofs are usually flat and the typical houses do not facing outside to prevent indoor activities from being viewed by outsiders. Furthermore, limestone is commonly used in the house to provide a convenient solar reflection (Azari-Najafabadi, Daneshvar, Pakseresht, & Pooryousefnejad, 2006). Kish Island has same physical and socio-cultural aspects and traditional house construction methods. (see Figure 1-4).

1.6.3 Second Homes

According to many researchers, second homes are not the principal property of their owners (Tress, 2007) who are mostly coming from upper, middle class of the community. Stedman, Goetz, and Weagraff (2006) believe that in the recent decades, the chief source of second home development in non-metropolitan areas increased disposable income, leisure time, improved transportation and growth in population. As their opinion, these non-metropolitan areas are rich in natural amenities, such as mild climate, surface water, mountain and trees. Notwithstanding all these
definitional concerns and for the purposes that a second home is a property owned or rented for a long time, the occasional residences of a family normally live elsewhere (Visser, 2004). The increasing interest in second homes can be addressed as a response to and rejection of globalization. Air travel and improved accessibility have generally allowed second homes to be located a long distance from the owner’s permanent residence.

In relation to desert and semi-desert climates which covered most parts of Iran, second home tourism has a long history in the country (Ziaei & Salehinasab 2009). In the recent decades, the metropolitan cities of Iran have faced growth in their populations and physical development. It has caused a significant interest in second homes for families to spend their weekend holidays in the rural areas or coastal shores (Rezvani 2003, Annabestani 2010). Thus, with its remarkable features and conditions, Kish Island is the most influential tourists’ attraction in the southern part of Iran (Ameri 2011). Natural factors, such as mild climate, surface water, as well as white sands and bright sun, encourage people to buy second homes in the island (DSIEC, 2007). In contrast to most other tourism areas in Iran, the owners are also offered a secure environment.

1.7 Significance of the Study

The study proposed a set of guidelines which integrate the second home elements and vernacular architecture characteristics, and are adapted to the Kish Island’s regulations. The proposed guideline was expected to be an alternative solution to providing second home owners’ long term requirements. Thus, it was expected that
this guideline would become an alternative and effective solution for permanent or second home design in the south of Iran as well. Additionally, the application of the vernacular architecture in second homes in Kish Island’s experience could be applied to other developing countries, especially those in the Persian Gulf region, which are in a dire need of housing for their second home ownerships, while trying to balance between developments to sustaining them.

1.8 Scope and Limitations of the Study

In this study, a new perspective of the vernacular architecture at Kish Island is introduced, together with an explanation of the existing Kish’s building regulations in second home design. This study also describes different definitions and functions of second homes in the international context to make a strong connection between the vernacular architecture and the criteria for second homes at a tourist island in the South of Iran.

This research provided a proposal for the development of second homes only in Kish Island, with its own environment, culture and function. Thus, this study was only concerned Iranian second homes owners who are the main owners of the Island’s facilities. More studies are required to generalize the findings to any place outside of Kish Island.

1.9 Organization of the Thesis

This thesis consists of eight chapters, which are organized as follows:
Chapter One gives a brief overview and the context of the study by introducing the research questions, research objectives, significance of the study and definition of the relevant terms used.

Chapter Two is the first part of the literature reviews which focuses on the definition of second home in general, its related theories, as well as its components and applications. It also introduced the theories countering second homes. Then, it highlights Kish Island’s housing plans, strategies and development through the history and in the recent decades. Moreover, it introduced the current situation of second homes in the island.

Chapter Three is the second part of the literature review which it discusses the vernacular architecture and its principles, as well as describing it in the Iranian and regional contexts. This part of the chapter also includes a survey on the vernacular architecture evaluation and an overview on application of vernacular architecture in Iranian contemporary architecture.

Chapter Four discusses in detail the methodological approach adopted in this study. It is given based on two principles of inquiry, namely, literature review and case study. In this chapter, the researcher also introduced the general research question and its specific research questions, as well as explained the qualitative case study research methodology. For this purpose, two main strategies were considered for the research content of the case study and the literature review which comprised of the techniques of data collection and data analysis.
Chapter Five discusses vernacular architecture of Iran and then the vernacular architecture of Old Saffein; a vernacular settlement in the island. Archival study, which is according the protocol and observation, creates this part of thesis. It attempted to investigate the vernacular architecture in the Old Saffein village so as to find its specific characteristics. It also sought to emphasize on the architectural concepts and ideas, as well as the construction and technologies which are applied in the vernacular architecture of the village, as the last opportunity for saving the architectural heritage of Kish Island.

Chapter Six discusses the findings of the interviews that were carried out with professional architects at Kish Island. It also explores the attributes of the architects’ reflections and ideologies based on their on-site experiences. In addition, the authority of Kish Island has also been analyzed to make the process and steps for the guidelines in taking distance to any unpractical proposal. Moreover, this chapter also presents the process for the synthesis of vernacular architecture characteristics and second home principles with owners’ requirements in Kish Island.

Chapter Seven explains the collected data, analyses, observations and interviews with the owners of two selected case projects at Kish Island. The integration of the findings in this chapter with other incorporated methodologies will lead to further recommendations of the proposed guideline for a better designing of second homes at Kish Island. This chapter also reviews the findings on the owners’ expectations of their second homes, their understandings of the physical design feature. This chapter is concluded by the summary of the findings from the interviews carried out.
Chapter Eight presents the conclusion of the research. It initially highlights the main findings by reflecting on the results obtained in each methodological approach and subsequently proposing several recommendations on how the appropriate vernacular architecture design can be adopted and covers owners’ requirements. The recommendations also include the improvement that can be introduced into the guideline for future second homes at Kish Islands. In this chapter, the researcher also explains the benefits of the new approach and makes a clear image of Kish Island in future. Finally, the thesis is concluded with the contributions and suggestions for future studies based on the findings of the current research.

In next page, Figure 1.5 (in next page) illustrates a flow chart that summarizes the overall structure of the study and this serves as a comprehensive reference and guideline to this thesis.
Objectives:

1. To Identify the Characteristics of Kish Island Vernacular Architecture.
   - Study on Old Safflein Village

2. To Explain Adaptation of Vernacular Architecture to Existing Houses
   - Systematic Field Observation
   - Experts’ Opinions on Vernacular Architecture in Kish

3. To Recognize the Second Homes Owners’ Requirements that Vernacular Architecture Can Solve
   - Owners’ Opinions / Physical Observation

Aim:
To develop Architectural Solutions to Second Home Design Using Adapted Vernacular Solutions.
- Comparing the Empirical Finding about Vernacular Architecture with the Theoretical Findings in Chapter 2 & 3
- Responding to the Research Questions & Implications

Figure 0-5: A flow chart of the overall structure of the thesis
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242


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245


