Architecture as Symbol and Self–Identity

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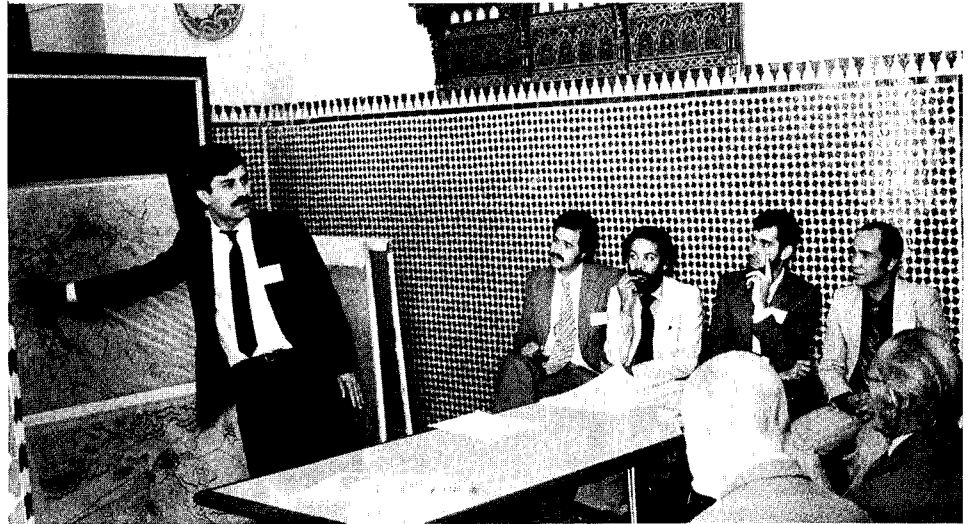
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Introduction

Renata Holod

The task of the architect is to create a physical environment readily identifiable by a society as its own. Building within contemporary societies sets before the professional the challenge of identifying, understanding and creating forms and spaces which are at once new and familiar, which convey a sense of specific identity and which are non–alienating. To do so within the Islamic world today is very difficult indeed. On the one hand, there is little in the realm of architectural theory, history and criticism dealing with Islamic environments and monuments which might provide guiding principles and insight. On the other, the discontinuities and disruptions of modernization within Islamic societies make the ready application of whatever principles of space and form that one may extract a problem.

The fourth seminar of the Aga Khan Award series, "Architectural Transformation in the Islamic World," represented an attempt to outline those aspects of architectural history which could be useful for the architect. It further sought to indicate those areas of the Islamic sciences and philosophy which could provide necessary cultural background, and to note those methods and observations of the social sciences which could adequately characterize attitudes toward space and buildings within contemporary Islamic societies.

Architectural criticism and theory has developed a rather sizable literature on the symbolism of architectural forms. The methodology of investigating the processes through which forms become symbols has borrowed heavily from the vocabularies and theories of linguistics and structuralism. However, the material under scrutiny has, for the most part, been drawn from examples of Western architecture: Roman, Renaissance, Neoclassical or International Modern. While the observations generated through such approaches may indeed be universal, it seems conceivable that at least some of the observations and principles may be culturally specific.

The search for symbolism within the forms of Islamic architecture is still in its incep-

tion and requires extensive elaboration. Already observable is the fact that the regional traditions of Islamic architecture tend to repeat several particular forms and signs. In the course of the seminar, some of these were identified and examined from the perspectives of both the historian and the practicing architect. Attention was drawn to such elements as the minaret, the dome, calligraphy or epigraphy, and internally oriented plan types.

The minaret, for example, was shown to have a number of formal and stylistic variations. Moreover, the range of inscriptions found on minarets provides evidence that individual monuments may have several different levels of significance or meaning. The minaret's ostensible function as a platform for the call to prayer was and often is not exclusive to it: roofs, stairways and especially balconies were and are also places for the muezzin. Yet the minaret, the tall, vertical form, has become a crucial element within the repertory of forms in the traditions of Islamic architecture. It is, in a way, symbolic of Islam's presence in a place. It has come to serve as a landmark for orientation and for identification, and it marks the aural and spatial centre of a neighbourhood. It has also been used as an element in design, to balance and anchor domical forms or to balance elevations and entrances. The repetition of the vertical form twice or more times may also signal the political or religious importance of a building.

The inclusion of inscriptions on buildings enhances the meaning and perhaps the symbolism of its forms. In themselves they are also signs and symbols. The content of an inscription gives its initial, specific meaning to a building, but its very presence provides the obligatory sign which validates a building within a socio–religious context.

The extent to which a particular arrangement of space—for example, the courtyard plan—carries an extensive series of perceptual and cultural meanings is somewhat more difficult to ascertain. To what extent interiority can be defined as a principle of

historic Islamic architecture and to what extent this principle is recognized as familiar are questions which received considerable attention in the course of the seminar. Many participants, however, advocated more detailed observation of contemporary uses of space. The internal vocabularies for architectural, spatial and general aesthetic phenomena were discussed as well.

Further validation, support or criticism for many of the investigations into the meanings of architectural forms was sought within Islamic thought—philosophy as well as the Koranic sciences. What valid directives they can provide for the assessment of architecture in its historical as well as contemporary context was a question which occupied both the social scientist and the scholar of Islamic philosophy.

The conditions for the continued significance of a building or a whole built environment need to be further elucidated. If a building or complex continues to be used through time, what new forms, if any, are introduced during its campaign of extension and rebuilding? Functional and formal revalidations are numerous in the history of Islamic architecture. The major congregational mosques in the historic centres of Islamic civilization show such processes quite clearly. Whether in Isfahan or in Cordoba, in Cairo or in Fez, the body of the original hypostyle mosque did not remain unchanged. While simple extensions of the roofed areas may be explained by the need for more space, the addition or insertion of major and differentiated forms such as the dome, minaret or *eyvān* may allude to the development of a more elaborate and precise architectural landscape. Very early mosques did not appear to have these elements, but by the tenth century A.D., one or more of these forms seem to have been extensively introduced. Why this should have happened is still an object of investigation and, indeed, speculation. Yet, by the fourteenth century, the dome, the minaret and, to a lesser extent, the monumental *eyvān* signalled the existence of a mosque or other religious public building on the urban horizon.

Transferring the question of the development of symbols in architecture to more contemporary periods, one must ask the following series of questions. Which are the obligatory and desirable functional and formal elements in the mosque, or any other building? What was the role of this type of building within the urban landscape and within the life of the city? Does this role continue or has it been usurped or taken over by other buildings, forms and functions?

A brief survey of contemporary mosques shows that at least one of the large formal components (e.g., the minaret, the dome) appears in every case. Whether in Morocco, Libya, Saudi Arabia or Indonesia, their inclusion is the obligatory identifier of a building's function as a mosque. Whatever their actual realization—domes can be pyramidal, minarets an assemblage of vertical elements—both have become symbols of mosques and of contemporary Islam. In some cases not only is the presence of the dome and minaret desired, but a particular stylistic (historical) type such as the Mamluk, Mughal or Maghribi mosque carries the complete set of elements of identification. Individual examples should be evaluated on their design and architectural merits. Yet the fact remains that, for the contemporary Muslim, a mosque is a mosque when it possesses such recognizable forms as the minaret and/or the dome.

The continued role of recognizable forms, buildings and even built environments requires further elaboration. At the moment, this aspect of contemporary Islamic societies has been inadequately investigated. In Fez, as in many other cities, particular social groups created and maintained the urban environment for many generations. For them, not only the buildings but the open public spaces, the streets and the houses held a variety of references and memories—a multitude of meanings. Now new groups inhabit these built environments. Are the meanings of the building and urban forms only part of the old social contract, or do they contain meanings transferable to the new?

The anthropoligist's techniques of indirect questioning and individual map drawing show a different awareness and knowledge of an urban environment depending on the needs and aspirations of the individual. Thus a rural trader and an urban teenager respond to and know different features of an urban landscape, not only those of immediate use to each but also those which have an expressive symbolic value. If such variation can be documented within a single location, how can more general assertions pertaining to regions or societies in the Islamic world be made?

Mention should also be made of the use and development of architecture as a symbol for the nation–state. In recent years, many countries of the Islamic world have been constituted or reestablished as sovereign states. With this came the desire to symbolize the achievement through commemorative monuments, new government buildings, whole new capitals, national mosques, revolutionary villages and urban housing schemes. Some buildings and complexes have remained unfinished and have lost their specific meaning with changes of government. Others have become part of the national landscape, appearing on postage stamps and copied on smaller scale in the countryside. All represent the desire to embody and portray a new entity. Often this desire led to a quick adoption of outside models in what can be called an optimistic, future–oriented fashion—part of a particular need to sever links with the past. In many cases the results were none too notable; they served more to disorient than to identify.

The study of the tastes and desires of contemporary societies is only at its beginning. Projects which seek to involve communities or clients in the design process may not be immediately successful. The clients whom they seek to serve or from whom they seek to elicit design criteria may be so disoriented by modernization that they cannot express a coherent set of spatial and visual values. Thus, the role of the designer/architect is perhaps even more crucial. Not only is there a need to observe the contemporary uses of space,

the functional or symbolic significance of particular arrangements and a need to respond sensitively to the client's aspirations but there is a need, above all, to create forms and spaces that evoke a sense of belonging which is not verbalized.

1

Form:
A Vocabulary and Grammar of Symbols

Symbols and Signs in Islamic Architecture

Oleg Grabar

Le problème central et le plus ardu reste évidemment celui de l'interprétation. En principe, on peut toujours poser la question de la validité d'une herméneutique. Par des recoupements multiples, au moyen des assertions claires (textes, rites, monuments figurés) et des allusions à demi voilées, on peut démontrer sur pièces ce que 'veut dire' tel ou tel symbole. Mais on peut aussi poser le problème d'une autre façon: ceux qui utilisent les symboles se rendent–ils compte de toutes leurs implications théoriques? Lorsque, par exemple, en étudiant le symbolisme de l'Arbre cosmique, nous disons que cet Arbre se trouve au 'Centre du Monde', est–ce que tous les individus appartenant à des sociétés qui connaissent de tels Arbres cosmiques sont également conscients du symbolisme intégral du 'Centre'? Mais la validité du symbole en tant que forme de connaissance ne dépend pas du degré de comprehension de tel ou tel individu. Des textes et des monuments figurés nous prouvent abondamment que, au moins pour certains individus d'une société archaïque, le symbolisme du 'Centre' était transparent dans sa totalité; le reste de la société se contentait de 'participer' au symbolisme. Il est d'ailleurs malaisé de préciser les limites d'une telle participation: elle varie en fonction d'un nombre indéterminé de facteurs. Tout ce qu'on peut dire, c'est que l'actualisation d'un symbole n'est pas mécanique: elle est en relation avec les tensions et les alternances de la vie sociale, en dernière instance avec les rythmes cosmiques.[1]

M. Eliade

Much of what follows consists in rambling views, opinions and interpretations developed over the years by an outsider trying to understand a world which is not his own. They tend, therefore, to seek general and abstract meanings in what has been a concrete and personal experience. This is not wrong by itself, but its danger is that unique cultural experiences can much too easily be transformed into meaningless and obvious generalities. The opposite dangers are either that a unique experience becomes so specific as to be unavailable for sharing and even explaining or that an artificial search for presumably universal values falsifies the truth of any individual's culture or experience. I hope I have avoided these pitfalls, but my main concern is that what follows be construed as a statement of the truth or of a doctrine. They are merely partial and questioning signals toward the formulation of a way to understand symbolism in a specific culture. At the end an "afterword" puts together some implications of my remarks which have worried me as I read and reread them. It seems more and more evident to me that discussions of symbols and signs are far more complicated than, in our managerial aloofness, we imagined them to be.

The Problem

There are two reasons, one general, the other specific, for raising the question of symbols and signs. The general reason is

that the act of symbolization and cultural or personal attachment to whatever we call "symbols" are recognized modes of behaving, feeling, thinking, associating and understanding. There may be now and there may have been in the past more than one "Islamic" symbolic or semiotic system, but whether one or a multitude, they form a discrete group which must by definition be, at least in part, different from comparable groups at other times or in other places. The question derives from nearly two years of deliberations and discussions in the context of the Aga Khan Award seminars about what, if anything, within contemporary architecture in Muslim countries can legitimately be considered Islamic. Furthermore, can this something be defined with sufficient clarity to be used as a criterion for evaluation?

When we dealt in the second seminar with restoration and rehabilitation the problem did not arise, for the criterion of having been part of Muslim history was sufficient to justify the consideration of any old remains. The concerns were or could have been technical (is a given monument or ensemble accurately restored?), social (what should be preserved and why within the context of contemporary culture?), informational (how should one present and exchange knowledge about monuments?), economic (how does rehabilitation relate to tourism or to urban mobility?), aesthetic (what is a good restoration?), or ideological (what is the purpose of preserving and whom does it profit?), but the value of the activity within the context of enhancing Muslim self–awareness was not questioned. It could have been, for the argument can be made that monuments, like people and cultures, may best be left to die, that antiquarianism in architecture is a peculiarity of a very limited Western elite and that preservation is a form of congealing a meaningless past, at best useful for flag–waving. But the discussion did not go that far.

Housing, the topic of the third seminar, was a much more complicated matter. It seemed clear to me that there were two extreme positions. One maintained that there is a definable Islamic typology of housing, whether its definition should derive from historical forms created in order to make an Islamic way of life possible or from a prescriptive system of religious and social requirements determined by the Koran, the Traditions and Law. The other extreme maintained that housing is independent of the pre-scriptions of the faith, either because contemporary problems require solutions independent of religious and cultural alle-giances or because Islam itself is pre-scriptive in behaviour, not in form. These extremes allow for a very extensive range of intermediate possibilities, but what was important about the debate itself was that the pertinence of Islam for housing—the system of belief and ways of life—*could* be questioned, while no one questioned the right of Muslims to a setting for whatever forms their lives may take. It was interest-ing that the texts quoted consisted either of very general statements (usually from the Hadith) about good behaviour and cleanliness or legal sources in which com-plex local practices and traditions were given a broad sheathing of theoretical jurisprudence. Statements attributed to the seventh and eighth centuries (for which we have few available forms) and contem-porary urban requirements are difficult to correlate, unless one tries to delve much more deeply into the evolution of Islamic law over the centuries. But even if un-answered in any way approaching coher-ence, the correct question was asked: what is the pertinence of Islam to architecture, now or in the past?

While this issue was aired in very broad terms at the first seminar and has reappeared from time to time, this fourth seminar seems to be the proper moment to try to be more specific and more concrete. But, even here, it is impossible to consider in one swoop the impact of Islam on architecture over fourteen centuries and from Spain to the Philippines—hence the choice of a series of questions dealing with
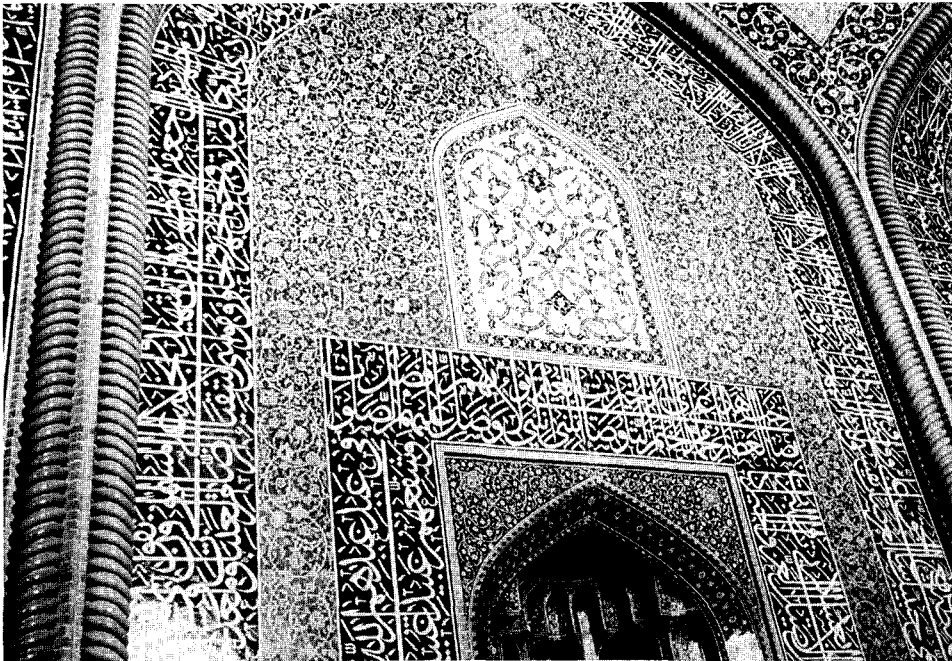
Isfahan, Iran: interior view of the Sheikh Lutfallāh
Photo: R. Holod

only one aspect of the impact. One could have chosen something as concrete as inheritance law and the development of building space in cities, but the information would not be easily available and the subject is hardly exciting. In proposing to deal with signs and symbols, the assumed social and psychological need to symbolize provides a different framework within which to consider Islamic architecture.

The questions can be formulated in the following way:

1) Is there an Islamic system of visually perceptible symbols and signs?

2) How universally Islamic is such a system and what are its variants?

3) What are the sources of the system, the revealed and theologically or pietistically developed statement of the faith, or the evolution of visual forms over fourteen hundred years?

4) In what fashion and how successfully were signs and symbols transformed into building forms?

5) How valid is the experience and memory of the past for the present and the future?

Old Approaches

The need for an approach derives from existing literature. To my knowledge, only two studies deal overtly and formally with symbolism and signs in Islamic culture and claim, at least in theory, some kind of completeness.

One is Rudi Paret, *Symbolik des Islam* (Stuttgart, 1958). Modestly restricted to "observation on the meaning of symbols (*Symbolik*) within the sphere of the Muslim world" (p. 9) and limited to religious matter, it tends to be descriptive rather than interpretative. Paret does, however, make an important distinction between primary and secondary symbols, the former being direct and immediate transformations of whatever is being symbolized (a complete set or system), the latter being more fragmentary or diverse,

at times a synecdoche (part used for whole) and at other times in multiple layers (as when a mystic headgear made of two pieces symbolizes *all* binary opposites like Paradise–Hell, Life–Death). It is only when dealing with mysticism that Paret, under the impact of Hellmut Ritter (on whom more below), moves beyond the descriptive to the visual symbolism of the Arabic alphabet. He does not, however, talk about visual architectural implications.

The second study is by Jacques Waardenburg, "Islam Studied as a Symbol and Signification System," *Humaniora Islamica* vol. II (1974). A theoretical essay on method, it asks appropriate questions (note in particular an interesting query about Islam as an ideology rather than as a religion) but loses itself by being so methodologically abstract that it fails in providing answers and even in indicating how these answers could in fact be found. Not even a nod is extended in the direction of visual forms.

Much more work has been done with the uniquely rich subfield of Islamic and especially Persian mysticism. The grand master of the field is Hellmut Ritter, whose *Das Meer der Seele* (Leiden, 1955) is one of the most elaborate and difficult systems of interpreting mystical thought. His successor, hardly less complicated, is Henri Corbin, some of whose works exist in English. An excellent introduction to all mystical matters is Annemarie Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam* (Chapel Hill, 1975). An interesting and occasionally quite provocative discussion of related issues around a single theme and with a broader base than Iranian Sufism or Ibn al-'Arabī can be found in M. Arkoun and others, *L'Étrange et le Merveilleux dans l'Islam Mediéval* (Paris, 1978), the proceedings of a lively colloquium. The most interesting aspect of these studies for our purposes is that they extend beyond traditional theological or esoteric interpretations into science and technology (S. H. Nasr, *Islamic Science*, London, 1976) and architecture (N. Ardalan and L. Bakhtiar, *The Sense of Unity*, Chicago, 1973). They owe little to broad symbolic theories

except to an implied (Jungian, I guess) assumption that certain kinds of formal transformations (i.e., not only the visible form but its finite or infinite modifications according to one or more logical or paralogical methods) are innate within the psyche and often affected by certain physical or cultural circumstances (e.g., the land of Iran with its ecological properties, Muslims brought up in Sufi traditions).

In most of these studies, just as in several works by T. Burckhardt (*Sacred Art in East and West*, London, 1967, and *Art of Islam*, London, 1976), which are not as deeply affected by Iranian culture, I see three inherent difficulties:

1) Nowhere is there an explicit statement of the relationship between data (measurable and quantifiable in time and space) and interpretation; in other words, as opposed to the works of philologists and even philosophers like Ritter or Corbin, there is an absence of scientific precision. Therefore, many of the conclusions seem premature.

2) The specifically Islamic character of forms is rarely clear or specific enough, except for calligraphy which is mentioned as unique but never described; in other words the Islamic component is either absent from what are basic human needs conditioned by local limitations (no stone in Iran, colder weather in Anatolia than in Egypt, and so on) or else it is simply a sheathing, a removable skin which is an expression of *taste*, not a symbol of the faith or the culture; this last point may be further strengthened by the undeniable fact that buildings (as opposed to objects in metal or paintings) were constantly repaired and refurbished to fit a prevalent taste and by the more debatable theory of earlier decades that visual expression was a sin in Muslim eyes.

3) The contemporary context is almost always missing; we may not yet have discovered a Suger or a Procopius in traditional Islamic culture, but we do have documents of contemporary witnesses which would prevent the unavoidable impression of modern constructs, perhaps

Jerusalem: Dome of the Rock

Photo: R Holod

But—and this is a key point—the charge was of low voltage. The Dome of the Rock, the mosque of Damascus, the north dome of Isfahan's Friday Mosque, the Alhambra and the Taj Mahal—buildings for which a highly intense meaning can be provided for the time of their creation—all lost their specific meaning soon thereafter. It is indeed as though Islamic culture as a whole consistently rejected any attempt to compel specific symbolic meanings in architecture comparable to those of Christianity and Hinduism (with their symbolic connotation in plan, elevation and decoration).

3) It is precisely this low symbolic charge of Islamic monuments which made it so easy for them to be copied and imitated elsewhere (Ettinghausen's argument). A corollary would be that the same low charge made it possible for an Indonesian pagoda or a Roman temple to become a mosque. In reality there is a somewhat more complicated intellectual and methodological problem involved in this reasoning, as I have tried to suggest in several unsatisfactory essays (*AARP* 13, 1978; "An Art of the Object," *Artforum*, 1976; "Das Ornament in Der Islamischen Kunst," *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Geselleschaft*, suppl. III, 1977). The problem is that a low charge of forms easily leads to ambiguity, and it is doubtful to me whether any culture can operate with an ambiguous visual system. Is it not, perhaps, once again a question of insufficient thinking and insufficient data–gathering?

Let me try to sum up this rapid and probably incomplete survey of the mostly recent literature (there may be much value in surveying the texts and notes of the great scholars of old like Herzfeld, van Berchem, von Kremer). No one has tried to identify an Islamic visual sign–symbol system in any serious way, with the partial exception of an Iranian and Sufi–oriented system. Part of the reason is the factual and intellectual underdevelopment of a field of study, but a more important reason lies perhaps in two aspects of Islam's historical destiny. First, it inherited

valid to modern man, applied to traditional forms.

If we turn to media other than architecture, the matching of literary evidence with works of art or the investigation of symbolic themes and ideas have been more thorough and more specific. The most conspicuous examples are various studies by Schuyler Cammann on rugs (in *The Textile Museum Journal* 3, 1972, and in P. J. Chelkowski, ed., *Studies . . . in honour of R. Ettinghausen*, New York, 1974) and much of R. Ettinghausen's work over the last thirty years (best examples in *Ars Orientalis* 2, 1957, and in J. Schacht and C. E. Bosworth, *The Legacy of Islam*, Oxford, 1974, pp. 274–291). Over the years several other scholars have made specific contributions to this general theme (Hartner, Baer, Dodds).

Ettinghausen's conclusions or (as he would have probably agreed) working hypoth-

eses can be summed up and slightly enlarged in the following manner:

1) There are in Islamic art certain themes such as the whirl, the lion, the bull and the signs of the zodiac which are historically older than Islam and which, with vagaries of no concern to us here, have been maintained in the new culture. Most of the identifiable symbols deal with secular themes or with what may be called "basic" religious symbols (earth, fire, life).

2) The one obvious new theme is writing; it is not merely an ornamental feature but either iconographic (Dodds, "The Word of God," *Berytus* 18, 1969, with the argument that it replaces images) or vectorial (Grabar, *The Alhambra*, 1978, or the "Dome of the Rock," *Ars Orientalis* 3, 1957; W. E. Begley, "The Taj Mahal," *The Art Bulletin* 61, 1979) in the sense that it charges neutral forms with concrete and sometimes very elaborate meanings.

many symbolically rich cultural traditions but could only preserve symbols which were not religiously charged and, to avoid the temptations of idolatry, preferred to restrict or even to stifle the growth of its own visual symbolism. Second, secular art was less affected by this restriction, but then secular art is by its very nature definable for the most part in social rather than cultural terms.

The hypotheses stated above are not fully satisfactory, in part for the very reasons I have used to criticize the opinions of others. They are abstract constructs for which archeological data exists, to my knowledge, only in the seventh to ninth centuries, and I am not certain how far it is legitimate to generalize from a few references and monuments. Mostly these hypotheses lack contemporary evidence; they have not made Muslims speak. Finally, all these hypotheses lack a clearly stated methodological premise. In what follows, I try to provide the latter by suggesting three methods of approaching the question with which we began.

Approach One: Pure Theory

From Plato to Wittgenstein, philosophers have talked about symbols and signs, and it is difficult not to be fascinated with St. Augustine's uses of the word "sign" (T. Todorov, *Théories du symbole*, Paris, 1977) or with E. Cassirer's *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms* 3 vol. (New Haven, 1953–57) and S. Langer's *Philosophy in a New Key* (Cambridge, Mass., 1953). These are all weighty and difficult works which rarely, if ever, attend to visual forms (music, literature and dance predominate). Less intellectually compact and conceptually abstract are anthropological works which I have consulted: R. Firth's *Symbols* (London, 1973), M. Eliade's *Images and Symbols* (New York, 1961), and a few more concrete studies by C. Geertz or V. Turner (*The Forest of Symbols*, Ithaca, 1967), or semiological ones (for our purposes the most useful ones are the works of U. Eco, *A Theory*

of Semiotics, Bloomington, 1979, and "Semiotics of Architecture," *Via* 2, 1973; G. Friedmann, "Une rhetorique des symboles," *Communications* 7, 1966; R. Barthes, "Elements de Sémiologie," *Communications* 4, 1964). A very interesting critical summary of several books is Abdul–Hamid el–Zein, "Beyond Ideology and Theology," *Annual Review of Anthropology* 6, (1977).

My overwhelming reaction to nearly all of these often brilliant and always fascinating works is one of despair. This despair has two components. The first is the non–commutability of abstraction; by this I mean that, even though specific observations and concrete reasonings about individual subjects led to the theory, I rarely saw an instance which would allow me to move backwards from the theory to some hitherto unstudied subject of Islamic architecture. The second component is that all these works hover between a requirement of nearly infinite and usually not available precision of information (particularly true of semiology; I dread trying to do a semiological analysis of a monument of architecture) and an obviousness of conclusions (the wall of a holy building is a symbol or a sign of the separation between sacred and profane, restricted and public spaces). In many ways the data of the anthropologist is too commonly spread in the segment of culture he studies to explain an accidentally preserved major monument, and questions of taste rarely appear in dealing with architecture as opposed to painting or objects (for a fascinating example see James C. Faris, *Nuba, Personal Art*, London, 1972).

How can these theories be useful even if they do not provide an automatic model or paradigm? First, there are certain semantic distinctions which are consistent enough that they can be used as premises for our purposes. For instance, a *symbol* is different from a *sign*, which indicates something, and an *image*, which represents it; a symbol defines something and connotes it but does not circumscribe it as does a sign or an image; thus a swastika

can be anything from an ornament to a potential incitement to hatred and destruction. Then, while a symbol is physically identifiable, it is itself not clearly circumscribed. As a tower for the call to prayer, the minaret is but a sign suggesting a function; it becomes a symbol when it reminds one of Islam, when it appears on stamps identifying a specific country (the spiral minaret of Samarra—its spiral quality is much more an Iraqi national symbol than an Islamic one), or when it serves to design a space (the Kalayan minaret in Bukhara, organizing open space between a mosque and a madrasa redone several times). In other words, while the sign attribute is fixed, the symbol attribute is a variable which depends on some "charge" given to it or on the mood or feeling (Langer's terminology) of the viewer ("referant"). Theory, therefore, compels us to identify and isolate the triple component of sign, symbol, referant. Of the three, symbol is the one which depends on predetermined conventions, habits or agreements which are not in the object but in those who share it. Our problem then becomes one of defining the semantic field of a symbol by finding the area in time or space of its contractual agreement with a social group.

Approach Two: Islamic Written Evidence

There are many different ways of imagining how written evidence could be used. Others with a better knowledge of texts than I will be able to provide examples or even answers to the following set of questions accompanied by brief and partial comments.

*Is there an indication that visual symbols or signs were, at any time, generally accepted ways of identifying functions, defining one's own as opposed to alien aims, or providing qualitative judgments?*

Looking over major classical and very different texts like Muqaddasī's *Geography* (see P. Wheatley, "Levels of Space Awareness," *Ekistics*, Dec. 1976), Ibn Nadīm's *Fihrist* (tr. B. Dodge, 2 vols.,

New York, 1964), and Ibn Khaldūn's
Muqaddimah (tr. F. Rosenthal, 3 vols.,
New York, 1958, esp. II, pp. 233ff.,
357–367), or Ibn Fāḍlān's description of
the Volga Bulghars, my answer is
negative. While alien lands are at times
identified by the peculiarities of their
visual expression (for instance, nearly all
descriptions of India in classical times), I
see no evidence of concrete visual symbols
which would be considered as uniquely
Muslim. The exception of the *minbar* in
tenth century geographical texts indicates
a certain kind of administrative status
rather than a reference to a concrete
object. The only other exception is the
Ka'ba which by definition is a unique
monument. This is not to say that there
are no Muslim symbols and signs, but they
consist less in visually perceptible features
than in memories of men and events: the
place where something took place or
where someone did something. The
literary genre of the *kitāb al-ziyārat*
(guidebooks to holy and memorable
places) which began in the twelfth century
only strengthens the hypothesis that the
Muslim tradition identified what is sacred
or holy to it in a *denoting* rather than
connoting fashion, i.e., in terms of
memorable associations and generalized
physical shapes (oval, rectangle) rather
than of concrete visual forms. In other
words, and with occasional exceptions
(like the *abwāb al-birr*, "gates of piety" in
early fourteenth century Iran), there is no
symbolic iconography of Islamic archi-
tecture to be derived from texts, as there
is, for instance, in Christian architecture.

*Is there an Koranic or early Hadith
symbolic system with visual associations?*

This is a difficult question to discuss
because it is difficult to develop an
appropriate method of dealing with it.
Should one simply analyze the Koranic
text as such? Or should one seek the
frequency of use of certain passages over
the centuries? For instance, one of the
most consistently used verses both in
architectural inscriptions and in depicting
Divine Power is the magnificent Throne
Verse (II, 256). But it is not the only
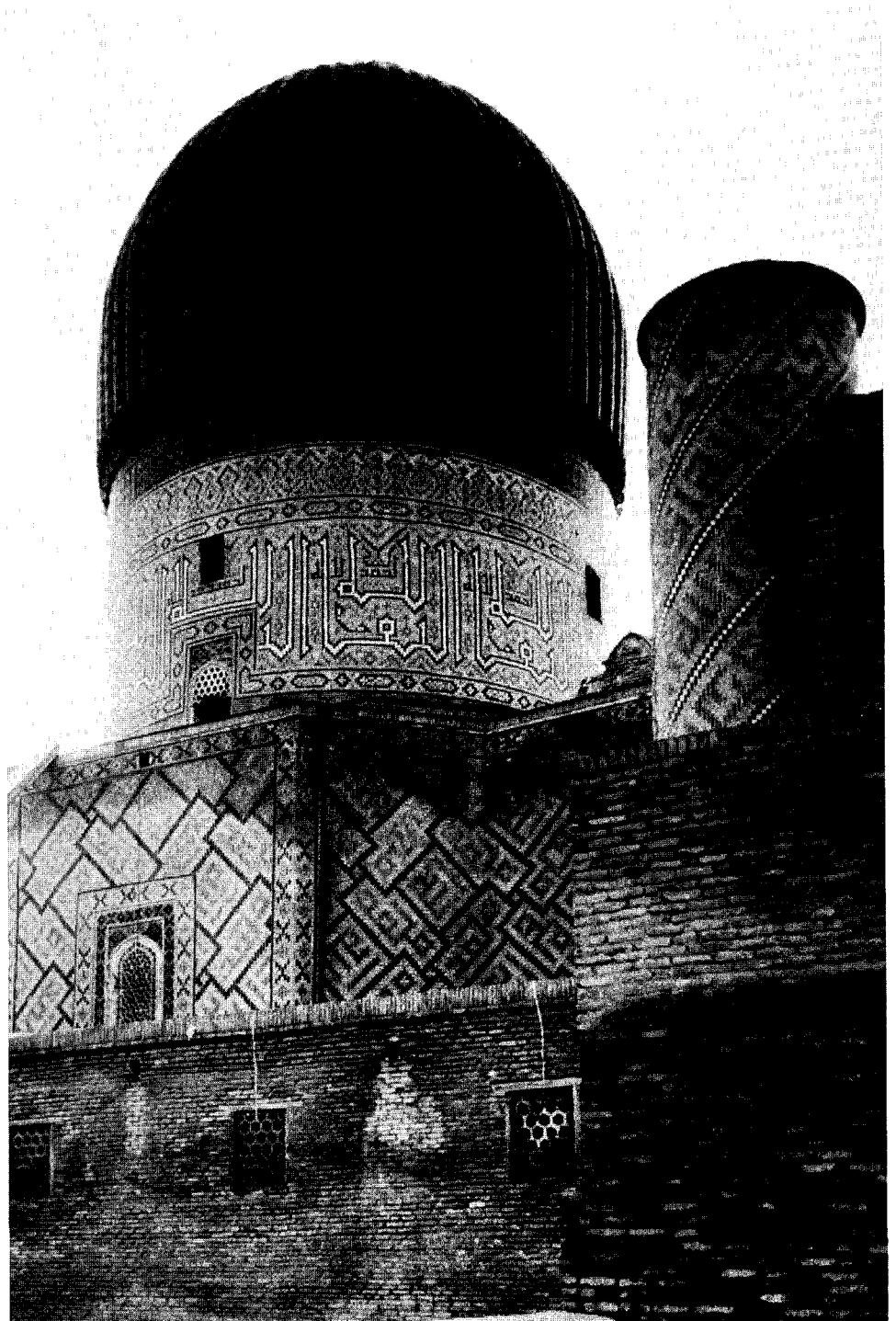
Samarqand, U.S.S.R.: Gūr–i Mīr

Photo: R Holod

instance in the Revelation of strikingly effective depictions either of Divine Might or of God's Throne. Some of them were occasionally used on monuments, as, for instance, VII, 52, in the north dome of Isfahan or LXVII, 1–5, found in the Hall of the Ambassadors in the Alhambra. In both instances the use of an unusual verse serves to explain the cupola's meaning, but can one conclude that these architectural meanings are inherent in the Koranic passage or that the monuments served to represent or otherwise symbolize the Holy Writ?

Another interesting passage is XXIV, 35–8, the "verses of light," which do suggest a symbolic physical setting reflecting Divine Presence. The passage was frequently used in *mihrābs*, but the later traditional Muslim mosque vocabulary hardly ever used the terms of the Koranic passage. This peculiarity does not preclude the existence of a Koran-based symbolic system; it merely questions its consistent validity for architectural history.

We know very little about the frequency and consistency of Koranic quotations. I propose the hypothesis that the symbolic or iconographic use of the Koran in Islamic art nearly always *followed* the development of a symbolic or iconographic need. Symbols, signs or meanings were discovered in the Koran but, at least as far as the arts are concerned, do not actively derive from it; in other words, I suggest there is no "iconography" of the Koran. Matters are obviously quite different in theology or law.

How culture–bound is the rich Islamic literary tradition of opulent princely dwellings?

A story from the *Thousand and One Nights* such as the "City of Brass" reflects an unbridled imagination about a magnificent palace. It contains, no doubt, the esoteric meaning of a difficult quest for Truth or Reality through secret and mysterious doors (like the ubiquitous *ya miftah al–abwāb*, "O Opener of Doors," in later Persian miniatures), but its details and its external mood are all of a brilliant

secular world. Should one interpret such stories as simply stylistically Islamic, i.e., as universal archetypes which have acquired culture–bound details? Or are they key reflections of a uniquely Muslim vision of sensuous beauty—paradisiac perhaps, but more likely fruits of a unique imagination formed by the confluence of an egalitarian faith and the reality of rich and isolated dynamic centres like Samarra or Topkapi?

How should we interpret technical and especially mathematical treatises applied to architecture or decoration?

Few of these texts have been properly published or translated, but, where available, as in the very recent book of M. S. Bulatov, *Geometricheskaia Garmonizatziia v Arhitektury* (Moscow, 1978), what is striking to me is that the subtle and complicated mathematical formulas are not presented as illustrations, symbols or signs of a faith or even of a cultural identity, but as practical solutions to architectural and ornamental requirements.

Hence, *is it legitimate to suggest a culturally accepted symbolism for visual forms as long as, in the highly verbal culture of traditional Islam, written sources give it explicit mention so rarely and require an esoteric approach to literature for demonstration?*

The obvious exception lies in the art of writing, where, thanks to the work of A. Schimmel and F. Rosenthal among others, it can clearly be demonstrated that a whole range of meanings, from direct sign to most elaborate symbol, had been developed, thought out and accepted. I am far less certain whether such matters as theories of colour in mystical thought (Corbin), for instance, actually did correspond to the uses of colour in artistic creativity. But this, perhaps, is simply a matter of insufficient research.

To sum up these remarks on written sources seems fairly easy within the present state of our knowledge. Except for the Arabic alphabet, there was no coherent, consistent and reasonably pan–Islamic acceptance of visually perceived

symbols; there was no clearly identifiable sense, even, of forms considered to be one's own, culturally discrete. It may, therefore, be possible to propose that traditional Islamic culture identified itself through means other than visual: the sounds of the city, the call to prayer, the Word of the Revelation but not its forms, the memories of men and events. If valid (and it is, I am sure, subject to criticism), this conclusion would suggest for the contemporary scene that it is not forms which identify Islamic culture and by extension the Muslim's perception of his architecture, but sounds, history and a mode of life.

To this statement intended primarily to promote discussion, I should like to attach three codicils. One is that there is some methodological danger in assuming too easily that written sources are the paradigms by which a culture saw itself; written sources reflect in large part the world of the literati, and neither St. Augustine nor St. Thomas Aquinas provide much information about the formation of early Christian art or of Gothic architecture. The importance of written sources lies in the parallelism they provide for visual phenomena and, to a smaller degree, in showing a time's characteristic concerns which contribute to the taste and will for creating monuments. My second remark is that written sources from the early Hadith onward provide an enormous amount of information in two related areas: the vocabulary of making anything from a textile to a building and hence the basic meaningful units (the morphemes) of visual forms, an area whose study has hardly begun, and judgments on changes of taste. For instance, a comparison between Ibn Jabayr (twelfth century) and Ibn Baṭṭūṭa (fourteenth century) describing the same parts of the Muslim world shows the same monuments and holy places in such different ways. Written sources do help in understanding the vernacular, the common, more easily than the unique in art, probably because the highest literati were often visual illiterates or at best visual vulgarians, a phenomenon which is

peculiar neither to the Muslim world nor to the past.

Finally, I have only alluded to written sources as essentially synchronic documents, with the obvious exception of the Koranic Revelation shown as a constant and consistent inspiration and justification of tastes, moods and function. There could be a diachronic analysis of literary sources seeking to find common and repeated themes and motifs; it is a dangerous kind of analysis, for it can too easily find consistency by comparing features which are not true parellels (as, for instance, both Persian and Arabic poetry, where I have often wondered whether metric and thematic consistency over the centuries is in fact what was prized at the time of creation of a new work of art). Such diachronic analyses, which may have been attempted without my being aware of them, could be of great importance in identifying consistent cultural threads.

Approach Three: The Monuments

I shall be briefer in discussing monuments, as some of them will be discussed more fully later in the seminar. Keeping in mind the broad questions raised at the beginning of these remarks, I would like to propose four points for discussion.

Proposition I. The Muslim world did create a number of monuments of art and architecture which are uniquely charged with symbols: the Ka'ba, the Dome of the Rock, the Taj Mahal, Fatehpur Sikri's throne of Akbar, and perhaps a few others (the mausoleum of Oljaytu in Sultaniyah, shrine of Lutfallāh in Isfahan) once someone undertakes to study them properly. But, in all instances known to me so far except the Ka'ba (which is in a way an "uncreated" monument), the depth of meaning with which the monument was created did not survive the time of its creation or was modified, as with the Dome of the Rock, which grew in religious connotations as the centuries went by, or with the Taj Mahal, which lost

them. Interesting though they may be to the historian, these monuments are of secondary significance for our purposes, because their uniqueness is more important than their typological set.

Proposition II. There are several instances of what I would like to call restricted symbolic cultural continuity in architecture. There is, for example, the large hypostyle mosque, a unique creation of the seventh century which solved several functional requirements of Iraqi Muslim communities. This type became a regional

one in some areas (Fertile Crescent, Arabia, Muslim West) but it also became symbolic of the introduction of Islam into new areas. Early Iranian mosques (this is a somewhat controversial topic at the moment for complex archeological reasons not pertinent to this discussion), early Anatolian ones and early Indian ones tend to adopt a form identified with early and pure Islam. Another example is the classical Ottoman mosque, whose large dome flanked by minarets and usually preceded by a courtyard became a symbol
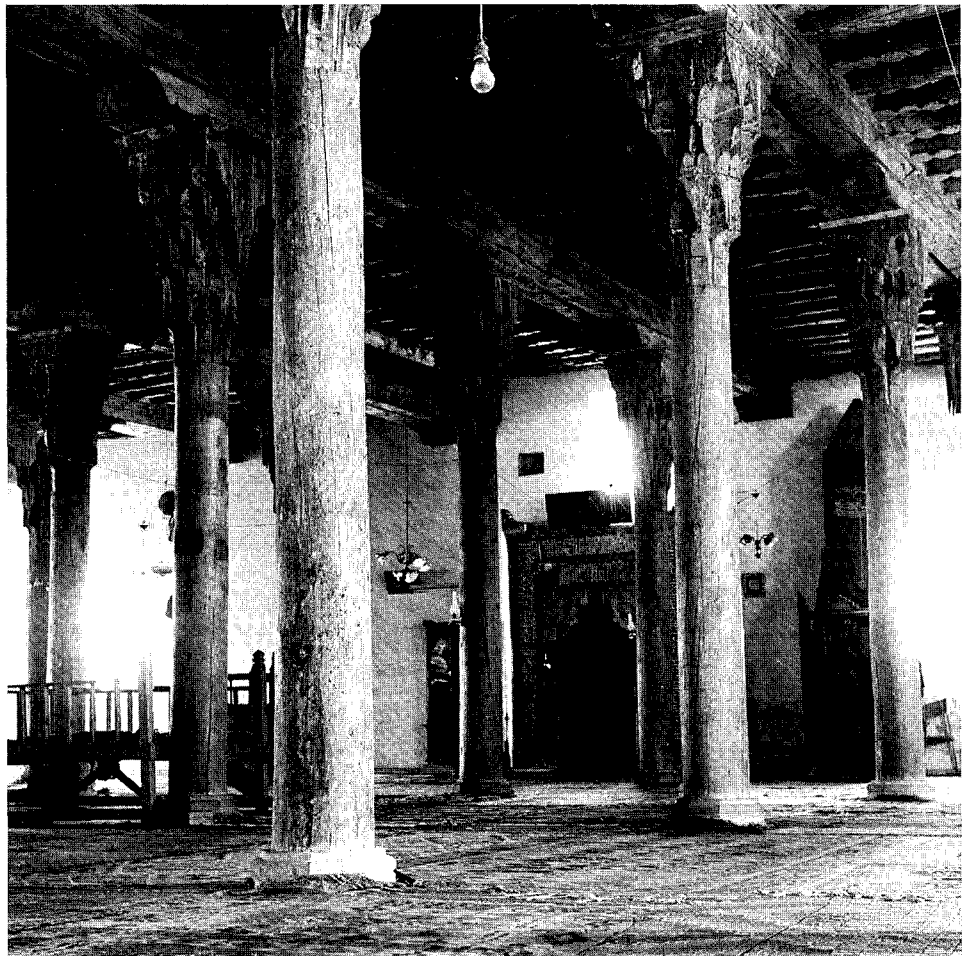
*Afyon, Turkey: interior of hypostyle mosque (c. 1272 A D.)*
Photo: M Niksarlı

of Ottoman cultural and political prestige and power from Algiers and Serbia to Egypt and Iraq.

The reason I used the word "restricted" for these examples is that specific historical and cultural conditions—the Ottoman empire or the Islamization of new lands—led to the symbolic quality of these forms; it was not a matter of their intrinsic value. The Ottoman mosque can become a national or romantic symbol and the building today of a hypostyle mosque in Tunisia is merely continuing a regional tradition.

Proposition III. There are very few architectural forms which are consistently indicative of the presence of Islam. The most obvious one is the minaret, whatever actual function it has had over time and whatever reasons led to its creation. I must admit that I am not satisfied with any of the traditional explanations of the minaret and its appearance, not only in the skyline of Cairo or as the elegant framer of Iranian façades or Ottoman volumes, but as a single monument in the Iranian countryside, at Jām in Afghanistan or in Delhi. The study of Koranic quotations on minarets is very instructive as they vary considerably from building to building or area to area. But in many cases both inscriptions and decoration lend themselves to a range of symbolic meanings which await their investigator. For instance, the use of the whole Sura Mariam (XIX) on the minaret of Jām identifies this extraordinary monument as a proclamation of Islam in its relationship to other religions, while the ornament of the Kalayan minaret in Bukhara can be understood as an expression of the central Muslim tenet of the Unity of God, since its different designs are in reality versions of the same motif.

Are there any other similarly obvious and constant forms? There are the *miḥrāb*s of sanctuaries, of course, but their symbolism is, with a few exceptions (Cordoba, some Fatimid examples in Cairo), an obvious one, and the object itself became automatically functional rather than emotionally or intellectually symbolic. There are traces of
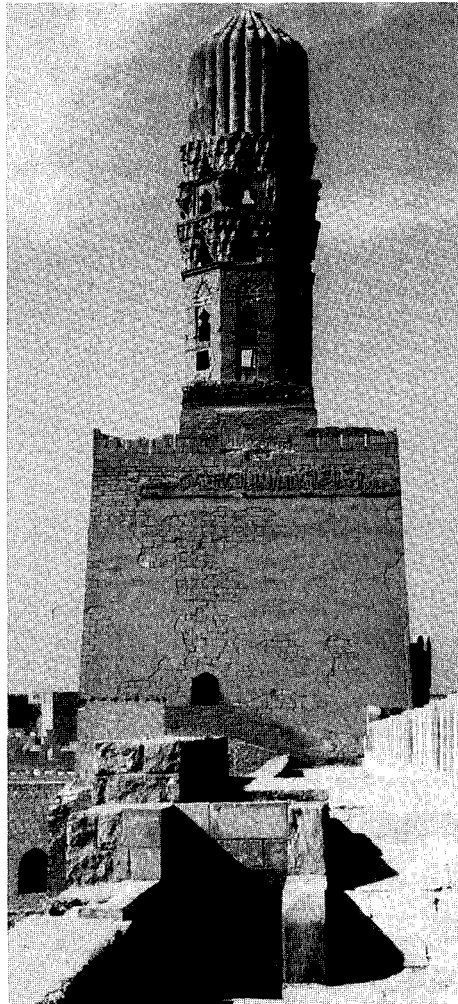
Cairo, Egypt: al–Hakīm mosque minaret bears the following verses from the Koran:

And certainly We have brought them a Book which We have made clear with knowledge, a guidance and a mercy for people who believe (VII,52)

There is no compulsion in religion, truly the right way has become clearly distinct from error; *therefore, whoever disbelieves in the devil and believes in Allah, he indeed has laid hold on the firmest handle, which shall not break off, and All is Hearing, Knowing " (II,256)*

But if they turn back, say: Allah is sufficient for me, there is no god but He, on Him do I rely, and He is the Lord of might power " (IX,129)

Photo S Blair/J. Bloom

a symbolism of gates in cities or even buildings, especially palaces, but this symbolism expresses itself more frequently in the names of gates than in their forms, a few exceptions as in Jerusalem's Haram notwithstanding. And anyway, I am not certain that the symbolic meanings which can be attributed to the gates of Abassid Baghdad or Fatimid Cairo remained significant symbols much after their creation. I am hesitant in attributing a symbolic rather than a socially functional meaning to traditional physical constructs of the Muslim city like the mosque–market–*maidān* unit.

I have mentioned primarily architectural symbols, because the seminar deals with architecture. Non–architectural visual symbols certainly existed as well, but to my knowledge none have been investigated in sufficient depth to know which ones were simple signs (hand of Fatima) and which ones acquired the kind of range which is required of a symbol (colour green, the Crescent).

If the proposition of the previous section that self–recognition within the Muslim tradition was primarily auditory and social is acceptable, this difficulty in defining an overall Islamic visual system need not be considered as troubling. In fact, it may simply demonstrate two secondary propositions. One is that symbolic systems may indeed tend to be most easily perceivable in time rather than across time. The other one is that in the actual perception of the environment such items as clothing, objects used and spoken accent are more significant than architecture.

Proposition IV. Symbolic and sign systems are to be sought not in architecture but in decoration, decoration being understood in its widest sense as those parts of a building which are not necessary to its physical utilization or structural stability.

If my earlier suggestion of symbolic systems as richer synchronically than diachronically is acceptable, this proposition is strengthened by the fact that decoration could and did change in kind (continuous additions) or in meaning (the reinterpretation of the mosaics of

Damascus by later writers). Furthermore, while nearly all architectonic units or even combinations and developments of units in Islamic architecture are easily relatable to the morphology and growth of other architectural traditions, this is much less so with decoration, whose motifs and combinations are nearly always culturally unique. To dismiss this decoration as "mere" decoration is a Western imperialist reflex from a society which equates meaningful decoration with representation and which for half a century has rejected decoration within its own "progressive" architecture.

But how are we going to find meanings in it? There is something troubling, for instance, in looking at a series of thirteenth century portals in Anatolia which are formally very difficult to distinguish from each other yet which serve as

Isfahan, Iran: the Barsian minaret bears Koranic verse XXII,76:

He knows what is before them and what is behind them, and to Allah are all affairs turned back

Photo: R Holod

entrances to mosques, madrasas, hospitals and caravanserais. Is this decoration unrelated to the purpose of a monument except in the very general way of beautifying, at best attracting to, an unexpressed function? Within the synchronic scheme proposed earlier, the answer may be positive, as one can easily argue that the contemporary did not have to be told by a façade whether a building was a warehouse or a hospital.

Yet it is unlikely that we will be satisfied with such an answer for three reasons. One is that a series of studies on objects and miniatures, for which similar explanations have been provided, tend to show that a close examination demonstrates in almost every case a complex iconographic and symbolic meaning. A second one is that it is hardly reasonable to expect enormous efforts on meaningless forms. And third, the study of major monuments of architecture almost always demonstrates great depth of meaning. In other words, we have not taken a proper look at these monuments and their decoration. Let me outline two possible approaches for dealing with this problem.

The first approach would be morphological, seeking to find such themes of decoration as have meanings. The most obvious one is writing, as monuments as diverse in quality and importance as the Taj Mahal, the Guyushi mosque in Cairo, and the Qaytbay complex also in Cairo are explained by the Koranic quotations on their decoration. One of the most striking "un–Islamicities" of contemporary architecture is its failure to make aesthetically appealing use of calligraphy. I should add that writing exists at several levels in intelligibility: direct quotation probably only available to the very literate in the past but to all in the future; rhythmic punctuation with litanic repetitions known to most, as in the clear *al–mulk lillāh* (Power of God) which organizes the lengthy and wordy inscriptions of Persian mosques from the fifteenth century onward; simple statements of God and His Prophet, known to all, which adorn the outside walls of madrasas in Khargird or

Samarqand. I have elsewhere discussed and, I hope, demonstrated this use of writing as a vector of meaning in architecture (*The Alhambra*, 1978).

Next to writing is geometry. I am less clear about the actual perception of geometry and hesitate to accept in full the *Gestalt* explanation proposed by Ardalan and others for Iran, but I am convinced that the geometry of Isfahan's north dome based on the pentagon or of Bukhara's minaret with several hypostases of the same basic design cannot be simply a designer's whim. But I am not sure how to approach the problem, just as methods should be devised for dealing with vegetal motifs or with a theme like the *muqarnas* which involves nearly all morphemes of decoration.

The second approach would be syntactic and would consist in studying and explaining whole ensembles. To my knowledge, no one has attempted to do so in Islamic architecture. One example may serve as a conclusion to this essay. I have long been puzzled by what seemed to me to be the arbitrary location of tiled panels in classical Iranian mosques of the fifteenth to seventeenth centuries. Yet, in the Masjid–i Shāh's main dome, the progression to the burst of light at the apex of the dome seems to me to be an extraordinary attempt at symbolizing the Revelation not as the static and learned order of a Gothic portal or of a Byzantine church but as the dynamic and sensuous illumination of a faithful praying. The symbolism of the decoration is not an inherent property of the design but the result of man's prescribed action in the building.

Could one extend the point to propose that the true uniqueness of the Muslim visual symbolic system lies not in the forms it took but in the relationship it creates, indeed compels, for its users? A celebrated Tradition is that wherever a Muslim prays there is a mosque. Symbolic or signifying identity lies in setting and man, not in form. Is this a possible challenge for contemporary architecture?
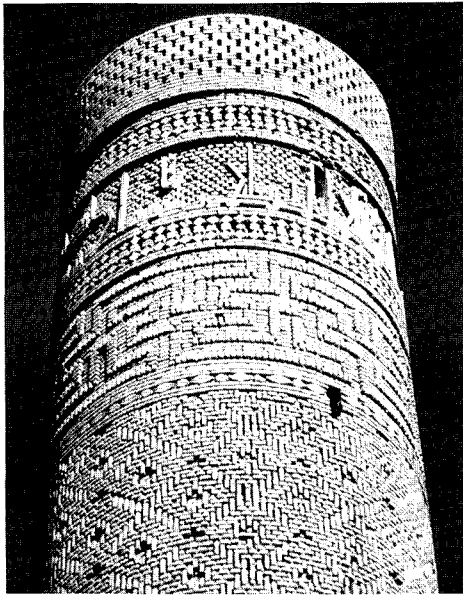
Afterword

What follows is a series of questions and concerns derived from the preceding pages which may in themselves merit further consideration.

1) *Synchronic versus diachronic.* I am suggesting that it is easier to identify a synchronic symbolic and semiotic system than a diachronic one which either becomes obvious and undifferentiated or requires the preliminary investigation of synchronic sets. Too few instances of the latter exist to justify many significant definitions of Islamic symbols. I should also add that the nature of a valid time frame is a very difficult question which has hardly ever been raised by historians of forms. I am not even sure that linguists have discussed the aspect of time in their consistent concern for semantic fields, but I may simply not be aware of some existing work.

2) *Specific forms and archetypes.* This is a very delicate issue. If we were dealing with architecture in general, it would be perfectly appropiate to discuss and refine broad and universal human needs, feelings, means of perception and the like as they are adapted to concrete ecological requirements. But I understand our concern for the architecture of Muslims to mean, when symbolism and signs are concerned, those aspects of architecture which are not universally meaningful but discretely significant to a certain culture. We *can* come to the conclusions that this discrete significance was minimal or merely cosmetic, that the contemporary world has made cultural discreteness obsolete and that universal modes of judgment are the only valid ones. But, if we do come to these conclusions, we must be sure that we are aware of what they mean.

3) *Architectural symbols and functions.* The greatest difficulty I had was in identifying those aspects of architectural creation for which it is justified to seek a symbolic significance. My answer is that the referant alone (user, viewer) decides on the symbolic meaning of an artistic creation. Hence architectural symbolism can only be demonstrated from non–architectural sources—written sources, opinion surveys or whatever else may be developed. Theoretically it is possible to derive symbolic meanings from formal consistencies, i.e., the repetition over the centuries of certain forms (E. B. Smith, *Architectural Symbolism*, Princeton, 1953), but I am not sure whether consistency of form means consistency of symbols or convenience for functions.

4) *Symbols and styles.* Can one maintain a distinction between aesthetic and taste impulses (style) and a range of associative reactions (symbols)?

5) *Visual and auditory perception.* 1 may have overstressed the thought that Islamic culture finds its means of self–identification in hearing and acting rather than in seeing. But I am more than ready to be corrected on this point.

Note

[1] "Interpretation is still obviously the central and most difficult problem In principle, we can always bring up the question of the validity of a hermeneutics Through cross–references, clear assertions (texts, rites, representative monuments) and half–veiled allusions, we can demonstrate precisely what such and such symbol 'means ' But we can also state the problem in another manner: do those who utilize symbols realize all their theoretical implications? For instance, when studying the symbolism of the 'Cosmic Tree,' we say that this tree is located in the 'Centre of the World ' Are all individuals belonging to societies that know of such Cosmic Trees equally conscious of the integral symbolism of the 'Centre'? But the validity of the symbol as a form of knowledge does not depend on the degree of understanding of such and such an individual Texts and representative monuments prove extensively that, at least to certain individuals of an archaic society, the symbolism of the 'Centre' was transparent in its totality; the rest of society was satisfied with the act of 'participating' in symbolism. Moreover, it is hard to state precisely the limits of such participation; it varies according to an indeterminate number of factors All we can say is that the actualization of a symbol is not mechanical; it is related to the tensions and alternations of social life and ultimately with cosmic rhythms " M Eliade

Symbolism in Its Regional and Contemporary Context

Doğan Kuban

Symbolism is founded not in a mysterious relation between the sign and the contents of the human mind, but between an object and a gesture, and an action and its influence upon the receptive organism.

L. Malinowski

I was fortunate to read Prof. Grabar's paper before trying to put down my own thoughts. Grabar raises most of the questions relevant to symbolism in Islam with particular emphasis on Islamic architecture. I have sought to answer or elaborate and sometimes to contradict or criticize his ideas in order to clarify the orientation of the overall investigation.

Grabar begins by asking whether there is an Islamic system of visually perceptible symbols and signs, how universally Islamic such a system is, and what its variants might be. I phrase this question somewhat differently. In the great variety and wealth of forms in the Muslim world, are there universally perceptible visual symbols? A civilization as rich and continuous as the Islamic civilization has no doubt created a multitude of symbolic systems within its domain. Can such systems be considered universally valid?

A Case Example: The Minaret

We may examine the problem of the universality of architectural symbolism by choosing a prominent example: the minaret. It is emblematic of the mosque because it is a functional part of it. By extension of this function it can be taken as the symbol of prayer, the symbol of the Islamic town and ultimately of Islam itself. Yet there is no specific prescribed form for the minaret. Therefore, not the form of the minaret but the fact that it serves an Islamic function is what makes it symbolic. The particular shape of the minaret is acknowledged and accepted by those who share the. culture in which it was created. For persons living outside certain cultural parameters, a minaret is merely a tower. Giralda in Seville has no religious significance for Turkish peasants.

Delhi, India: detail of the Friday Mosque showing minaret and dome

Photo: D. Sareen/Aga Khan Awards

It is clear that the symbolic importance of the minaret was borrowed from pre-Islamic cultures. The minaret is first a sign and only becomes a symbol on a higher level of appreciation. Its form is therefore defined culturally, not religiously. I want to emphasize here that if we cannot identify a specificity of form even for the minaret, we are not likely to locate such specificity in other building elements. A practical corollary would be the observation that the tower form, stripped of its cultural context, cannot properly be deemed of "universal" importance to an Islamic landscape. We recall that in early Islam there was no minaret, and even in later Islam there have been mosques which totally lack minarets or whose minarets are not towers.

From this we can conclude that no "universal" Islamic architectural forms exist without a degree of ambiguity. Nor can we expect to attain a modern and universally valid Islamic architecture through the repetition of such forms. On the other hand, there are elements of Islamic life and culture where continuity is an important concern. The quest for cultural continuity and cultural identity requires identifying the necessary linking elements. In architecture these links are presumed to be the old forms.

If one wishes merely to imitate an old mosque, the problem of continuity can be solved in a straightforward way; no discussion is required except to determine the methods of imitation. As far as purely formal aspects are concerned, I can imitate the Qayrawiyyin mosque in a new mosque at Rabat or a copy of the sixteenth-century Süleymaniye at Ankara. Such imitative solutions are actually being employed. This demonstrates that although there are no universally adopted forms in Islamic architecture, regionally identifiable ones do exist and are accepted as symbolic.

Plurality, Continuity and the Function of Forms

The universal, all-encompassing characteristics of Islam as a way of life have not been sufficient to create an all-embracing world of forms. The number and variety of forms, therefore, is not a product of an Islamic world view but the outcome of varying regional and cultural interpretations. Changing attitudes and a plurality of traditions have found different expressions in various phases of Islamic history. There is no doubt that universal Islamic values are incorporated into the life of every Muslim society. These values, in the form of social behaviour, emanate from the Koran and Sunna. Nevertheless, as Grabar discusses, no body of writing attests to the symbolic content of any architectural form. In a sense this is proper, because a dependence on any implied value in forms is inherently anti-Islamic. Forms are transient. Only Allah, who is formless, is eternal. Thus the perception of any continuity of form is not a religious but a cultural attitude.

To differentiate a religious attitude from a cultural attitude so thoroughly shaped by religion would seem difficult. But religion does not condition all aspects of behaviour; it only sets limitations. The Tradition does not say the *hajj* must be made on donkey, on camel, on foot, by car or by airplane. If the Koran and Sunna had prescribed physical forms, nobody could ever have added to Mecca and the form of the pilgrimage would have remained unaltered; neither could the route between Ṣafā and Marwa have been covered nor tunnels built under the rocks to ensure that pilgrims to Mina are protected. At Mecca, overwhelmingly practical considerations totally eclipsed symbolic intent, if indeed any ever existed. It is certainly difficult to define the symbolic content of traditional Islamic forms if so radical a change in environment can occur in the very heart of Islam and in close proximity to the symbol of symbols.

Obviously there is no reason to insist on a continuity of forms if this is rejected by the very history of Islam itself. On the other hand, the neutrality of tradition (vis-à-vis the physical forms of life) should not lead us to reject historical forms. Although they may lack deep religious meaning, traditional values embodied in some forms and spatial relationships continue to be cherished. It is to these cultural traditions, then, that we should look when seeking symbolism in the architecture of Islamic countries.

Let us consider a concrete example. Whether functional or symbolic or both, in North Africa and Spain we find dark, shadowy mosque interiors contrasted with bright courtyards. Full, massive exterior forms contrast with delicate surface textures; white or red monochrome exteriors contrast with exuberant interior surface colours. Shadows cast by high walls onto winding paths suggest a certain relationship between sun and shade. Any modern building which boasts a combination of these aspects expresses a certain continuity of spirit with the past. Is this expression of continuity enough to make the edifice symbolic of Islam for modern men? I think this evocation is possible, but not necessary.

Grabar asks in what fashion and how successfully were signs and symbols— however restricted in time and space— transformed into building forms. If we pose the question in this way, there will very likely be no answer. Symbols do not evolve into forms, but forms, through certain cultural and psychological mechanisms, earn the status of symbols. We may also ask whether there exist, in totally disparate historical and geographical settings and different worlds of regional forms, similar mechanisms for the formation of symbols. If so, what is the role of religion in this process? These are difficult questions, and I am unaware of the existence of a study or theory yielding any clue to this universal mechanism.

Obviously, every possible influence, whether of a material, personal, societal or spiritual nature, may be expected to play a part in the development of forms.

Religious regulations and prescriptions for everyday behaviour may have been initially influential, but it was their practical aspect and not their spiritual content which was influential. Religious traditions defined acts, not the forms and spaces in which these acts were to be executed. The spaces and forms are actually neutral and can serve any purpose. Only their usage invested them with meaning. Time first conferred upon them the status of a sign indicative of a function or an act and only secondly a symbolic implication.

A symbol's meaning is subject to religious or secular adaptation. In the realm of mysticism and the esoteric, symbolism is attached to every object in space and to space itself. A Bektashi convent is a case in point. Here the form of space is not shaped in accordance with any detailed symbolism; it is simply a cubic room.

Toward a Vocabulary of Symbolic Meanings

To Prof. Grabar's query about the validity of experience and the usefulness of past memories for the future, we may say that *the symbol of the present is the sign of the past*, because it is the end product of an evolved system of knowledge and beliefs. According to historical consensus, the greatest works of art are those created in the past and not the products of our own age.

Grabar remarks that in the writings of Nader Ardalan and others there is an implicit assumption that certain kinds of formal transformations with their infinite modifications "are innate within the psyche and often affected by certain physical or cultural circumstances." Even if we accept this statement, it yields no clues to the understanding of symbolism unless we define the relationship between specific circumstances and the human psyche. Here I would reiterate a pertinent remark by Grabar: *unless we take the contemporary situation into account, the use of past symbolism as the sole basis for our explanation can only be incorrect.*

Grabar observes that Islam lacks a rich vocabulary of symbolic meanings comparable to that found in Christianity. Recalling Ettinghausen's opinion about the low symbolic charge of Islamic monuments, Grabar opines that it was this low charge which made it possible for an Indonesian pagoda or a Roman temple to become a mosque. The easy transformation of any symbolically different building into a mosque may result from the particular nature of the Muslim religion. Allah is everywhere and in every act. Nothing is necessarily closer to Him than anything else since everything emanates from Him. A symbolic meaning may be attached to a given form but it does not come from this source. The meaning is derived from human necessities that may be cultural, functional or economic.

A shape should not have a religious significance. It should not become an idol. I am even inclined to admit that any formal symbolism in Islam is essentially anti–religious. But religion does not interfere with the cultural significance of symbolic forms, nor does it dictate their existence or nonexistence. If we accept that formal symbolism in Muslim culture operates on a level below religious significance, our problem will be easier to solve.

Grabar asks whether cultures operate in ambiguous visual systems. This is surely the case. Ambiguity derives largely from the necessity for individual interpretations. The relationship between form and symbolic content, especially in architecture, is not likely to be interpreted in the same way by every individual.

Can a mosque be more than a place of prayer for the common man? He lacks the vocabulary to attach much abstract significance to it. But it is difficult to accept that a symbolic meaning for a form can exist without a capacity for verbal explanation. Signs and symbols must have verbal synonyms or their existence cannot be proven. I believe that the discovery of a concrete terminology to explain symbolic meanings is of paramount importance. The Muslim written traditions do not provide

much assistance in regard to this aspect of Muslim life, but surely a lack of literary mention does not denote total nonexistence. The paucity of reference may only signify literary disinterest.

Another point is important in this context. Muslim culture is not as object–oriented as Western culture. When the West arrived with all its material might, with its idolatry of objects and with a great fanfare of new symbols, the nonchalant, symbolically low–charged Muslim architecture succumbed to this powerful force. If Islamic architecture had been heavily invested with religious symbolism, this sudden submission to Western forms would not have occurred. Perhaps our very search for the nature of symbolic meaning is but another example of Western influence.

We should not conclude, as does Prof. Grabar, that it is not forms which identify Islamic culture and by extension the Muslim's perception of his architecture, but sounds, history and mode of life. Only the very early history of Islam is a common denominator for modern Muslims. In Muslim countries "mode of life" suggests all possible varieties of human experience. Except for a common creed, neither history nor lifestyle can identify a unified Islamic culture. In consideration of wide stylistic differences in the great Muslim monuments, Grabar's argument is untenable. Consequently, we must reduce the elements from the universal to the regional and from the specifically religious to the cultural. We must define temporal and geographic boundaries, and look for symbolism in an existential and not a religious context.

In his third proposition Grabar states that very few architectural forms have been consistently indicative of the presence of Islam. This seems to be an incorrect approach to our problem, since it is based upon a faulty assumption of the universality of symbols. Symbolic value is present whenever a *meaning*, subject to alteration, is attached to *any* artifact in the environment. We cannot assign symbolic meaning to the mosque, the gate, the

cupola, or the *minbar*. Symbolic values in the existing environment are not assigned spontaneously, but they evolve and exist in everyday life over a period of time. The common people perceive symbolic values, but they seldom have the desire or the ability to express them.

The next issue is whether form itself is a manifestation of the symbolic. Here the detailed study of esoteric symbolic meanings will prove unproductive. For practical purposes the symbolic value of architectural forms lies in their visual impact as perceived by ordinary people.

Decoration as Symbol

Grabar's fourth proposal is to seek Islamic symbolism in decoration. I think that apart from calligraphy intimately connected with architecture, it is difficult to ascertain the Islamic content of decoration. I suspect that when Grabar says "symbol," he actually means something more on the order of a sign. There is indeed a characteristic Islamic approach to decoration but every culture within the Islamic world follows its own style.

Does an inscription on a Sheraton Hotel make it Islamic? In a sense it would, because the presence of calligraphy is an immediate reference. By this reasoning, an Arab–owned bank in London would be Islamic. But when Grabar says that "one of the most striking 'un–Islamicities' of contemporary architecture is its failure to make aesthetically appealing utilization of calligraphy," he leans toward a dangerous generalization.

Admittedly, calligraphy does not play the same role in the modern as in the historic Islamic building. But do we really want to write the names of Allah alongside Coca–Cola signs on the balconies of stadiums?

In Turkey we use the Latin alphabet. Should we decorate our façades with Arabic script?

Until now, no body of research has sought to elucidate the correspondence between architectural form and its inner meaning. An evaluation of the form of the most sacred of Muslim buildings, the mosque, reveals little correspondence between Muslim prayer ritual and the mosque form. No satisfactory answer has yet been offered to the question of what confers symbolic meaning upon a form. Is it formal quality or function? I suggest that we look in the realm of function as precisely defined by time and space.

From Past to Present Tense

To what extent should we seek historical antecedents of modern, symbolically–imbued form? My own inclination is that there is no need for an historical perspective at all. For those who believe in the validity of such a regeneration, I cite the following cautionary example. The Prophet's house in Medina served as a mosque. There was no minaret, no *miḥrāb*, no *minbar*. Since the life of the Prophet represents the ideal life for a Muslim, all the auxiliary forms which are now associated with a mosque may be taken as superfluous. Of course, no Muslim will accept this, because in Islamic tradition the accretion of forms and changes in their symbolic content are accepted. Our problem lies in our capacity to control the rate of change of this symbolic content. If it is too fast, a vacuum in symbolic meaning will result. A lack of communication between past and future accounts for the veritable cultural chaos of today's Islamic world. But neither should we retard changes in symbolism by looking longingly to the great monumental buildings of the past or by excessively cherishing domes, arches and courtyards.

Today we face a dilemma. How can Islam as a potential source of symbolism be reconciled with the modern international architectural forms which introduce their
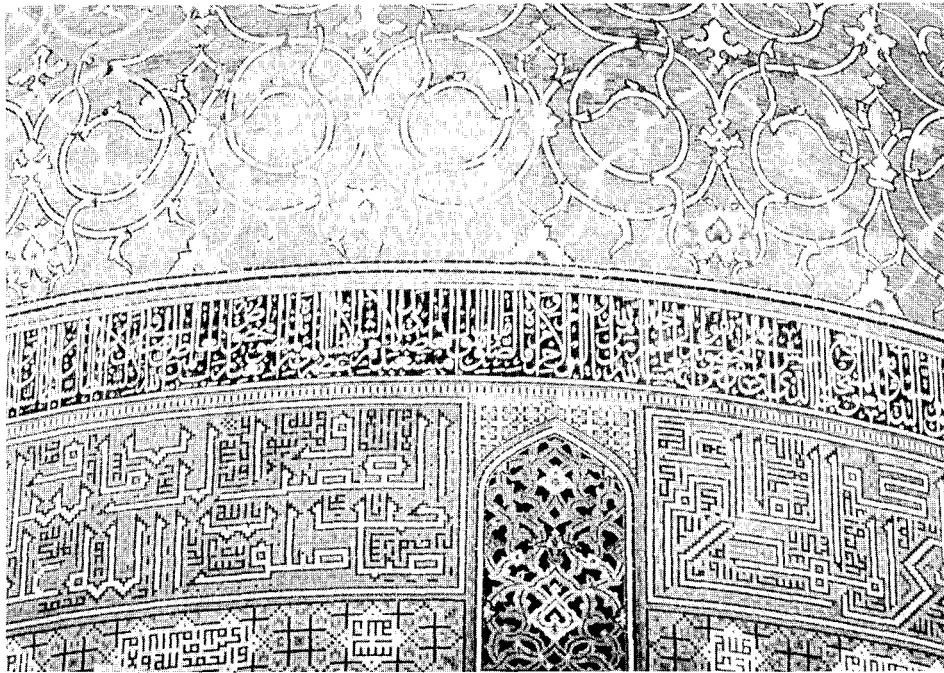
Isfahan, Iran: Masjid–i Shāh, dome exterior
Photo: V. Prentice
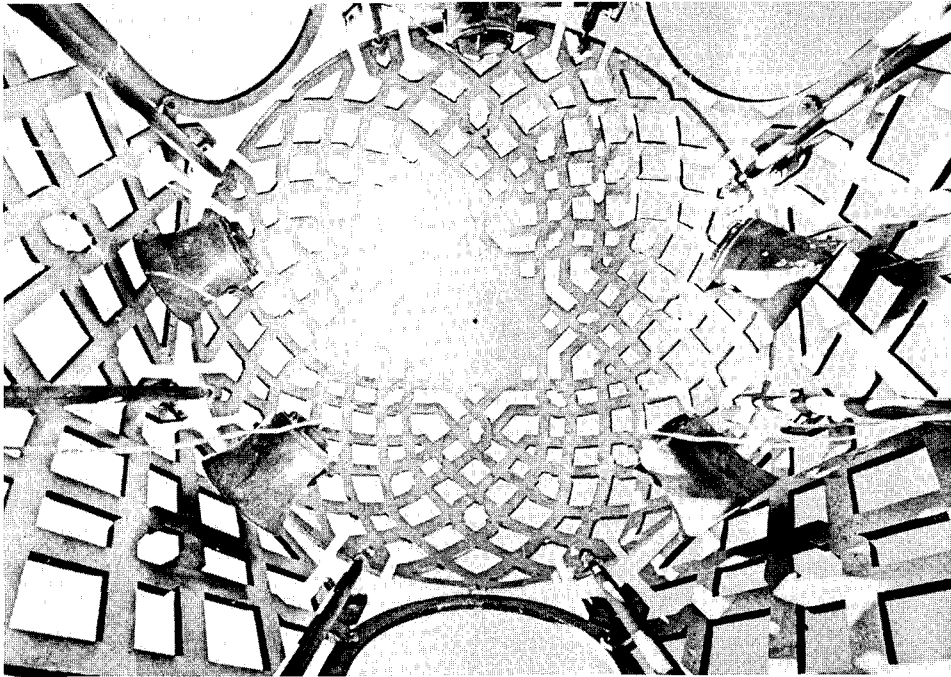
Mecca Hotel and Conference Centre, Saudi Arabia interior view of contemporary design minaret

Photo: M Al–Hariri/Aga Khan Awards

own symbolism of technology? Contemporary symbolic forms are so readily accepted that even alien techniques and foreign authorship do not appear to have slowed their adoption by Muslims. The masses are happy to destroy their old houses in favour of new apartments. The rulers are satisfied when international designers build their palaces, government offices, airports and universities. As a social consensus, nobody seems to be bothered by these forms borrowed from foreign cultures. And so against a background of acceptance, on what authority do we denounce the lack of Islamic symbolism in these buildings?

Problems of Definition

I would like to conclude by discussing problems of definition of a more practical nature. To simplify our discussion of

symbolism in architecture, two distinct aspects of the problem should be clearly separated. One is the symbolic value of traditional architectural forms, and the second is their role in architecture and in the modern environment in general. The latter aspect may also be subdivided, as it includes both entire old buildings situated in the modern environment and isolated old forms assimilated into modern buildings.

The derivation of symbolic value from any architectural form is a theoretical problem. I strongly doubt that any definitive agreement on the nature of the symbolic process in the built environment can ever be reached. But discussion is useful, because even if the symbolic values of certain forms die out, the process itself survives; new forms of symbolism replace the old ones, possibly fulfilling the same unaccountable needs of the human psyche. We can hope to understand this mecha-

nism only through an analysis of the past. Historical analysis also makes clear that different cultures have differing attitudes toward conferring symbolic value upon a given form.

Human beings have an intuitive inclination to symbolize. I believe this is an extension of the act of recognition, glorifying the capacity for memorization evinced by humans and their society. The ability to memorize and to remember past experiences has been the basis for the development and survival of human society. Simple memorization requires symbolization, and the modern world offers many examples of the use of symbolizing for practical and functional purposes.

No matter what aspect of symbolism we consider, we must take its actual usage into account. There is no stronger clue to the value of a symbolic form than its perception and acceptance by the community at large. To underline this fact is a matter of practical necessity. The Award aims at actual contributions to the shaping of the man–made environment in Islamic countries. The old relationships between form and sign or symbol concern us in the degree to which they illuminate contemporary perceptions; symbols cannot exist without perceivers.

The symbolism of surviving elements of the traditional environment exists on several levels. The great monuments have become symbols by dint of value judgments accumulated over many generations. The built environment in its totality is also symbolic of a certain way of life. But these symbols act in different ways. The great mosque as a symbol has a certain invulnerability because it does not belong to individuals; it is part of the common heritage. On the other hand, the urban landscape is composed essentially of privately–owned homes. Home and family are practically synonymous terms. Individual houses are easily replaceable elements in the urban fabric. Homes lack the symbolic value of great monuments; unless they are connected with some historical fact of importance, they are vulnerable. The absolute control over a

private residence is vested in its owner. In the case of individual houses, therefore, the necessary prerogatives of daily life are greater than any symbolic importance. Any symbolic value inherent in a house form comes from its long use, from its becoming a paradigm of some experience or quality of life. When this form, whose value is so overtly experiential, does not fulfill the exigencies of changed circumstances, it is difficult to interfere with the demands of its owners that it be changed.

In the past, this change in demand as reflected in form occurred smoothly because the additions or replacements were of a similar and familiar quality. Today, however, the replacement is likely to be totally foreign in nature. The superiority of the Western image in architecture is not, however, a product of the experience of generations. It is derived from the political and economic superiority of an alien world which imposes itself by sheer force. This is clearly a different kind of symbolism.

When we speak of implicit symbolism in the forms of the past, we refer to the intrinsic quality of the native building process which developed very slowly. This development may even have been imperceptible in a normal human life span. With modern symbolism, the story is entirely different. Therefore, any argument about architectural symbolism will be on sure ground only if all participants in the debate share clear and common definitions of the meaning of symbolism. Symbolism is subject to temporal and spatial delimitation and should be considered only in proper context.
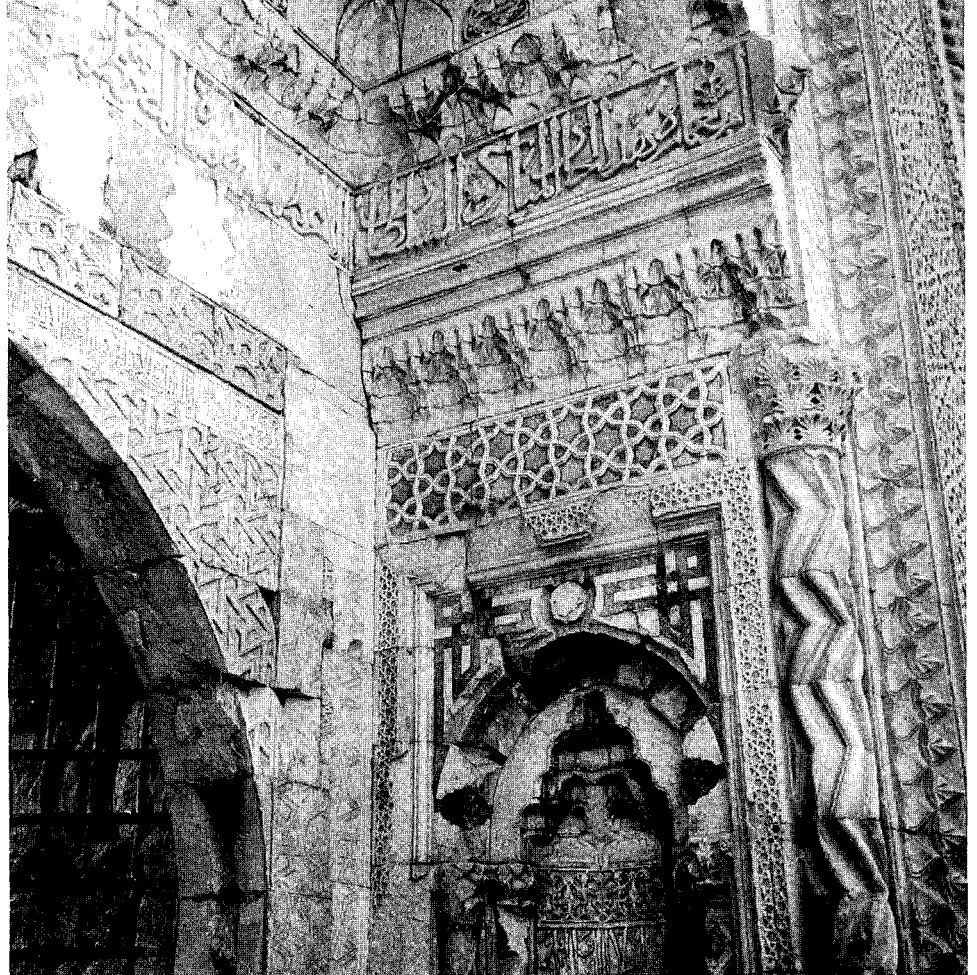
Aksaray, Turkey: Sultan Han, a Seljuk caravanserai. Detail of main portal

Photo: M Niksarlı

The Visual Language of Symbolic Form: A Preliminary Study of Mosque Architecture

Nader Ardalan

As a practicing architect in the Islamic world, my views reflect the concerns of one who has practically and philosophically encountered the issues of traditional architecture and its potential integration within the contemporary context.

My fifteen years of experience in this field have taught that Islamic art and architecture traditionally place the highest value on the achievement of beauty. This is a natural outgrowth of the Koran, the fountainhead of the Islamic perspective, which emphasizes goodness, truth and knowledge while placing the primary concern upon *ahsan al-'amala* (Beautiful Deeds). As another example of this emphasis, the ninety–nine Holy Attributes of God are referred to as *asmā' al–husnā* (Beautiful Names). Therefore, it is understandable that in Islam the fundamental mandate of architecture, apart from fulfilling necessary functional requirements, should be to manifest a purposeful sense of beauty. Meaningful beauty in Islamic architecture requires both a quantitative dimension of concern, achieved mainly through a process of pragmatic environmental adaptation, and a qualitative dimension, expressed principally through Islamic aesthetics.

This paper concentrates upon a few major themes of the aesthetics of Islamic architecture and is intended as a complement to the more quantitative considerations expressed by others in the seminar. In particular, it offers a preliminary survey of the visual language of symbolic forms found in the architecture of the mosque. The mosque has been selected for study because it occurs in varying shapes and sizes as a fundamental part of city planning in all Muslim cultures from Spain to China, and because it possesses the most charged set of visual symbols. An important reminder of the pivotal role of the mosque in Islamic thought is the saying of the Prophet inscribed upon the gateway of the Qutb Minār: "He who builds a mosque for God, God will build for him a similar one in Paradise."

To achieve an understanding of the visual language of mosque design, a two–part methodology has been employed. First, by analyzing the origins of mosques and studying the transformation of ancient pre–Islamic building types into mosques, it is possible to discern a distinct set of generic "Islamic" forms and typologies of spatial organization. Second, a comparative survey of the major mosques of the Muslim world makes it possible to catalogue the relative occurrence of these generic forms and typologies over the last fourteen hundred years. The results of this preliminary study, while still in the process of completion, indicate the existence of a definite visual language possessing both a vocabulary and a grammar. The vocabulary basically deals with the aesthetic concepts and models of the parts of the mosque. It concerns such issues as constituent forms, surface pattern, colour selection and modes of material usage. The grammar, on the other hand, relates to various systems of organizing these parts into a coherent whole within the framework of Islamic concepts of place-making.

Some qualifying remarks are, however, necessary. First, while there seems to be a distinct visual language that is uniquely Islamic, there exists a multiplicity of dialects related to various ecological and cultural regions of the Muslim people. Second, some parts of the vocabulary and grammar have achieved, through accretion and evolution, highly charged symbolic meanings upon which there may still be general societal agreement, while other parts of the language are very regionally bound. An example of this is the dome, which receives a high emphasis in the zone of Persian culture but is rather undeveloped in the African, Saudi Arabian and Indonesian cultural zones. Third, the visual language to be presented is only a "kit of tools" related to a mode of architectural expression. Just as a dictionary and a handbook of style do not by themselves guarantee a masterpiece of literature, the different levels of aesthetic beauty depend upon the creative excellence of the user. Nevertheless, documenting the parts and structural systems of this visual language is necessary for build-ing a bridge to the historical traditions of Islamic architecture that unfortunately have fallen into a state of obscurity. Without concentrating on issues beyond the present scope of this study, we will address briefly the vast subject of the meanings and intentions of this language. Our work supports the position that art in Islam is rooted in the principle of Divine Remembrance and that the value of true creativity lies in the ability of that art to resonate a profound accord between man, nature and the Absolute.

Transformations as Beginnings

The study of the transformations of pre–Islamic monuments is an important first step in the definition of what constitutes a visual vocabulary relevant to Islam. For example, lessons can be gained by observing those parts of pagan, Christian, Zoroastrian and Hindu buildings which were maintained intact and those which were modified or entirely removed to make them Islamic spaces. A similar lesson can be gained from the study of what has been added. Thus, through a systematic study of inclusions and exclusions, we can trace the birth of Islamic architecture.

In reviewing a number of notable transformations as representative samples of the different ecological/cultural regions of the Islamic world, primary emphasis will be placed upon the Masjid al–Haram at Mecca and the Hagia Sophia. A more brief review of mosques at Damascus, Cordoba, Delhi and Fars, Iran, will show both the multiplicity and the unity of the earliest beginnings of mosque architecture.

Mecca

In terms of sacred geography, Mecca is considered by the Koran to be the "mother of all cities" and, in a metaphorical sense, the "naval of the earth."

The *bait al–'atīq*, the ancient house located in Mecca, is our primary source of knowledge of this most sacred Islamic place.

Mythology relates that Adam first built the great cube of the Ka'ba, while the Koran records that Abraham was divinely ordered to construct this archetypal house of worship. It is instructive to remember here the Koranic admonition addressed to Abraham: "Behold, we gave the site to Abraham, of the [Sacred] House, [saying]: 'Associate not anything with me.'" (Sura XXII, 26)

This affirmative act of providing "something" (the Ka'ba), followed by a negating directive indicating "nothingness," is an apparently paradoxical yet telling sign of the basic character of Islamic aesthetics. As a fundamental architectural criteria of mosque design, it is similar to the Islamic testament of the *shahāda*: *lā ilāha illā llāh* (There is no god, but Allah). The *shahāda* states a profound basic concept of a dynamic God, a simultaneously denying yet affirming perception of "Ultimate Reality." Through the process of similitude, much used in Islamic logic, an extension of the *shahāda* concept regarding all manifestations of God may be possible. Taken in this light, the Koranic admonition to Abraham regarding the Ka'ba assumes additional meaning and helps to establish the basic principle of transcendence observable in great Islamic art and architecture.

In addition to the philosophic implications of the Koranic references to the Ka'ba, the historical transformations leading to the present Masjid al–Haram are instructive in our search for the basic vocabulary of Islamic forms. In this study it is valuable to distinguish the morphology of the Ka'ba proper from peripheral place changes. Fortunately, both aspects have been meticulously recorded in history.

Legend has it that the Ka'ba constructed by Abraham and Isma'il was a roofless square about the height of a man with its corners set to the cardinal directions. In the eastern corner the Black Stone was installed (*al–ḥajar al–aswad*) to mark the beginning of the circumambulation. From its primary shape, the form came to be known as the Ka'ba: "the Cube."

Some twenty–six hundred years later, by the time of the Prophet Muḥammad, the form had evolved into a flat roofed cube constructed of alternating courses of stone and teak wood. The interior walls contained pictures of Abraham, Mary and the Child amidst angels as well as trees and vegetal motifs. In the ensuing centuries the cube–like edifice was reconstructed several times, assuming different sizes, proportions, number of doors and varying interior structures and decorations. The present Ka'ba dates nearly four hundred years to the Ottoman period, but it rests upon the foundation stones of Abraham's first construction.

The walls of the Ka'ba have been enshrouded since pre–Islamic times, and this tradition has continued to the present. The cloth has varied from a black and white striped pattern to all white, all red, red covered in black, and to the black brocade that now adorns the Ka'ba.

The metamorphosis of the Ka'ba attests to its essential constancy, for on the whole, very little has been added or taken away from this ancient house over the last four thousand years. Perhaps the only singular monumental act of exclusion was performed by the Prophet in eliminating from the outer perimeter the pagan idols which had surrounded the Ka'ba.

Circumambulation of the Ka'ba has been an associated act of this sacred place since its inception. However, the growing number of annual pilgrims, together with
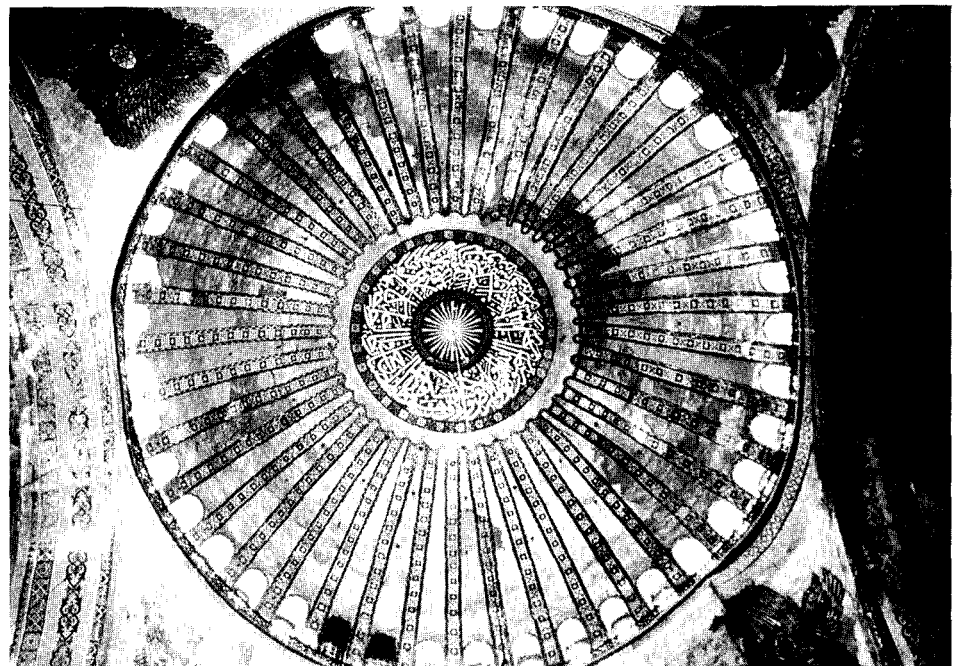
Istanbul, Turkey Hagia Sophia, dome

Photo: V. Prentice

the growth in stature of the religion, has created the need periodically to expand and elaborate the surroundings of the Ka'ba. Originally, at the time of the Prophet, the Ka'ba, the associated Zamzam Well and the station of Abraham were located in a small, open courtyard, forty metres in diameter, surrounded by houses of the city of Mecca. Gradually, the space was enlarged to include other symbolic objects such as several *minbars* and the four pavilions of prayer representing the four schools of Islamic thought. Finally, an arcade and mosque emerged to encircle the Ka'ba. This was completely rebuilt by Sinan in the sixteenth century in a most modest manner. The Masjid al–Haram of the Ottoman period remained basically unchanged for nearly four hundred years until the recent major extension and modifications completed by the Government of Saudi Arabia. Today, the open space measures nearly 150 by 300 metres and the new Masjid al–Haram can accommodate more than 100,000 people at one time.

The evolving design of the Masjid al–Haram has been characterized by several distinct architectural forms occurring over the centuries: courtyard, arcade (portico), gateways, minaret and, in a minor yet definite way, dome. The latter is found in all of the Sinan arcades and in the contemporary Safā–Marwa area of the mosque.

Hagia Sophia

In Constantinople, nearly eight hundred years after the Hijra, on May 29, 1453, one of the last Islamic transformations of significance took place. On that day, Sultan Muḥammad marched triumphantly into the great "Cathedral of the Heavenly Wisdom," the sum manifestation of the Byzantine Empire and the Eastern Holy Church, climbed upon the table of the sacraments, turned to Mecca, and said his prayers. This act inaugurated a series of changes whereby an architectural masterpiece of the sixth century was made into a

mosque. Of course, twentieth–century Turkish culture has relegated the Hagia Sophia to museum status, but our concern is with the five hundred years of its Muslim usage.

In the interior of the Hagia Sophia the altar and all liturgical objects of worship were removed; all biblical figures, such as the mosaics depicting the Virgin and Child and St. John the Baptist were covered in plaster; the faces of two seraphim and two cherubim in the four pendentives of the dome were transfigured by gilded stars, and most notably, the image of Christ in the dome was replaced by a sunburst medallion enriched with the Sura of Light.

Among acts of inclusion in the interior was the placement in the old apse of a *mihrāb*, *minbar*, sultan's throne and raised places for the recitation of the Koran. These objects were situated with a slight orientational adjustment to the south in the direction of Mecca. Opposite the *mihrāb* space great fonts for ablution were placed. Considerably later, in the nineteenth century, the series of large calligraphic discs that now adorn the interior were installed. In sum, however, the spherical geometry of the interior space was left unaltered. Rather, the direction, the "furniture" and the signs were changed, and hence, the particular symbolic meaning of space.

On the exterior, aside from the removal of the cross atop the great dome, additive steps predominate. Soon after the conversion of the Hagia Sophia, a wooden minaret was erected in the northeast, later replaced by a masonry minaret. Then a second minaret of stone was erected to the southeast. Finally, the twin minarets of Sinan were completed on the opposite corners in the sixteenth century. More than any other transformative act, the four minarets have changed the architectonic impression of the building. However, it is what has remained untouched—the space and form of a central domical plan—that has had the most lasting influence. All subsequent great mosques of Turkey have emulated the transformed and prototypical Hagia Sophia.

Damascus, Cordoba, Delhi

The mosque of Damascus offers an instance of a double transformation. A pagan Roman temple of the third century A.D., set within a temenos, was transformed first into a Christian and then a Muslim place of worship. The plan of the church lay on an east–west axis with the altar located in the apse to the west. With the Islamic conquest, the shell of the church was retained while an arcade was added to the north. In time, three minarets were also constructed. By virtue of its geographic location, the basilica space of the interior was dramatically altered by the placement of the *mihrāb* and *minbar* on the southern wall, changing by ninety degrees the spatial orientation of the building. Instead of looking down the large hierarchical nave, the emphasis was placed on the breadth of a seemingly endless space of equality.

Cordoba represents a reverse transformation. An Islamic place was here turned into a Christian place. The original Moorish mosque was unusual for several reasons, but it was most unique by virtue of its "room *mihrāb*" which remains even in the Christian period. Significantly, the small cathedral that now has been inserted into the vast arcaded space of the old mosque is oriented almost ninety degrees from Mecca toward the rising sun. Aside from the minarets that have become bell towers and the floral decorations that have remained virtually unchanged, it would be hard to discern the changes that have occurred.

The Quṭb ad–Dīn Aybak Mosque and the adjacent Quṭb Minār in Delhi of the twelfth century A.D. represent yet again another aspect of historical transformation. Here, as in many examples elsewhere in the Muslim world, transformation involved borrowing the parts of existing pre–Islamic buildings. Although all the elements of the classic mosque can be seen—gateway, courtyard, porch, minaret (in this case a towering giant of seventy-five metres), *mihrāb*, dome and plinth— some of the actual stone columns and

masonry used in the building construction belong to the Hindu temples upon whose foundation stones the mosque was constructed.

Chahār Tāq and Eyvān

Rather than review a particular historical building, our final example of a transformation centres on two types of pre–Islamic building forms belonging to the Sasanian period: the *chahār tāq* and the *eyvān*. These have influenced nearly all later Persian mosques, culminating in such masterpieces as the Friday Mosque and the Masjid–i Shāh of Isfahan.

Formed by a cubic base of four supporting elements connected by arches and covered by a dome, the *chahār tāq* or tetrapylon was the sacred place of the Zoroastrian eternal flame. With the Islamic conquest, such sacred spaces were easily converted into mosques by the inclusion of a *miḥrāb*. Such a simple transformation can be seen in the small mosque at Yazd–i Kasht in Fars.

From the great ceremonial halls of the Sasanians came the *eyvān* or great porch. An example of the form, which was quickly integrated into the architecture of Persian mosques, can be seen at Niriz in Fars in a mosque dating from 970 A.D.

Visual Characteristics of Mosque Architecture

From the preceding sample study of transformation, it is possible to deduce a basic list of recurring generic forms as well as some principles of spatial organization. There is a definite concern for orientation in space expressed both in the cosmic orientation of the Ka'ba (set with corners to cardinal directions) and in the terrestrial alignment of mosques toward Mecca. The architectural device for this purpose is the *miḥrāb*. A second principle is introversion, characterized by courtyard and central dome planning. This concern is

also reflected in the gateway and portico, important parts of a "positive space" design attitude.

The domical, mandalic form highlights a third principle of centrality and symmetry. The dome, when in evidence, normally provides the special sacred space within which the *miḥrāb* is located. In Southeast Asia and other forest ecologies, this sacred space often takes the form of a pyramidal roof with wooden rafters. Regardless of the particular shape, the idea of centrality remains constant.

From the ritual of daily and congregational prayer, two other generic forms have evolved: the minaret and the place of ablution. The plinth has come into being as a necessary consequence of single plane courtyard designs set upon land with a minimum degree of topographic slope. The symbolic value of a raised place is further in evidence in the placement of mosques on hilltops as in many Turkish and Indo–Pakistani examples.

To reiterate, the following recurring forms of mosque architecture constitute the major elements of inclusion that have evolved over the centuries: *miḥrāb*, minaret, gateway, courtyard, portico, place of ablution, plinth and dome. Acts of exclusion are relatively few and are primarily restricted to the removal of specific imagery that would limit the transcendent unity of the Divine. This aspect is most telling of the eclectic and integrative nature of Islamic architecture.

In an effort to determine the prevalence of the aforementioned generic forms and the regional character of the spatial order of their organization, I have surveyed one hundred and thirteen major mosques throughout the Islamic world. In this survey, the Muslim world is categorized according to regional, ecological and cultural variations as expressed by the typology of their mosque design. Six groups have been identified at this preliminary stage, but the number of categories could grow as more information is collected about the zones and the typologies of mosques. Each mosque was analyzed according to plans, photographs

and, whenever possible, site visits to determine the relative level of emphasis of the eight generic forms and the regularity of adherence to a typology of spatial organization. In particular, information for Far Eastern mosques was inadequate and the results for this geographic zone are only tentative.

In reviewing the survey charts, some definite patterns are observable. For example, the Arab cultures of Arabia, Iraq, Syria, Egypt, North Africa and Moorish Spain are heavily represented by the hypostyle mosque with a flat roof or a flat roof with dome accents. In East and West Africa the flat hypostyle type seems to predominate, although great dynamics of design, which could in time alter this trend, are evident. The interpretations here may also be misleading, as the sampling for this large region was small and the buildings were investigated only through plans and photographs.

The Indian subcontinent (including Pakistan and Bangladesh) represents a unique cultural identity, although ecological variations have influenced the design of mosques there considerably. Mosques in Iran, Central Asia and Afghanistan show strong affinities of type. Predominantly of the four–*eyvān* variety, they rely heavily upon the *chahār tāq* concept of place-making. Turkey is also one of the more homogeneous areas, having evolved the central dome plan within its own regional borders and being basically of one ecological zone.

Despite the preliminary nature of this survey, it is important to note that all eight generic forms were found in each of the six geographic zones and that they appeared in no less than 83% of the mosques surveyed. The incidence of courtyards was 93%; minarets, 89%; domes (pyramidal also included), 83%; gateways, 100%; porticos, 86%; plinths, 87%; places of ablution, 97% and, of course, *miḥrāb*s, 100%.

In the mosque typologies, the results are for the most part regionally bound, but there is also a spread of cultural types beyond the regional borders. Turkish

central dome plans in North Africa and Egypt are the product of Ottoman stylistic imperialism. The presence of the Iranian four–*eyvān* plan in Iraq and the Indian subcontinent reflects similar historical processes.

One overpowering question for further inquiry arises as a result of this study. Is the prevalance of these eight generic forms a mere coincidence, the result of auto-cratic impositions, or does their repetition represent a natural Islamic language of visual forms for mosque design? Our preliminary evidence points to the latter.

Moreover, what can be learned from the study of mosque typologies of spatial organization? Assuming that an ecological imperative is at work with cultural identity, do the adaptive forms thus produced have applications beyond the mosque? A fruitful direction for future action lies in the development of a complete inventory of major Islamic build-ings. If systematically undertaken ac-cording to the various ecological and cultural zones of the Muslim world, other building types such as the madrasa and caravanserai can be analyzed for their generic forms and ordering typologies. A compendium of such studies would provide a useful "road map" to the more relevant forms appropriate today for each of the ecological/cultural zones of Islam. With greater refinement, the study could address other architectural dimensions which have been forgotten. This much needed remembrance could help make explicit the multiplicity of expressions inherent in the world of Islam and, through an understanding of the generic nature of transcendent forms, surfaces and patterns, create a new sense of visual beauty worthy of Islamic culture.

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ZONE I Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, North Africa, Palestine, Saudi Arabia, Spain, Syria

NO.	LOCALE	NAME	Miḥrāb	Courtyard	Minaret	Dome	Gateway	Portico	Plinth	Ablution Place	Hypostyle	Hypostyle with Dome Accent	Hypostyle with Domical Vaulting	Four-Eyvān	Central Dome	Other	Century of Construction–A.D.
			GENERIC FORMS 1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**	**8**	**MOSQUE TYPOLOGY 1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	
1	ALGIERS	Mosque of the Fishery	●	○	●	●	◐	◐	◐	◐					X		17
2	ALEPPO	Great Mosque	●	●	●	◐	◐	●	◐	●		X					11-13a
3	BAGHDAD	Mustansiriyya	●	●	◐	◐	●	●	◐?	◐				X			13
4	BASRA	Mosque of Umar	●	●	◐	◐	◐	●	◐	◐		X					8
5	CAIRO	Al-Aqmar	●	●	●	◐	●	●	◐	◐		X					12
6		Al-Azhar	●	●	●	◐	●	●	◐	◐		X					10
7		Al-Ḥākim	●	●	●	◐	◐	●	◐	◐		X					10
8		Al-Mu'ayyad Sheikh	●	●	◐	◐	◐	●	◐	◐		X					15
9		An-Nāsir Muhammad	●	●	◐	◐	●	●	◐	◐		X					14
10		Az-Zāhir Baybars	●	●	◐?	◐	●	●	◐	◐		X					13
11		Amir Altunbughā	●	●	◐	◐	●	●	◐	◐		X					14
12		'Amr Ibn Al-As	●	●	◐	○	◐	●	◐	◐	X						9
13		Ibn Tūlūn	●	●	●	◐	◐	●	◐	●		X					9
14		Muhammad 'Ali	●	●	●	●	◐	●	●	●					X		19
15		Sultan Hasan	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●				X			14
16	CORDOBA	Great Mosque	●	●	●	○	●	◐	◐	◐		X					8b
17	DAMASCUS	Great Mosque	●	●	●	◐	●	●	●	○		X					8c
18	FEZ	Bū-'Ināniyya	●	●	●	●	●	○	◐	◐			X				14
19		Qayrawiyyin	●	●	●	●	●	●	◐?	◐		X					9-17
20	HAMA	Great Mosque	●	●	●	◐	◐	◐	◐	●		X					13-14c
21	JERUSALEM	Aqsā Mosque	●	○	○	◐	●	○	●	◐						X	7
22		Dome of the Rock	●	○	○	●	◐	◐	●	◐						X	7
23	KAIROUAN	Great Mosque	●	●	●	◐	◐	●	◐	◐		X					9-13
24	KUFA	Mosque	●	●P	○?	○	◐	●	○	◐	X						7-15
25	MAHDIA	Great Mosque	●	●	◐	◐	◐	●	◐	◐		X					10
26	MARRAKESH	Kutubiyya	●	●	●	◐	●	◐	◐	◐		X					12
27	MECCA	Haram Al-Sharīf	○	●	●	◐	●	●	○	●		X					7d
28	MEDINA	Mosque of Prophet	●	●	●	◐	●	●	◐	◐		X					7
29	RABAT	Hasan Mosque	●	●	●	○	◐	◐?	◐	◐		X					12
30	SAMARRA	Great Mosque	●	●	●	○	◐	●	○	◐	X						9
31	SAN'Ā'	Al-Bakīriyya	●	●	●	●	◐	◐	◐?	◐					X		16
32		Great Mosque	●	●	●	◐	◐	●	◐	◐		X					7-17
33	SEVILLE	Great Mosque	●	●	●	○	◐	●	◐	◐		X					12b
34	SFAX	Great Mosque	●	●	●	◐	◐	●	◐	◐		X					9-18
35	SHIBAM	Mosque	●	●	●	○	◐	◐	○	◐	X						9
36	TA'IZZ	Ashrafiyya	●	●	●	●	●	◐	●	◐			X				13-14
37	TINMAL	Friday Mosque	●	●	◐	◐	◐	◐	◐	◐		X					12
38	TLEMCEN	Al-Mansūr	●	●	●	◐	●	●	◐	◐		X					14
39		Great Mosque	●	●	●	●	◐	◐	○	◐		X					12-13
40	TOLEDO	Bāb Mardūm	●	●	●?	◐	●	●	◐?	◐		X					10b
41	TUNIS	Hamūda Pasha	●	●	●	◐	◐	◐	◐	◐					X		17
42		Zaytūna Mosque	●	●	●	◐	◐	●	●	◐		X					9-15

Inventory of generic forms and typology of selected mosques

Compiled by N Ardalan

KEY:
- ●   Strong emphasis
- ◐   Medium emphasis
- ○   Nonexistent
- ?   Insufficient information
- P   Pitched roof

- a   Converted from church
- b   Converted to church
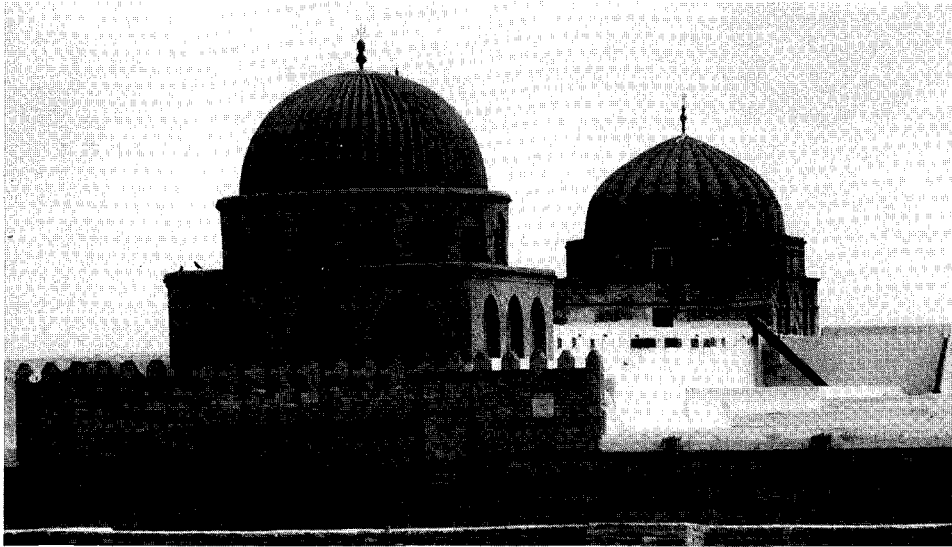- c   Roman structure converted first to church, then mosque
- d   Pre-Islamic Arabian

Location of principal mosques of Middle East, North Africa and Spain
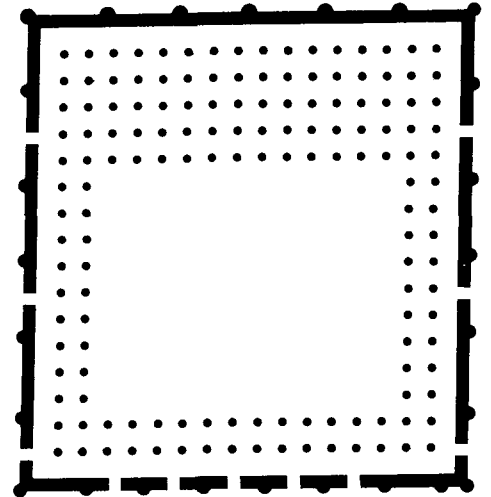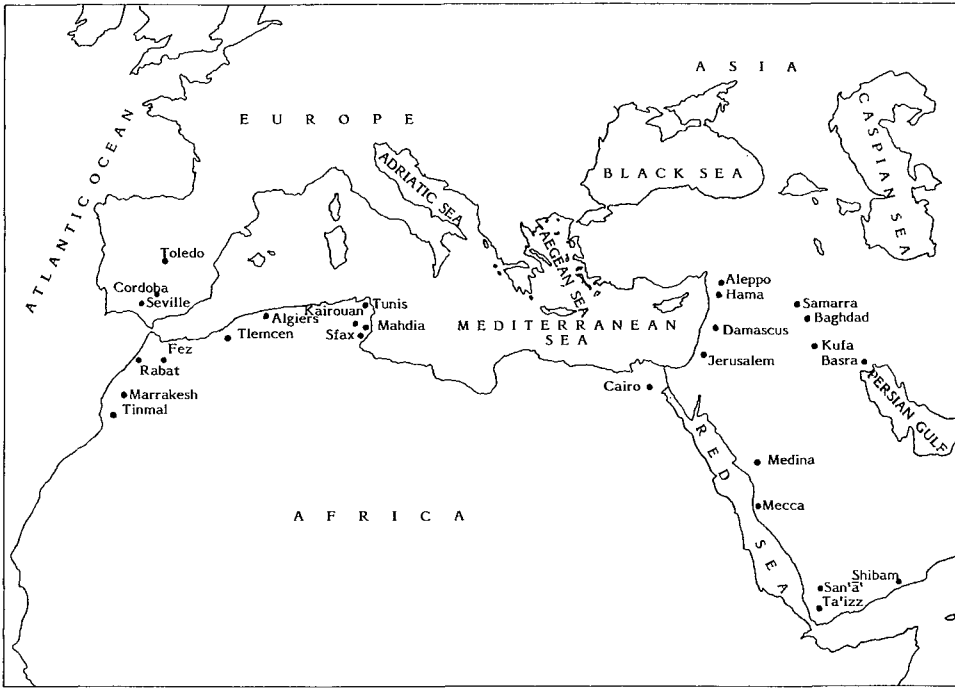
Kufa, Iraq: plan of Great Mosque as rebuilt by Ziyadh ibn Abihi in 670 A.D. An early hypostyle mosque
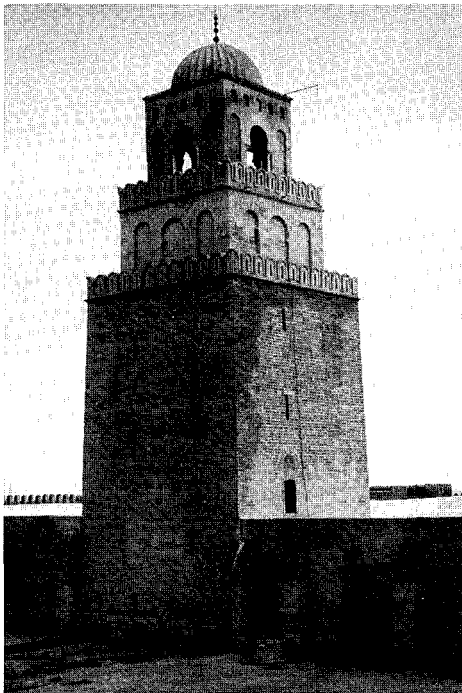
After K. A. C. Creswell
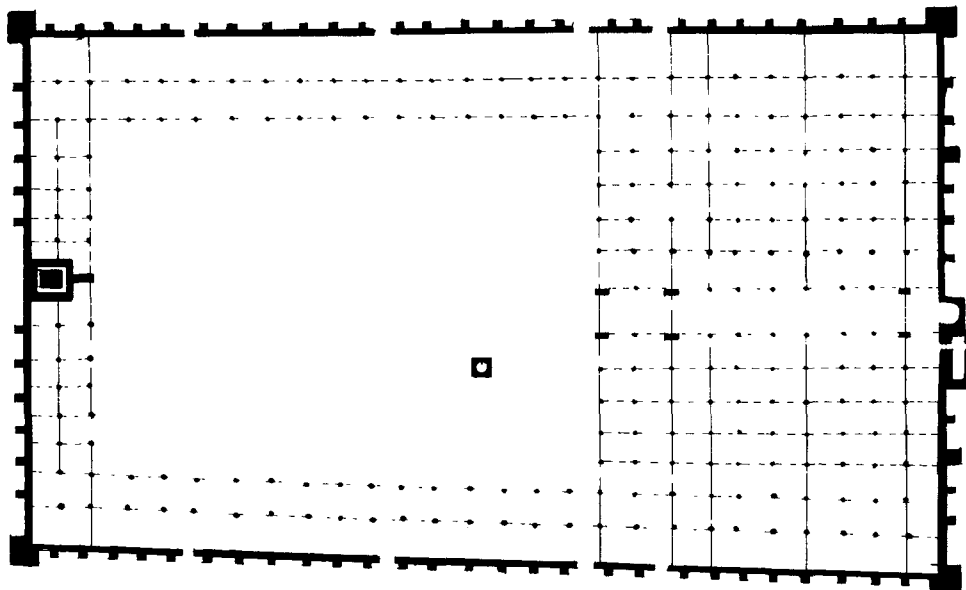
Kairouan, Tunisia: plan of Great Mosque. A hypostyle mosque incorporating dome over miḥrāb

Dome over miḥrāb *space of Great Mosque of Kairouan*
Photo: S. Blair/J. Bloom

Minaret of Great Mosque of Kairouan as seen from northwest
Photo: S. Blair/J. Bloom

Interior of Great Mosque of Kairouan
Photo. S Blair/J. Bloom

ZONE II Turkey

NO	LOCALE	NAME	Mihrāb (G1)	Courtyard (G2)	Minaret (G3)	Dome (G4)	Gateway (G5)	Portico (G6)	Plinth (G7)	Ablution Place (G8)	Hypostyle (T1)	Hypostyle with Dome Accent (T2)	Hypostyle with Domical Vaulting (T3)	Four-Eyvān (T4)	Central Dome (T5)	Other (T6)	Century of Construction–A.D.
1	AMASYA	Beyazit Paşa	●	○	○	●	◐	●	●	OR					X		15
2	BEYSEHIR	Esrefoğlu Mosque	●	◐	◐	◐	◐	◐	◐	◐		X					13
3	BURSA	Hüdavandigār	●	◐C	○?	●	◐	●	●	◐				X			14
4		Great Mosque	●	◐C	●	●	◐	○	◐	●			X				14
5	DIVRIĞI	Mosque	●	◐C	◐	◐^	◐	◐	◐	◐			X				13
6	EDIRNE	Selimiye	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●					X		16
7		Üç Şerefeli	●	●	●	●	◐	●	●	◐					X		15
8	ISTANBUL	Hagia Sophia	●	◐	●	●	◐	◐	●	◐					X		15*
9		Nurosmaniye	●	●	●	●	●	●	◐	●					X		18
10		Sehzade Mehmet	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●					X		16
11		Sokullo Mehmet	●	●	◐	●	●	●	●	●					X		16
12		Süleymaniye	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●					X		16
13		Sultan Ahmet	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●					X		17
14	KONYA	'Alā' Ad-Dīn	●	◐	◐	◐^	◐	◐	●	◐		X					12
15	MANISA	Muradiye	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	◐					X		16

(GENERIC FORMS: columns 1–8; MOSQUE TYPOLOGY: columns 1–6)

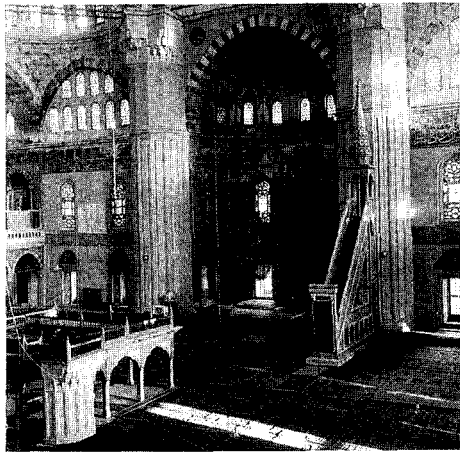*Inventory of generic forms and typology of selected mosques*

Compiled by N. Ardalan

KEY:
● *Strong emphasis*
◐ *Medium emphasis*
○ *Nonexistent*
? *Insufficient information*

A *Pyramidal roof*
C *Covered roof*
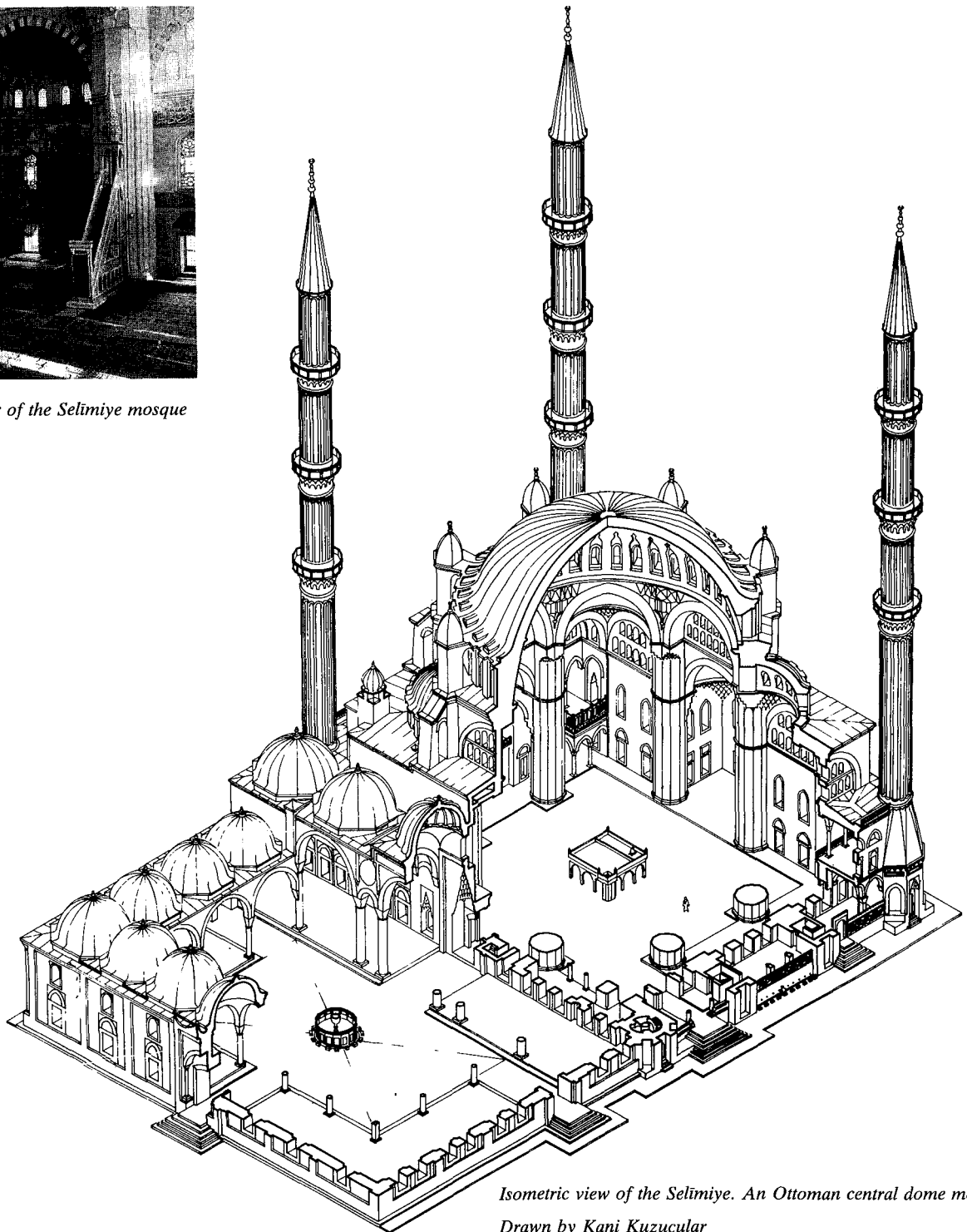R *River*
* *Converted from church*

Location of principal mosques of Turkey

Edirne, Turkey: interior of the Selīmiye mosque
Photo: M. Niksarlı

Isometric view of the Selīmiye. An Ottoman central dome mosque
Drawn by Kani Kuzucular
*Reproduced courtesy of Doğan Kuban*

ZONE III Afghanistan, Central Asia, Iran

			GENERIC FORMS								MOSQUE TYPOLOGY						
			1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	1	2	3	4	5	6	
NO	LOCALE	NAME	Miḥrāb	Courtyard	Minaret	Dome	Gateway	Portico	Plinth	Ablution Place	Hypostyle	Hypostyle with Dome Accent	Hypostyle with Domical Vaulting	Four-Eyvān	Central Dome	Other	Century of Construction-A.D.
1	ANAU	Jamāl Ad–Dīn Mosque	●	●	●	●	●	●	◐?	◐				X			15
2	ARDESTAN	Friday Mosque	●	●	◐	●	●	●	◐	◐				X			11–12‡
3	BALKH	Abu Nasr Parsa	●	○	●	●	●	●	◐	◐?					X		15
4		Now Gunbad	●	○?	○	●	◐?	●	○	◐?				X			9
5	BUKHARA	Kalayan Mosque	●	●	●	◐	●	●	◐	◐				X			16
6	DĀMGHĀN	Tārik Khāna	●	●	◐	◐	◐	●	○	◐				X			8
7	ISFAHAN	Friday Mosque	●	●	●	●	●	●	◐	●				X			8–17‡
8		Masjid–i Shāh	●	●	●	●	●	●	◐	●				X			17
9		Masjid–i 'Alī	●	●	●	◐	●	●	○	●					X		17
10		Sheikh Lutfallāh	●	○	○	●	●	○	◐	○				X			12
11	KERMAN	Friday Mosque	●	●	◐	◐	●	●	○	◐				X			14
12	MASHHAD	Gowhar Shād	●	●	●	●	●	●	○	◐				X			15
13	NAYIN	Friday Mosque	●	●	●	●	●	●	◐	OQ			X				10
14	SAMARQAND	Bībī Khānum	●	●	◐	◐	●	●	◐	◐				X			14
15	SHIRAZ	Vakīl Mosque	●	●	◐	◐	◐	●	◐?	◐				X**			18
16	TABRIZ	Blue Mosque	●	●	○?	●	●	○	◐	◐?				XC			15
17	VARAMIN	Friday Mosque	●	●	◐	●	●	●	○	◐				X			14
18	YAZD	Friday Mosque	●	●	●	●	●	●	○	◐				X*			14
19	ZAVAREH	Friday Mosque	●	●	●	●	●	●	◐	◐				X			12

Inventory of generic forms and typology of selected mosques

Compiled by N. Ardalan

● Strong emphasis   Q Qanāt
◐ Medium emphasis   * One–Eyvān
○ Nonexistent   ** Two–Eyvān
? Insufficient information   ‡ Converted from Sasanian structure
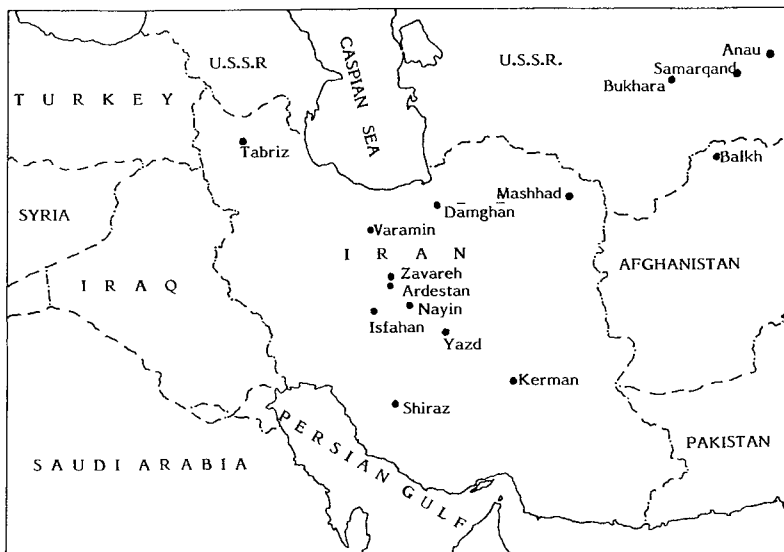
Location of principal mosques of Afghanistan, Central Asia and Iran

Isfahan· entrance to Masjid–i Shāh
Photo V Prentice
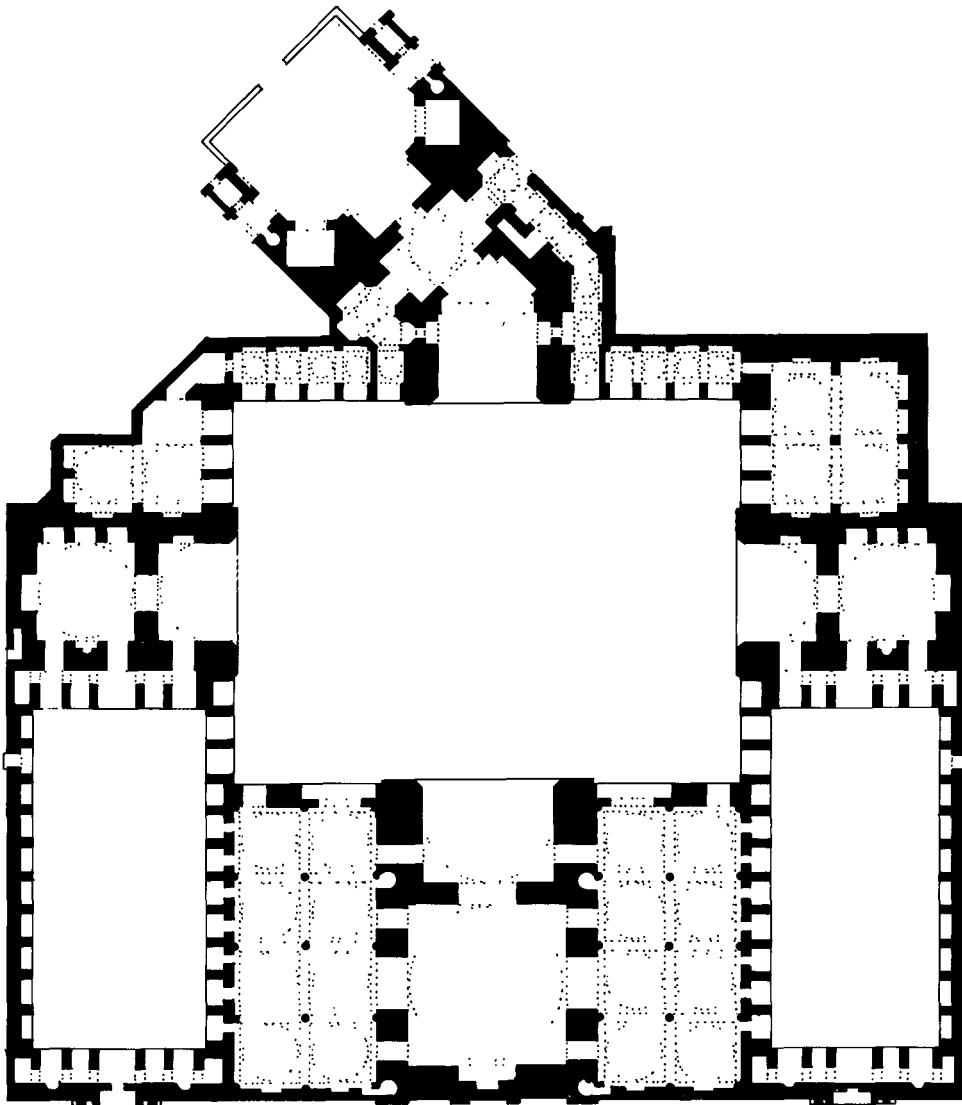
*Isfahan, Iran: plan of Masjid–i Shāh. A Safavid four–*eyvān *mosque*
After U Vogt–Göknil

ZONE IV Bangladesh, India, Pakistan

NO.	LOCALE	NAME	Miḥrāb	Courtyard	Minaret	Dome	Gateway	Portico	Plinth	Ablution Place	Hypostyle	Hypostyle with Dome Accent	Hypostyle with Domical Vaulting	Four-Eyvān	Central Dome	Other	Century of Construction–A.D.
			GENERIC FORMS								**MOSQUE TYPOLOGY**						
			1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	1	2	3	4	5	6	
1	AHMEDABAD	Friday Mosque	●	●	◐	◐	●	●	●	◐			X				15
2	DELHI	Begampūr	●	●	◐?	◐	●	●	●	◐					X		14
3		Friday Mosque	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	◐			X				17
4		Khirkī	●	●	◐	◐	●	●	●	◐			X				14
5		Pearl Mosque	●	●	◐	●	◐	●	●	◐			X				17
6		Qutb Minār	●	●	●	◐	◐	●	◐	◐			X				12*
7	FATEHPUR SIKRI	Friday Mosque	●	●	◐?	●	●	●	●	◐			X				16
8	GAUR	Tantipara	●	●	○	◐	◐	◐	◐	◐			X				15*
9	GULBARGA	Friday Mosque	●	◐	◐?	●	●	◐	◐	◐			X				14
10	JAUNPUR	Atala	●	●	◐?	◐	●	●	◐	◐					X		15
11	LAHORE	Bādshāhī	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	◐			X				17
12		Wazīr Khān	●	●	●	◐	●	◐	◐	◐			X				17
13	SRINAGAR	Friday Mosque	●	●	◐	●^	●	◐	◐	◐					X		14
14	TATTA	Friday Mosque	●	●	◐	◐	◐	●	◐	◐					X		17

Inventory of generic forms and typology of selected mosques

Compiled by N Ardalan

KEY: ● *Strong emphasis* ? *Insufficient information*
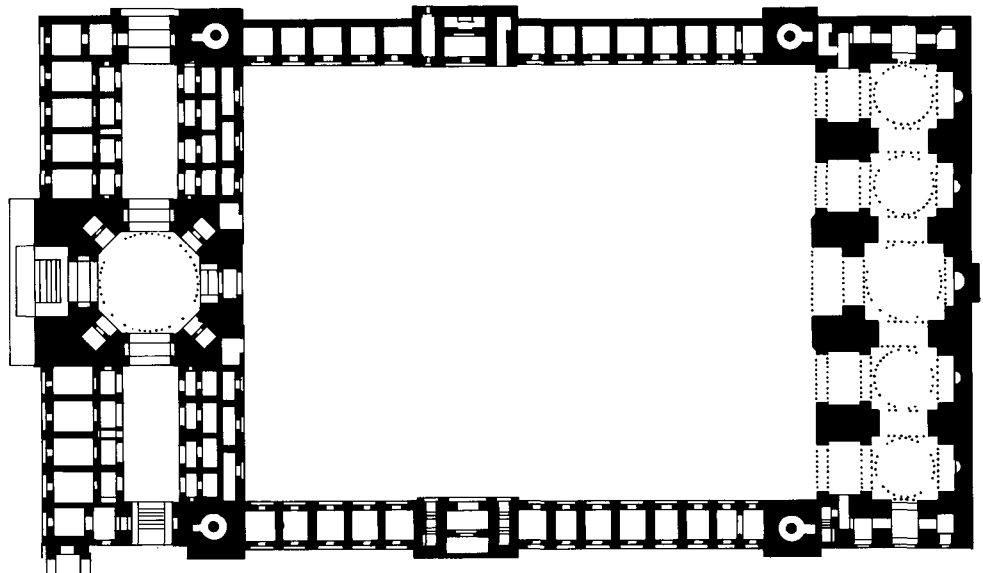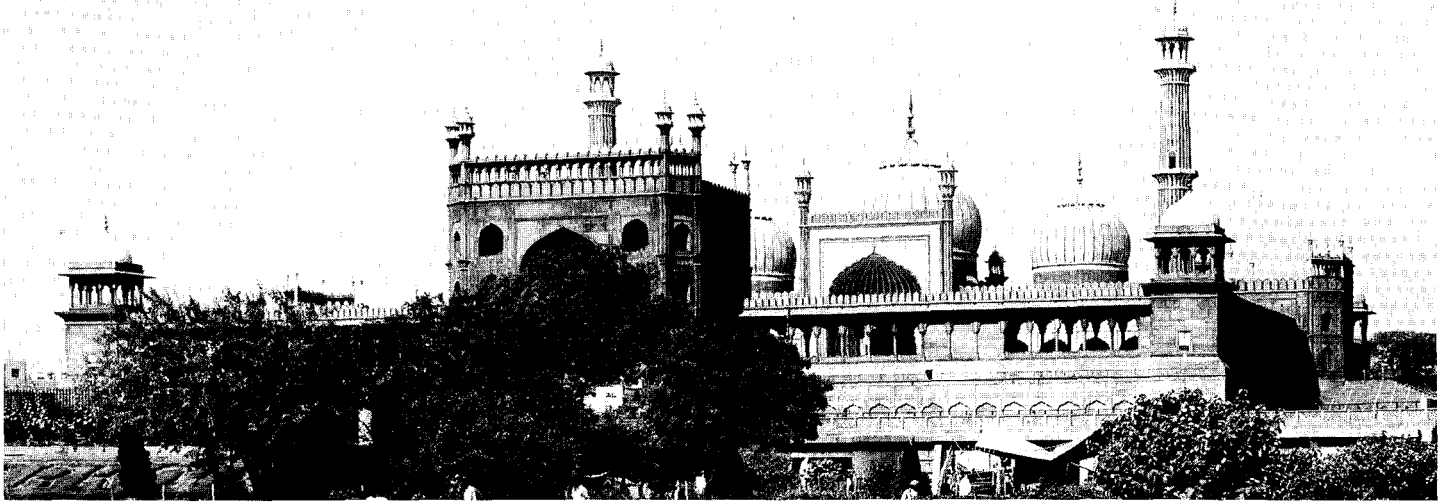◐ *Medium emphasis* ^ *Pyramidal roof*
○ *Nonexistent* * *Converted from Hindu structure*

Location of principal mosques of Bangladesh, India and Pakistan

Lahore, Pakistan· plan of Wazīr Khān A hypostyle mosque with domical vaulting

After La Roche

Delhi, India· a view of the Friday Mosque
Photo. D. Sareen/Aga Khan Awards

Djenne, Mali. bazaar set up outside Great Mosque
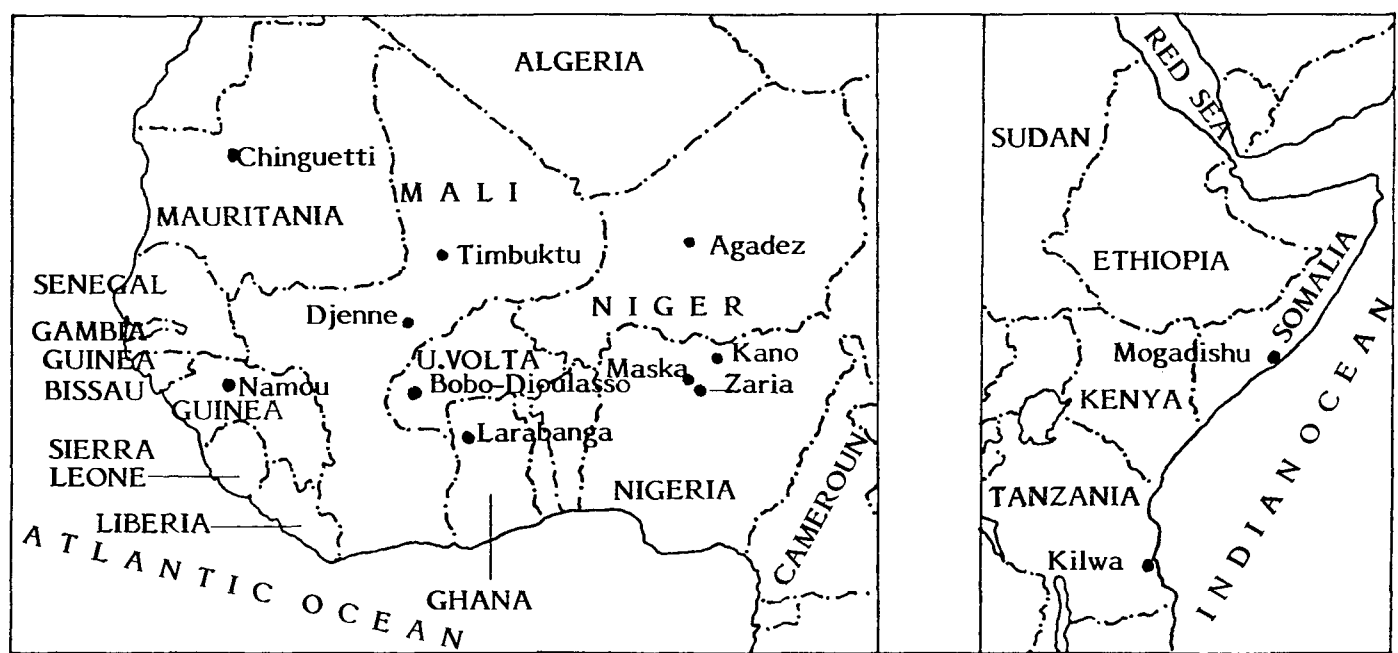*Photo: M. Al–Hariri/Aga Khan Awards*

ZONE V East and West Africa

NO.	LOCALE	NAME	GENERIC FORMS 1 Mihrāb	2 Courtyard	3 Minaret	4 Dome	5 Gateway	6 Portico	7 Plinth	8 Ablution Place	MOSQUE TYPOLOGY 1 Hypostyle	2 Hypostyle with Dome Accent	3 Hypostyle with Domical Vaulting	4 Four-Eyvān	5 Central Dome	6 Other	Century of Construction-A.D.
1	AGADEZ	Great Mosque	●	◐	●	○	◐	○	○	◐	X						16–19
2	BOBO-DIOULASSO	Friday Mosque	●	◐	●	○	◐	◐	◐	◐?	X						19
3	CHINGUETTI	Great Mosque	●	●	●	○	◐	○	◐	◐	X						13–15
4	DJENNE	Great Mosque	●	●	●	○	◐	○	◐	◐	X						14–20
5	GAO	Askia Al-Hajj	●	●	●	○	◐	○	◐	◐?	X						16
6	KANO	Friday Mosque	●	◐	●	○	◐	○	○	◐	X						15–19
7	KILWA	Great Mosque	●	◐	◐	◐	◐	○	◐	◐			X				12–13
8	LARABANGA	Friday Mosque	●	◐?	●	○	◐	◐	◐	◐?	X						17–19
9	MASKA	Friday Mosque	●	◐	◐	○	◐	○	◐	◐	X						19
10	MOGADISHU	Fakhr Ad-Dīn	●	◐	●	●	◐	◐	◐	◐		X					13
11	NAMOU	Friday Mosque	●	O?	O?	●	◐	○	○	◐					X		18–19
12	TIMBUKTU	Great Mosque	●	◐	●	○	◐	◐	◐	◐	X						14
13		Sankore Mosque	●	●	●	○	◐	◐	◐	◐	X						14–15
14	ZARIA	Friday Mosque	●	◐	●	◐	◐	○	◐	◐		X					19

Inventory of generic forms and typology of selected mosques

Compiled by N Ardalan

KEY ● *Strong emphasis*   ◐ *Medium emphasis*   ○ *Nonexistent*   ? *Insufficient information*

Location of principal mosques of East and West Africa

ZONE VI Far East

NO.	LOCALE	NAME	Mihrāb	Courtyard	Minaret	Dome	Gateway	Portico	Plinth	Ablution Place	Hypostyle	Hypostyle with Dome Accent	Hypostyle with Domical Vaulting	Four-Eyvān	Central Dome	Other	Century of Construction—A.D.
			1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**	**8**	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	
1	CHÜAN-CHOU	Mosque	●	◐	○?	○	◐	○	◐	◐?						X	14
2	HANG-CHOU	Great Mosque	●	◐	◐	○	●	●	◐	◐						X	15?
3	JAKARTA	Azziadah	●	◐	●	●	◐	◐	◐	◐						X	17?
4		New Mosque	●	●	●	●	◐	●	◐	◐		X					20
5	MALACCA	Mosque	●	◐	◐	●^	◐?	●	◐	◐?						X	20?
6	SENDANG-DUWAR	Java Mosque	●	◐	◐	●^	◐	◐	●	◐						X	16*
7	TAIPEI	Mosque	●	◐	◐	●	◐	◐	◐	◐					X		20
8	TELOK MANOK	Mosque	●	◐	◐	●^	◐?	○	●	◐						X	18
9	WEST SUMATRA	Mosque	●	◐	○	●^	●	◐	●	◐						X	16?

Inventory of generic forms and typology of selected mosques

Compiled by N Ardalan

KEY: ● *Strong emphasis*   ? *Insufficient Information*
       ◐ *Medium emphasis*   ^ *Pyramidal roof*
       ○ *Nonexistent*   * *Converted from Hindu structure*
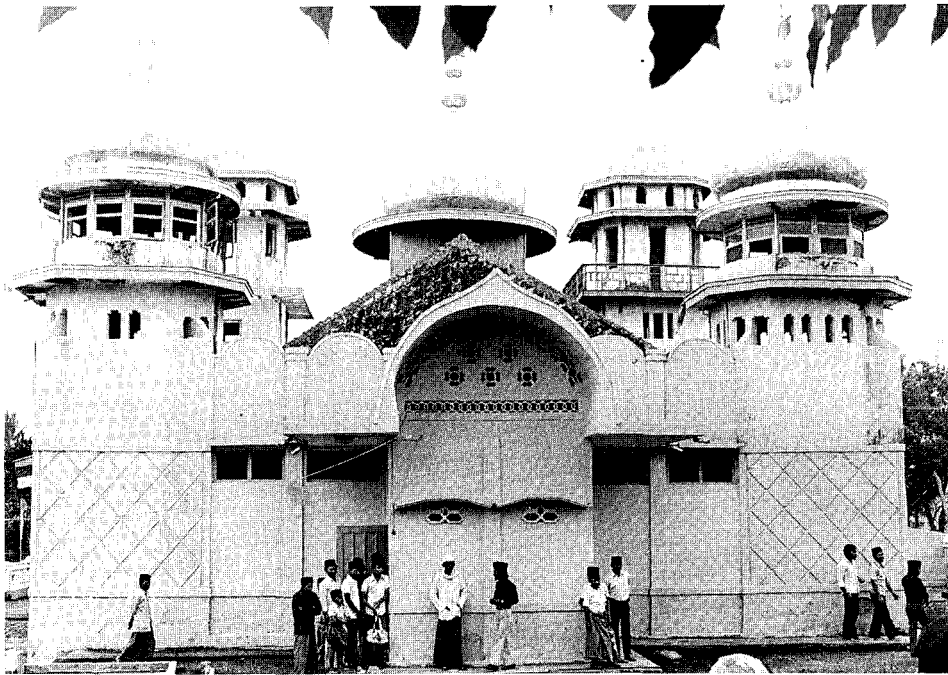
Jakarta, Indonesia. Azziadah Mosque

Photo: H–U Khan/Aga Khan Awards

Location of principal mosques of
the Far East

A village mosque between Kuala Lumpur
and Malacca, Malaysia

Photo H–U Khan/Aga Khan Awards

ZONE NO	GEOGRAPHIC LOCALE	ORIGINS		MOSQUE TYPOLOGY						TOTAL NUMBER
		Pre-Islamic	Islamic	Hypostyle	Hypostyle with Dome Accent	Hypostyle w/Domical Vaulting	Four–Eyvān	Central Dome	Other	
I	EGYPT, IRAQ, JORDAN, NORTH AFRICA, PALESTINE, SAUDI ARABIA, SPAIN, SYRIA	4	38	4	28	3	2	3	2	42
II	TURKEY	1	14		2	2	1	10		15
III	AFGHANISTAN, CENTRAL ASIA, IRAN	2	17			3	14	2		19
IV	BANGLADESH, INDIA, PAKISTAN	2	12			10	4			14
V	EAST & WEST AFRICA		14	10	2	1		1		14
VI	FAR EAST	1	8		1			1	7	9
	Totals	10	103	14	33	19	21	17	9	113
	Percentage	9	91	12	29	17	18	16	8	100

Frequency of typology of 113 mosques according to geographic zone

Compiled by N Ardalan

ZONE NO.	GEOGRAPHIC LOCALE	1 MIHRĀB			2 COURT-YARD			3 MINARET			4 DOME			5 GATEWAY			6 PORTICO			7 PLINTH			8 ABLUTION PLACE			TOTAL NUMBER
		●	◕	○	●	◕	○	●	◕	○	●	◕	○	●	◕	○	●	◕	○	●	◕	○	●	◕	○	
I	EGYPT, IRAQ, JORDAN, NORTH AFRICA, PALESTINE, SAUDI ARABIA SPAIN, SYRIA	41		1*	39		3	30	9	3	9	26	7	18	24		28	12	2	7	29	6	6	36		42
II	TURKEY	15			8	6	1	9	4	2	12	3		7	8		10	4	1	11	4		7	7	1	15
III	AFGHANISTAN, CENTRAL ASIA, IRAN	19			16		3	10	6	3	13	6		16	3		17		2		13	6	3	14	2	19
IV	BANGLADESH, INDIA, PAKISTAN	14			13	1		4	9	1	7	7		10	4		10	4		7	7		2	12		14
V	EAST & WEST AFRICA	14			4	9	1	11	2	1	2	2	10		14			5	9		11	3		14		14
VI	FAR EAST	9			1	8		2	5	2	7		2	3	6		3	4	2	3	6			9		9
	Totals	112		1	81	24	8	66	35	12	50	44	19	54	59		68	29	16	28	70	15	18	92	3	113
	Percentage	100			93		7	89		11	83		17	100			86		14	87		13	97		3	100

KEY   ● *Strong emphasis*   ◕ *Medium emphasis*   ○ *Nonexistent*   * *Haram al–Sharīf, Mecca*

Frequency of generic forms of 113 mosques according to geographic zone

Compiled by N Ardalan

ZONE NO	GEOGRAPHIC LOCALE	GENERIC FORMS								MOSQUE TYPOLOGY						Number Surveyed
		1 Mihrāb	2 Courtyard	3 Minaret	4 Dome	5 Gateway	6 Portico	7 Plinth	8 Ablution Place	1 Hypostyle	2 Hypostyle with Dome Accent	3 Hypostyle with Domical Vaulting	4 Four–Eyvān	5 Central Dome	6 Other	
I	EGYPT, IRAQ, JORDAN, NORTH AFRICA, PALESTINE, SAUDI ARABIA, SPAIN, SYRIA	●	●	●	◐	◐	●	◐	◐		●					42
II	TURKEY	●	◐	●	●	◐	●	●	◐					●		15
III	AFGHANISTAN, CENTRAL ASIA, IRAN	●	●	◐	●	●	●	◐	◐				●			19
IV	BANGLADESH, INDIA, PAKISTAN	●	●	◐	◐	●	●	◐	◐			◐				14
V	EAST & WEST AFRICA	●	◐	●	◐	◐	◐	◐	◐	◐						14
VI	FAR EAST	●	◐	◐	●▲	◐	◐	◐	◐						◐	9
	SUMMARY	●	◐	◐	◐	◐	◐	◐	◐	14	33	19	21	17	9	113

KEY ● *Strong emphasis*   ◐ *Medium emphasis*   ○ *Nonexistent*   ▲ *Pyramidal roof*
Summary of generic forms and typology of 113 mosques according to geographic zone

Compiled by N. Ardalan

Comments

Burckhardt

Some of our contemporaries seek to rehabilitate Muslim art by making light of its canonical rejection of image and by insisting on the influence of ethnic particularism. Some have gone so far as to declare that Islamic art does not exist in a global sense, that there exists only the art of individual Muslim peoples.

These critics forget that for every culture there is an internal economy of artistic expression. Some forms have a central and essential role. Others (particularly in the case of semi–decorative, semi–narrative representations of human and animal forms) play the more or less peripheral role of compensatory elements. Except in very special cases we know that anthropomorphic imagery has never been tolerated within the Islamic liturgical realm. Were this not so, it would necessarily indicate some sort of deficiency on the part of Muslim artists. Where can we

find in Muslim painting and architecture summits of perfection aesthetically and spiritually comparable to the holy image of the Blessed Virgin of Vladimir, the stained–glass windows of Chartres or the tympanum of the Moissac Abbey? I only speak of works that encompass a symbolic dimension and necessarily possess it by reason of their liturgical function.

In choosing works of Islamic art which can be qualitatively compared to these summits of Christian art, one does not take examples of figurative art. Instead, one selects elements of sacred architecture such as the *mihrāb* of the Great Mosque of Cordoba—a work comprised of geometry, arabesque and sacred writing—or even better, an entire architectural environment because that is, above all, the object of Islamic art.

In our remarks above, we have implicitly established a parallelism between the terms "sacred," "central," "symbolic" and "liturgical." But these four notions are not equivalent in every respect. The symbolic is always of central nature because it is the

direct and nondiscursive manifestation of a spiritual reality. Situated outside the liturgical realm, the symbolic is of the same order as the sacred but not coextensive with it. For example, in the architectural symbolism of mausoleums and the tombs of saints and princes, the ubiquitous dome is the image of the sky. The hemispherical cupola above the cubic base represents the union between earth and sky. But that symbol contains nothing vague or abstruse; it is not the product of a "sentimental charge," but a language of the spirit.

The Muslim courtyard house is another example of symbolism outside the liturgical realm. The centrality (its being centered on itself) and the interiority of the house combine with the paradisiac symbolism of gardens.

While symbolism is not restricted to the liturgical order, the latter is necessarily woven with symbolism. There exists a coincidence of universal religious symbols. Liturgical objects such as the *mihrāb* and *minbar* are simultaneously linked to

Islamic tradition and to universal symbolism. The recess for prayer, the *miḥrāb*, finds its prototype in almost all religions (the theophany recess). But it also serves as an essentially Islamic symbol owing to its Koranic context.

We have defined symbolism as a direct and nondiscursive manifestation of a spiritual reality. This definition is not at all inspired by modern "in-depth psychology." Rather, the expression "spiritual reality" should be understood in a general sense. Thus, Islamic symbolism always refers to the fundamental idea of Islam, the idea of divine unity.

The unity of God is at the same time exclusive and inclusive. Nothing can be compared to God and nothing exists outside of God. Under the first relation, symbolism cannot exist. This may afford justification for those who deny the existence of symbols within the framework of Islam. Under the second relation, which refers to the inclusive unity of God, symbolism is indispensable.

For the mentality of common Muslims, the incomparability of divine transcendance (*tanzīl*) predominates as a point of view somewhat on the order of symbolical analogy (*tashbīh*). Thus symbolism remains implicit. Accordingly, one would never say that the sun represents God, but that the sun is "neither God, nor any other but God." Likewise, the entire world is the symbol of God to the extent that it does not pretend to be anything other than itself.

Islamic aniconism exists here in its most profound sense. The naturalist image seems to add something to the divine creation; it affirms to be what it is not. Aniconism is the repercussion, at the level of art, of the mainly objective character of the Muslim creed. It singularly restricts the creative possibilities of art. But this restriction is compensated by the discovery of an abstract (or should we call it "concrete"?) language of ornamental motifs drawn from the folklore of various peoples. Its implicit sense (the platonic idea) always refers to unity unfolding itself in multiplicity much like the geometry

which, originating in the regular division of the circle, spreads indefinitely with the genesis of star–shaped polygons. This is more than simple ornament. Utilized in calculating the proportions of a building, it is linked to the idea of the qualitative unity.

Our theme is the reintegration of the multiple within the one. Among other things it implies the union of time and space—a union reflected in art forms such as the *muqarnas*, which is properly speaking a rhythmic articulation of space.

Among the symbols of unity (always the reflection of the transcendental unity as such), the most profound as well as the most obvious is that of light. The Muslim artist knows how to capture, filter and crystallize it in myriad ways. Light symbolically corresponds to existence (*wujūd*) because no form can be perceived without it. According to the Koran, "God is the light of the heavens and earth." Light is one. It only appears multiple and diverse because of the intervention of darkness which lacks intrinsic reality. Without light there is pure nothingness. Yet according to another point of view, darkness is the state of indifferentiation (*al-'āma*). Correspondingly, light is the principle of manifestation. There is a Hadith: "I was a hidden treasure, and as I wished to be known, I created the world."

Now I wish to offer an additional remark as to the definition of the symbol. We have to distinguish clearly between the sign which is a simple indication and the symbol which involves great complexities of meanings. Dr. Grabar said that these meanings are attached to the symbol in an arbitrary way. This leads to the destruction of the symbol because if the meanings can mean everything, then the symbol can either be everything too or it can be nothing. In fact, the multiple meanings of the symbols can occasionally be manifested in the complexity of exteriorly attached meanings. If we try to give too rationalistic a definition of the symbol, we simply make the symbol disappear. Nothing else. As to the example of the minarets with different Koranic inscriptions, I do not see that their variety is a

problem. Each of these inscriptions is Koranic, and insofar as it is from the Koran, it is related to the fashion and the symbolism of the minaret.

To this I will add something which enhances the idea that in the Islamic world the sound manifestation is superior to the visual manifestation. Sound is more directly related to revelation than visual forms. From my own experience here in Fez I made a map of all the existing mosques, more than two hundred, which have minarets. I was astonished to see the regularity of the disposition of these minarets. I drew circles of audibility around each point indicating a minaret and calculated that the average voice of the muezzin could be heard in a circle of about sixty–two metres. I discovered that the whole city plan is covered by these circles. So that really, before there is even the division into quarters, there is the minimal community around the minaret which clearly shows the sound genesis of the town.

Arkoun

If we problematize everything, we should find that the problem of symbols is a new one. It is not new historically, but our approach makes it new. Here I have two remarks. How would we talk about symbols if we distinguished between Arabic and Persian frames of reference? This is a fundamental question. As a working hypothesis, let us say that in Islamic thought there are two directions with regard to reading the Koranic text. The Shi'ite direction has developed a certain symbolism, such as the space of the town and the Muslim house. This symbolism is introverted because it has developed as a kind of interior life, an interior vision which can only be transmitted to the exterior through the initiation of mystics and gnostics. This is a special practice of symbolic thought.

The second direction, that of Sunni thought, occurred in law, theology and philosophy. It rejected reading the Koran

on any level but the literal. In fact, this tendency eliminates symbolic thought. It has repressed the thought of Ibn al-'Arabī, for example.

As for Western thought, things have not been any better. There was, of course, the development of Roman architectural symbolism in medieval thought. But very early, beginning with St. Thomas, to cite only him, there was Aristotelianism. In the history of thought this represents a struggle between the *logos* and the *nomos*. Christian thought, in following St. Thomas, developed like Sunnism along Aristotelian lines which opposed the development of mythical and therefore symbolic thought. With the advent of Cartesian rationalism and later with the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, we come to technology. In other words, symbolic thought has again been re-pressed. Now we are dependent on rationalist thought which prevents us from properly raising the issue of the symbol. This is why I believe that it is premature to discuss the definition of symbols.

I would also like to propose that we take into account the problem of knowledge. When we discourse, and therefore confer knowledge, is it a representation of the world we express in our discourse, or does our speech express the reality of things? If we do not keep this problem in mind, we are going to wander and be divided on definitions.

Raymond

Concerning the problem which has been raised and which is directly linked to the programme of the Aga Khan Award, I believe that the key issue is not the existence or nonexistence of symbols. The discussion about the minaret, for example, is very interesting, but I do not know whether we can really consider the minaret as a symbol of Muslim architecture. It does not always indicate the presence of a mosque. The monuments which have been presented are exceptional monuments; perhaps ninety-five percent of all Muslims

worship in structures that have nothing to do with the grandiose mosques that have been shown. In fact, they worship in rather small oratories which are quite simple.

I think that the minaret is a functional work of architecture which is integrated into the general concept of religious ritual. A religious edifice represents a collection of objects that permit the performance of rites. For example, the *miḥrāb* is much more important than the minaret in many respects. Here I am referring to the experience of archeologists. During excavations it is the presence of a small recess in the wall oriented in a particular direction that helps us to determine whether we are dealing with a mosque. This is exactly what has happened to me twice.

I agree with Prof. Grabar when he said that the same monument can assume many

Varamin, Iran: Friday Mosque, exterior wall, detail showing star-shaped polygons

Photo R. Holod

comparable functions in various religions. The Gothic cathedrals in Cyprus, when endowed with minarets, became mosques, and a monument in Algiers was first a mosque, then a cathedral, and then a mosque a second time. I think that we can overcome the real theoretical difficulties which I have stated only if we adopt a functionalist approach within the frame-work of studying the religion as well as its adherents.

Cultural factors can also explain the development of forms which vary accord-ing to time and place. This is not a problem that exists only for Muslims. Christians encounter the same difficulties when having to choose between classical art and modern art. The problem is whether our era can create original cultural types by turning to traditional types and regional techniques, or will it attempt to create monuments that are labeled "contemporary"?

I think that the functionalist approach can also guide us in the study of the city and not just monuments. Cities are complex organisms which offer a setting for the fulfillment of vital functions such as hous-ing and food as well as religious needs. If we approach the double problem of archi-tecture and urbanism from this angle, style becomes a secondary issue.

Mahdi

I must first make a short remark about what Dr. Arkoun has said, but my main question really relates to something that was said by Prof. Grabar. First, the typology of symbolic interpretation, on the one hand, and a kind of rationalist and literalist interpretation, on the other, is certainly tenable, but dividing it between Shi'ism and Sunnism is somewhat sim-plistic. Obviously the earliest kind of mystical writings that we have from the eighth and ninth centuries are almost wholly Sunnite. Mysticism was practically the domain of Sunnism until sometime in the fourteenth century. And within Shi'ism the conflict between these kinds of two
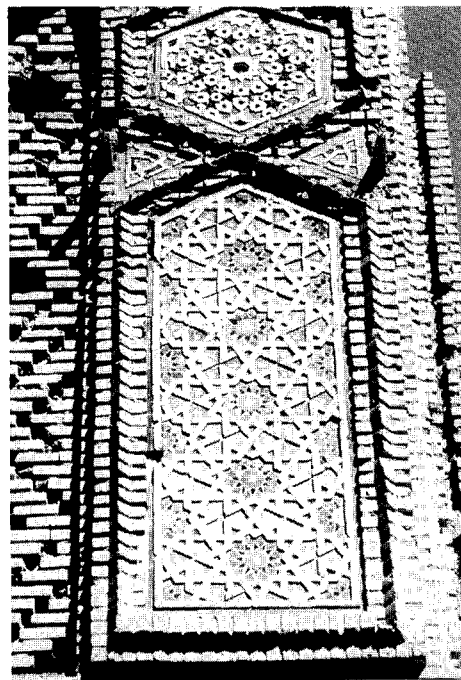
interpretations has been known throughout history. One has to think of these two tendencies within the Islamic community as a whole.

Regarding what Prof. Grabar said, I am trying to understand the symbolic function of poetic as well as Koranic inscriptions. The implication is not that it is the form of the inscription that is symbolic. It is the content somehow. It is what one reads, if he ever reads, or if he gets to see the thing, given that it might be fifty metres high on the minaret. But suppose one does read it. Now Koranic *āyāt* literally mean Koranic symbols or Koranic signs. My question is, what do you mean when you imply that a Koranic or a poetic inscription gives the minaret or the court in the Alhambra a symbolic charge? Do you mean that the attempt to understand or remember that particular line or verse generates a kind of symbolic activity, or an intent to penetrate that particular monument?

Grabar

The inscription makes the monument into a symbol. The correct terminology would be a vector, that is, it gives the direction by which one should understand the monument.

Now if you cannot read it—as it happens with minarets, very frequently the inscription is up high—then there is a kind of inner symbolism, what the maker said it was going to be. How it was understood afterwards is yet another story. The public changes its mind on the meaning of buildings. One can say that a building was built for purpose X and then over the centuries it acquired function Y.

Bammate

It so happens that I was in Mecca last Friday. Listening to the conversation here, I thought of those pilgrims and tried to imagine what kind of meaning our meeting

today might have for them. In other words, what kind of sympathy would they have toward space for architecture, not in any conceptual way, but in an empirical way?

Are Islamic impressions mainly verbal or mainly visual? I have a third element to introduce. In Mecca the strongest impression I had was the impression of movement, of circular movement around the Ka'ba. And I had the same impression in the running between Ṣafā and Marwa. My feeling is that the monument, architecture by itself, is not sufficient. You must visualize the human beings and their movements as well. You must deal with the space as a space to be inhabited by human beings.

I was very interested when Nader Ardalan said that originally the Haram was open and had no wall at all. When I was in Mecca for the first time several years ago, the Haram was not a monument. It was an open space. And when you went between Ṣafā and Marwa you went through the markets. There were goats and bicycles running into your feet. Now all this is covered by domes or plexiglass. All the surroundings have been expanded so that now it is a very impressive and majestic building. What was once an environment and a space has turned into a building, and there are some architectural reflections to be made from that.

In the process of becoming a symbol, what confers symbolic meaning to a form? Is it formal qualities or function? Prof. Kuban suggests that we look for our answer in the realm of function rather than in the realm of form. My experience would suggest that the functional is at least as important as the formal.

Grabar

I think that clearly there is a question of vocabulary. I do not mean vocabulary in English, but in Arabic, and subsequently Turkish, Persian, Urdu, whatever. In other words, we are asking a question which

may be a false abstract question—that somehow there ought to be symbols. If one is to delve into the culture itself and its architecture, one has to discover the terms of that culture for the questions we are asking. The question of the internal vocabulary which the Muslim world uses to understand its own environment is to me essential.

The second thing is a fairly small but important technical issue. This is the question of the *miḥrāb*. We have over-emphasized minarets simply because minarets are obvious and exciting things to look at. But at the same time one should mention that there is also the *miḥrāb*, a far more complicated and interesting shape. A different kind of effort has been put into the *miḥrāb*. It is, for instance, the only part of the basically religious environment in which there exists a clear iconography for all Muslim art and architecture. And there are esoteric meanings in this. But whether the *miḥrāb* is a valid architectural form is something that concerns me very much. In the reality of the use of the mosque I am still struck by the fact that from ninety percent of the space of the mosque you cannot see the *miḥrāb*. And therefore the act of prayer within the mosque is really not that closely directed to the *miḥrāb*. The *miḥrāb* is really a symbol, precisely because it is something which is not used. One does not go into a mosque and say, "Where is the *miḥrāb*? That's the direction I'm going to pray." Any Muslim going into the mosque knows very well in which direction he is supposed to pray and does not need the *miḥrāb* for that. Therefore, the *miḥrāb* fulfills a very symbolic function which deserves further study.

I also think that there are a certain number of broader issues. The first issue is the question of Mecca. Now it seems to me that we have to be extremely careful; the reality of Mecca is its uniqueness. It is a symbol, a direction and so forth, but precisely for what it is, it is not repro-ducible. On the whole it cannot be repeated. It is a symbolic model, not a valid architectural model for anything.

The other broad issue is the question of the mosque. I tend to disagree with Mr. Ardalan in that I do not think that the mosque was a sacred space for most of the history of Islam. It was the space of the whole community in which all the community activities took place. Now a lessening of the functions of the mosque has occurred. Perhaps this is exactly what characterizes the second half of the twentieth century, that one subdivides architecturally one's functions.

Porter

First, I wish to address one of Prof. Grabar's early challenges to us. That symbols never appear in form is a fascinating proposition. The second topic has to do with the expression of social and religious patterns of rituals as symbolic in form. We have not addressed the question of social and religious habits so far, at least explicitly. My third question concerns the evolution of new symbols. How do we recognize these and what are their preconditions? Finally, is symbolism as an idea illegitimate in Islamic thought from the point of view of its constituting an analytical separation? Is it simply evidence of a Western mode of thinking applied to Islam or, alternatively, is symbolism idolatrous within the framework of Islamic thought?

Let me start by making some remarks about the relationship between people and forms. Prof. Grabar asserted that diachronic meaning—meaning that exists across time—was not possible because symbolism is only evident in form for a particular place and time. He illustrated this by showing how Koranic inscriptions might imply the precise meaning of a place at a particular time. Now it seems to me that there are at least three ways that one can look at inscriptions. The first is that inscriptions are simply signs with respect to the form in which they define themselves. They literally tell you what they are or perhaps for what they are intended. Second, they may be forms. As beautifully
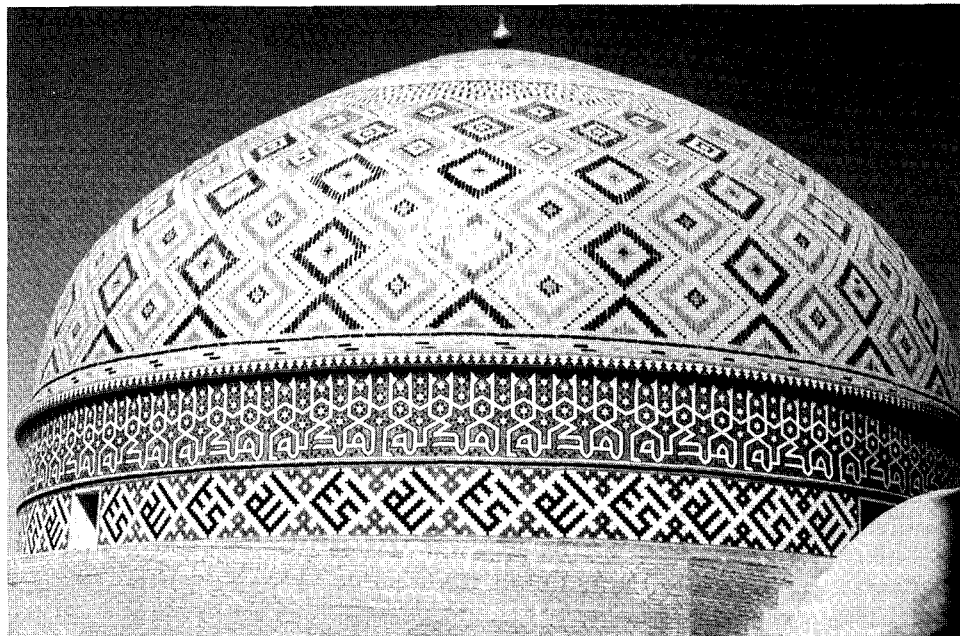
Yazd, Iran· Friday Mosque, dome

drawn writing they may be symbolic assertions of the past and beautiful decorations in and of themselves which carry forth from past ages. Third, they are very clearly symbolic of the Koran.

The second point I would like to make is the fact that an object contains a sign. This tells you what that object is but does not necessarily confer upon that object the quality of being a symbol. I think an example would be simply to imagine a Koranic inscription being placed on the wrong kinds of buildings in Islamic cities. Alternatively, they may be the right kinds of buildings, but perhaps in a Western culture the inscriptions would be entirely incongruous, that is, in a place where the presence of the sign on a particular object simply does not achieve symbolic meaning for those who wish to perceive it. Therefore, there has to be something intrinsic about the situation in which this sign happens to occur and perhaps something intrinsic about the sign itself that allows the form to be charged with meaning at a particular time.

We all seem to agree implicitly upon these three preconditions for charging a symbol with meaning. The object or form has to have some potential for becoming symbolic. Thus, while a specialized visual symbolism in a culture may be synchronic, that is, it may exist at only one moment in time, the potential of that form to be imbued with symbolic content must derive from other times and other places. A potential exists within that form and thus there is a diachronic symbolism at some level. Maybe it is at a second or a third level, but it has some general importance which it brings to the scene in order that it have the potential to be charged with meaning.

The second precondition for an object to become a symbol seems to be that the inscription itself exploits the potential of that particular object. This occurs through the appropriateness of the inscription— whatever appropriateness means—and through the excellence of its execution. This is particularly troubling to historians whose duty it is to find out whether those

who perceived the inscriptions understood the resulting combination as symbolic. Now it seems that we have a very good example in the article by Begley on the Taj Mahal.[1] The reinterpretation of that building by careful examination of the Koranic inscriptions and a subtle analysis of the site seems to make a good deal of sense.

To sum up the relationship between inscription and object seems to me to be more complex than Prof. Grabar alleged at the beginning. Looked at narrowly, the symbolic meaning may indeed not be diachronic if restricted to the particular culture at the time, but surely there is something that carries across the ages. In the search for form, which is, after all, what the architect is faced with, the exact curvature of the arch may make the difference between the building's capacity to connote as compared to the building's capacity simply to absorb more scathing criticism. The search for form is dominated exactly by questions such as what are the appropriate forms and which combinations of inscriptions and forms make the most sense.

I think I an evincing here a style of thinking like that of the architect. By that I mean to place it in some kind of perspective and not to insulate it from criticism.

Kuban

I would like to speak of this Taj Mahal article because it shows the uselessness of this kind of symbolism. We have to abandon this intellectual arrogance. Until this article nobody among us ever knew what was the significance of this building. Certainly millions of people never understood this symbolism. So let's get down to the community level. Ninety–nine percent of the people never read anything from the Koran or anything else. This kind of symbolism never existed for the whole community. That is why, especially today, it is much better not to discusss these kinds of things. Go to the level of the

community, to the common people, in order to make it useful for others.

Grabar

I disagree. I grant you the point about the arrogance of assuming that for three hundred years everybody was wrong. But I would not be willing to bargain for ignorance instead. On the question of illiteracy, I simply do not think that that was true. I think that people knew the Koran by heart, although a large number of them may not have been able to read it as if it were a philosophical treatise. I think the parallel would be the Latin of the Mass in the older tradition. Most people did not know Latin but knew enough of the Mass so that in terms of the Latin it would come back to them automatically. Even priests often did not know Latin very well, but certainly enough to deal with the Mass. This is something which I cannot totally demonstrate, but I think before the eighteenth century literacy had a much greater part in the Muslim world than we give it credit.

Burckhardt

In the case of the Koranic inscription, the fact that it is the Divine Word goes beyond the actual reading. It is quite legitimate that the nonliterate members of the community are aware that the Koran is inscribed there and that this has a sacred quality.

I. Serageldin

Most of the discussion of signs and symbols seems to revolve around the mosques. I feel I have not quite caught on how these signs and symbols may be transferred to the other types of structures that dominate the Islamic built environment in its totality.

Ardalan

I would like to comment on the question raised by Dr. Serageldin by saying it is interesting how gateways are really notable as places of inscriptions. Again, as an issue of scale, it is very important that we look at it not only in the context of the mosque. The gateway to the entire city of Shiraz under which one passes, the Darvazeh Koran, contains a Koran. With other gateways, such as those of Cairo or Aleppo, the inscriptions are normally Koranic.

However, I really wish to speak about the house. There, a sentence or an admonition is beautifully expressed just on top of the door. Normally it is a tile, often a standard product. The gateway might take you to more than one house, and as you pass, a blessing occurs. This indicates how important a gateway has always been in Islamic architecture. With the gesture of making a break from the outside to the inside, there is normally a Koranic admonishment.

Arkoun

You cannot limit the formation of a symbol to an inscription on a form, its support. There is still a third element which is man, the living user. If you take away man, there will be nothing. We can always put inscriptions on the pillar of a mosque or on the door of a house, but without man there will be no symbol.

A symbol is rich and essentially open, whereas a sign, because we are dealing with literal meaning, represents a lessening of the virtual significations linked to a symbol. A signal is something that releases an immediate movement without reflection. A symbol, on the contrary, by its function inspires meditation. As a consequence, a symbol is linked to a time and a place.

I would go even further and say that, in a congregation, each worshiper receives at the same time the same inscription on

completely different levels. Some perceive it as a signal, some as a literal linguistic sign, and others as a symbol. This is the reason why we cannot give a symbol an "operative" definition. By definition a symbol is rich and mobile, and it is man, its creator and user, who makes it so.

Burckhardt

I should like to illustrate Dr. Arkoun's remarks with an example. At a certain level of understanding the circle means unity. But it could also mean totality, time and so on. The form does not change, but the meaning changes according to the different levels in which it is used.

Mahdi

I found a remark made by Prof. Kuban quite intriguing. He said that although he had not asked for Begley's study on the Taj Mahal, somehow it became clear for the first time what the symbolism there was all about. It seems to me that we are in a way trying to do the same thing for Islamic civilization in general. It was not until nineteenth–century romanticism, not until Hegel's great book on aesthetics came out and the development that followed, that somehow Islam and Islamic architecture and symbolism became the subject of today's concern. That concern is what troubles me. Prof. Kuban asked what is the point of talking about things of which one cannot talk. What is all this attempt to talk about myth, for instance? Are we trying to demythologize Islam as Christianity was demythologized? What is the purpose of this rational concern with nonrational things? Ultimately one could skirt around them, but one cannot really go to the core of them.

Now surely we are not trying to spread this kind of teaching among the Muslim community at large. We are also not trying to create a new set of symbols. We are trying, I suppose, to become somewhat sensitive to the great monuments which we have seen and perhaps help the Jury that is going to bestow the Awards. But here I think something which Mr. Ardalan said earlier is quite crucial. We should be absolutely humble enough to say that ultimately one has to depend on the sense of excellence and the taste of that Jury. In short, even if we had a hundred such seminars we are not going to change that particular core that is there. All we can do is somehow give some pointers, things which one may have missed somehow or not thought about.

This brings to mind an experience I had in the Alhambra. There are all those wonderful inscriptions from the Koran and poetry, but somewhere low in a corner there is one that is very small. I do not know whether art historians have looked at it or not. It is not really very decorative. It is a prayer that asks in Arabic, "Let my work be filled with love."

Now I suggest that this is another thing for the Jury to consider. Was something a work of love, or was it for glory? I do not need to enumerate the alternatives. Again, there are really no tests or rules that one can give, but I think that we can depend on the great sensitivity and taste of the Jury to be able to tell the difference. I am sure that they must have heard somehow that one thing was a work of genuine love and that another was for something else. I believe that one answer to whether a symbol is legitimate or not will probably be this: if it expresses man's love for God on whatever level, if it moves one a step nearer to God, it is certainly legitimate. If it expresses love for anything else, then certainly it is idolatrous.

Reference Note

[1] Wayne E Begley, "The Myth of the Taj Mahal and a New Theory of Its Symbolic Meaning," *The Art Bulletin* 61 (1979), pp 7–37

2

Function: Concepts and Practice

Islamic Philosophy and the Fine Arts

Muhsin S. Mahdi

In going over the readings prepared for this seminar, I was pleased to notice in them the absence of ethnically and racially based views on Islamic art and architecture. These views should be guarded against, and not allowed to re-enter through the back door via ambiguous expressions like "culture" and "religion," terms that mean all things to all people, especially when lumped together. Take an expression like "Islamic culture": one difficulty is that it tends to be seen in terms of so-called primitive cultures, as it sometimes is in anthropology, or of some particular, real or presumed "religious culture," such as Christianity The attempt to look at Islam through Christian eyes and to search for symbols that parallel those of Christianity is a dubious enterprise, regardless of protestations that one is looking for specifically Islamic symbols or symbols that distinguish Islamic culture from other cultures. Christianity absorbed and transformed, and in this way preserved, pagan or gnostic symbols; Islam rebelled against these symbols and tried to remove them from the consciousness and experience of the Muslim community. We should also remember that symbols, and the symbolic functions of art and architecture as we understand them today, are predominantly nineteenth–century romantic European notions. Their relevance to the self–understanding of artistic creation and expression in other times and places cannot be taken for granted (the critical side of A. H. el–Zein's "Beyond Ideology and

Theology" is rather instructive in this respect).[1]

Even if we accept the notion of "culture" or "Islamic culture" as a useful point of departure, the relationship between crafts in general and what we call the "fine arts" in particular and other "aspects" of such a culture remains highly problematic Yet in this seminar we are dealing with the possible relationship between the fine arts in Islam and certain other things called "written sources." Here I think it is prudent not to be too ambitious or too hasty, and Oleg Grabar's suggestion that "the importance of written sources lies in the parallelism they provide for visual phenomena" is a sound starting point. The only indication in the readings that such a parallelism existed between the fine arts and philosophy is the passage from the *Alchemy of Happiness* by al–Ghazālī, which is cited by Richard Ettinghausen and referred to by Oleg Grabar:

> The beauty of a thing lies in the appearance of that perfection which is realizable and in accord with its nature . . . [For example] beautiful writing combines everything that is characteristic of writing, such as harmony of letters, their correct relations to each other, right sequence, and beautiful arrangement.[2]

Let me, therefore, begin here and point out what the patrons as well as the practitioners of these arts could have learned from philosophy, either directly or indirectly, through popularized versions of

philosophy spread among educated circles
by mystics like al–Ghazālī.

The Task of Islamic Philosophy

If I were asked by a student of Islamic art
and architecture where one could look in
Islamic philosophy for further enlighten-
ment on these questions of a thing's
perfection, harmony, the correct relation-
ships among its parts and on their
implications for man and man–made
works of art, my answer would be quite
simple. This is what Islamic philosophy is
all about: it is the search for order and
harmony in the natural world, the
intelligible world, the human soul, and the
city. It is an account of such order and
harmony where it exists, and an account of
how to restore it in man and in the city. It
looks at works of art as being in the
service of this objective. If the student
were then to ask whether he could expect
to find in this literature an account of
Islamic architectural symbols and their
meanings, the answer would again be
simple: the overarching concern of Islamic
philosophy is to find out what is true
always and everywhere, and to discover
the principles that govern temporal and
local variations and change insofar as
these are rhythmic or cyclical or the
products of the interaction of permanent
factors. It is not a religious or cultural or
national philosophy in the sense that it is
the product of, or bound up or concerned
primarily with, the ideas and ideals of a
particular human community, not even one
as large and significant as its own religious
community. Yet it is equally true that
Islamic philosophy is very much concerned
with understanding the particular character
of the Islamic community, and architec-
tural forms and decorations are temporally
and locally bound with specific nations,
cities, and tribes, and with their particular
environments and traditions. In this sense,
Islamic philosophy, like Islam itself, is
concerned with man's deeds and way of
life as determined by his views of the
world, of the human soul, and of the civic
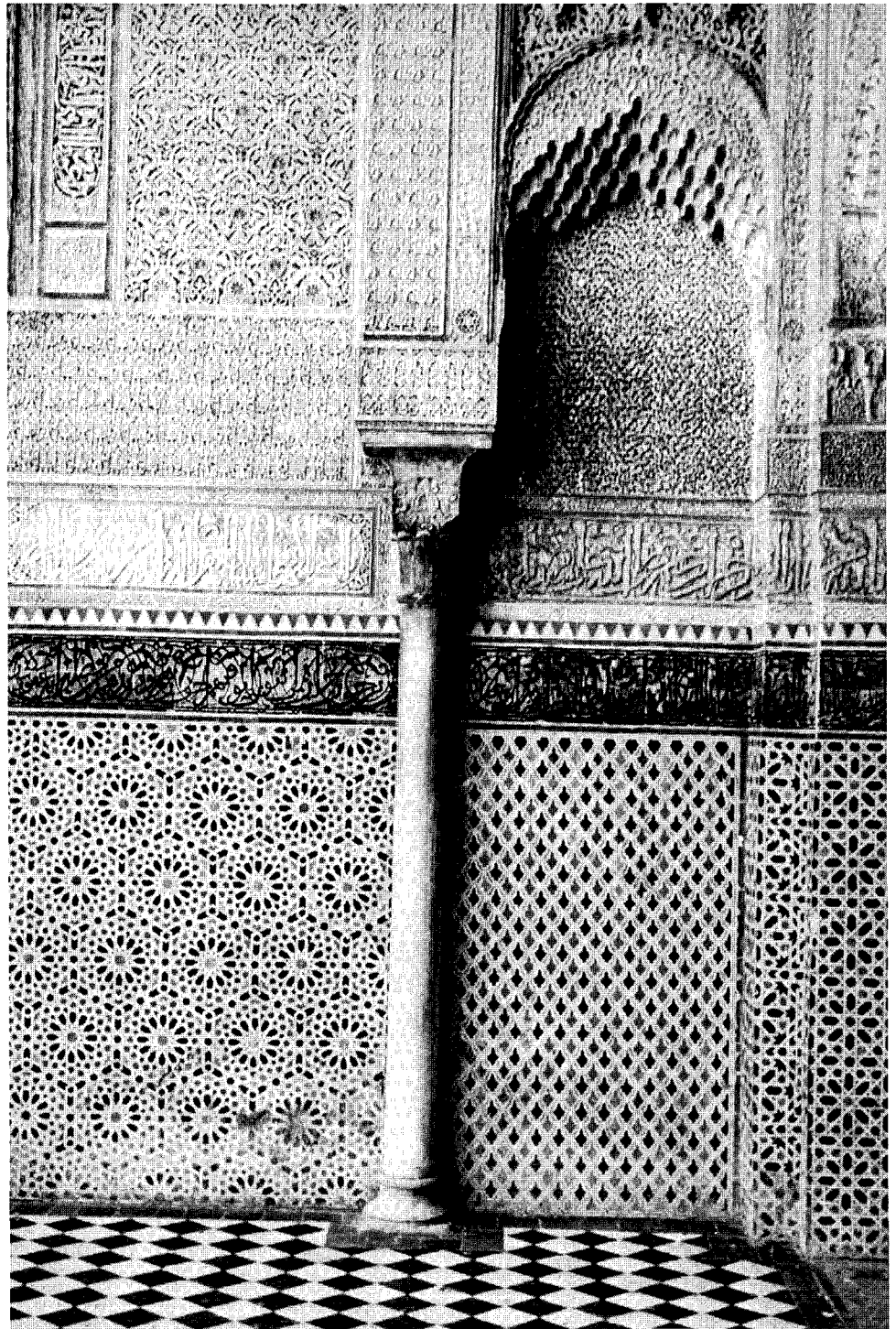
Fez, Morocco: a corner in the madrasa al–'Aṭṭārīn

Photo: H-U Khan/Aga Khan Awards

order. What a builder does, on the other hand, is largely determined by the needs and purposes of the particular human community for which he builds, which may be a family or a business, a civic establishment or a whole nation; and he must know and take into account those needs and purposes.

How then, one may ask, can the student understand the relationship between Islamic philosophy (or the thought of the major Muslim philosophers) and Islamic architecture (or the work of the major Muslim architects)? Is the relationship "proved" to a significant degree by the fact that they were all Muslims. I should not think so; one can be a good Muslim without being a philosopher or an architect. One must therefore look for more concrete links. If they existed, it was probably because some architects were educated and intelligent men who read or heard about some of the writings of the philosophers. But the question still remains: what could they have learned from these writings?

Aspects of Divine and Human Creation

Before looking for answers, it is useful to recall some of the characteristic ways in which Islamic philosophy deals with the arts. Although it does occasionally set down the general rules that govern the production of works of art, it does not generally engage in an analysis of these rules as they apply to the production of particular works, except by way of giving examples; nor do we find a detailed analysis of aesthetic experience or of the problems arising from the contemplation of a work of art. The particular rules that govern the production of a particular work of art, as well as the analysis of the experience of particular works, are normally dealt with by the art critic. The philosopher may also be a poet or a musician, a literary critic or a critic of music. But these activities remain distinct from what we may call his "philosophy of art," which is concerned with such

questions as the relationship between art and knowledge (whether knowledge of the Creator or of the created world); the role of the powers and passions of the soul in the production and experience of art; and the civic functions of art.

The architect is a maker. If he is any good, we say he is a creative man, a creator. If he is a Muslim he knows already that the Supreme Creator is God, and one assumes that he would be interested in reflecting on His work and even in imitating His creation. There is, of course, quite a bit about God's creation in the Koran and the Hadith, but it is not difficult to distinguish between the way these sources speak about God's creation and the way philosophy investigates and presents it. Philosophy looks at it as a whole, and looks at its parts and the order of its parts as an object of human knowledge. There is an affinity between the way the philosopher looks at the world and the way the artisan conceives of his work, inasmuch as they both consider a whole, its parts, and the relationships among those parts. Both are engaged in a human enterprise: one looks at the natural whole with the aim of knowing it, the other conceives a whole with the aim of producing it. Both need to consider this whole–to–part relationship to the extent that human capacity permits. But more specific issues still have to be considered.

How is the Supreme Creator conceived? Does one give priority to His knowledge or to His will? In philosophy this question turns on whether He is conceived as the supreme intellect or as the mysterious One beyond the supreme intellect, beyond all knowledge and being. Muslim philosophers were divided on this fundamental issue, and their differences were not necessarily related to the part of the Muslim community to which they belonged. In Ismaili philosophy, for instance, the early Iranian philosophers such as Abū Ya'qūb al–Sijistānī thought of God as beyond being and not being, and as the originator of the supreme intellect through His command, while the later Fatimid philosopher Ḥamīd al–Dīn al–Kirmānī thought of God as the first or

supreme intellect, and in this he was followed by the Ismaili thinkers in Yemen. The question may seem to deal with a subject that is too remote to have any relevance to human things. In fact it is not, for it determines the end of human thought and human action. Is the end of man (who is created in God's image) the perfection of his intellect that terminates in the intellectual intuition of the whole, or is it to contact that mysterious One through deeds? The answer to this question may determine the way one looks at artistic creation in its most sublime form—whether it is considered an imaginative representation of how things are and how man ought to act, both of which can also be articulated by intellectual understanding and intuition, or an imaginative revelation that transcends all created reality and anything that intellectual understanding and intuition can achieve on their own.

This issue has something to do with the next one, which is the nature and structure of the created world, intelligible as well as sensible, the heavenly bodies as well as the bodies here below. Do stars have intellects and souls? Are they ranked in an order ascending to that which is closest to God? Such questions are more philosophic than religious, even though a philosophic interpretation may be related to or have its origin in a Koranic or Hadith text. We all know of the numerous verses about light and darkness in the Koran, especially the famous "light verse" (XXIV, 35), that lend themselves to philosophic interpretations: light as the physical manifestation of intellectual or supra–intellectual light, and the different parts of creation as an orderly mixture of light and darkness, an analogy of being and not being, that terminates in God as pure or unmixed light. These philosophic interpretations were current in Sufi circles and among the Sufi orders to which many of the great architects belonged.

Then there is the analogy that is drawn between the structure of the world, the structure of the soul, and the structure of the city. The structure of the soul and the activities of its various parts or powers and

their relationship and hierarchy are of interest to any artist whose art consists of creating a work that pleases or conveys a message or arouses a certain feeling in the human beings who look at it or work or worship in it. Sense perception, imagination, intellect, passion, and practical understanding are all parts of the soul that the architect addresses to some extent through what he creates. The power of imagination, its functions in waking and dreaming, the way it mediates between understanding and sense perception, its role as a receptacle of intellectual perception or revelation, and its creative role in representing this perception or revelation in sensible forms are all questions crucial to any discussion of symbols in architecture and any under-standing of how a work of art works.

There is also a question of the passions and desires of the human soul: pleasure and pain, comfort, security, the desire for wealth, domination, honor, and so forth. How does a work of art provide for these, order them, exploit them, or control them? Do they have a natural order which the work of art is called upon to preserve or restore? Or is the work of art meant to satisfy human feelings, desires, and passions regardless of whether they are healthy or sick, good or evil, moderate or immoderate? What is meant by the aesthetic education of man? And what is the relationship between the experience of beauty and the experience of goodness? Can a human being who lacks the experience of beauty, order, and harmony through works of art be educated in goodness, and perceive the beauty of good actions and the beauty of God's creation?

The arts provide both living space for the families and citizens of a city, and symbols for a city or nation's power or purpose. These are the subjects of economics, ethics, and politics, or of the practical sciences. It is in this context that philosophy centres its attention on the "symbolic" character of these arts, and emphasizes their character as sensory apprehensions that aim at pleasure as an end in itself and as accidentally useful in practical things. Otherwise they would be merely practical; that is, they would serve what is necessary in practical life or in human excellence in practical life, be it victory in war, wealth, pleasure, or virtue.

The Treatment of Language Arts in Islamic Philosophy

The arts that Islamic philosophy treats at some length are the arts of language: poetry and rhetoric. We have become sensitive to the fact that language and the arts of language are of capital importance for the study of all other human arts, and we speak of the "vocabulary," "grammar," "rhetoric," and "poetics" of this or that art, including the art of architecture. Such things as signs and symbols are thus discussed in Islamic philosophy with reference to certain forms of speech and sometimes music, i.e., generally to things heard rather than things seen. This is a paradoxical situation, since things seen have a higher rank in philosophy than things heard. The former are the objects of perceiving, speculating, or theorizing. Yet they are discussed with reference to natural rather than to man-made, to artful or artificial things. Philosophic literature considers poetry and rhetoric as part of or in the perspective of "logic"—that is, thought. In this respect, it articulates something that is present in nonphilosophic literary criticism (e.g., the "science of meanings," *'ilm al-mā 'anī*), but which is discussed there in a less coherent manner and within a narrower perspective.

In philosophy the emphasis is on the formal structure of speech and its thought content, its purpose, its impact, what it generates in the listener, and how it does this. So the question is whether poetry and rhetoric have a thought content, and if so, what kind of content it might be; whether they aim at pleasure for its own sake; whether they are meant to generate certain notions or convictions or images; and whether these are ends in themselves or are meant to educate the audience morally—that is, to form their moral character and enable them or make it easy for them to learn something or to do (or not do) something. If they do this—and the philosophic literature assumes that, for good or ill, they do—then the next question is what do they make men think or imagine; what do they persuade them of; what do they arouse them to do; what do they discourage them from doing? The arts can be all these things: they can be useful, playful, fun, pleasant, restful, morally instructive or thought–provoking (in both directions—good or bad, true or false). All these aspects have to be considered. Such disciplines as the "sociology of literature" are modern efforts to recapture these dimensions of art.

Again, the arts (to a greater degree than the sciences) are relative to certain peoples, times, and places. They are popular or public in character. They express the human character, traditions, conventions, laws, and religious and cultural views that prevail in a certain region at a certain time. The best of them express the highest views or ideals of their audience, and lift that audience to the highest level of which it is capable whether in terms of pleasure, moral character, or deeds. This is one aspect of the discussion of these arts in Islamic philosophy. But there is also the supra–national, supra–regional, supra–temporal perspective of Islamic philosophy that provides for the possibility of comparing images, conven-tions, moral attitudes, and deeds of various nations, and for understanding their horizons and limitations.

A "Pragmatic" Aesthetic Critical Theory

Thus Islamic philosophy provides an aesthetic critical theory that is best characterized as "pragmatic."[3] It deals with poetry and rhetoric (and occasionally arts such as painting and sculpture) as they exist outside the context of philosophy and as they are meant to be used by a new breed of teachers. It centres its attention
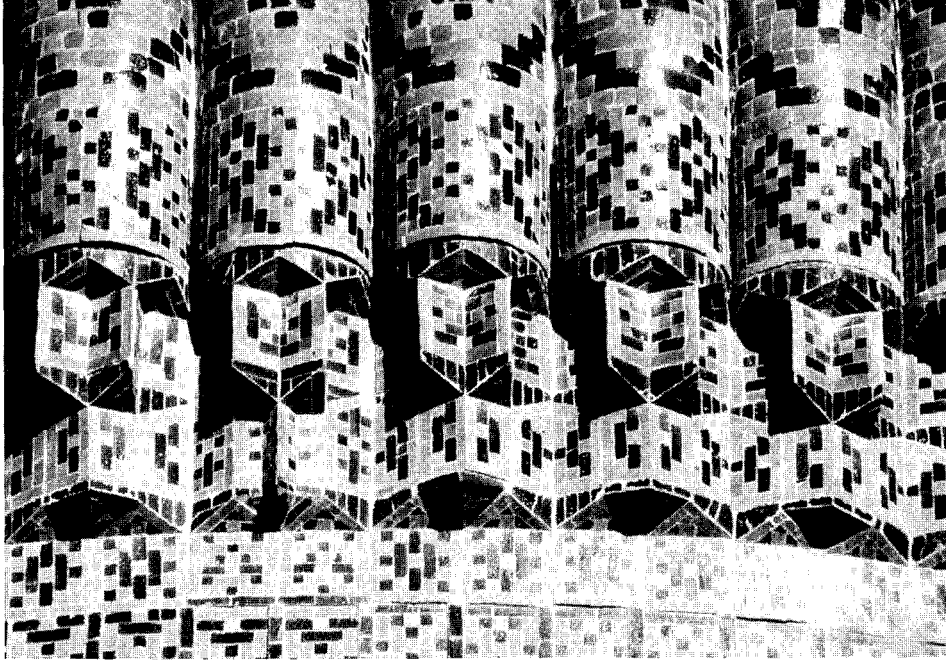
Samarqand, U.S.S R.: detail of the Gūr–i Mīr dome

Photo: R. Holod

on the crucial role of sensory perception and sense apprehension, and the pleasure felt by man in sensible knowledge for its own sake, for its utility, and for the way it beckons beyond itself to higher kinds of knowledge. It distinguishes between the prephilosophic experience of the arts (the experience that, among other things, led to the rise of philosophy) and the post–philosophic use of the arts by philosophers, lawgivers, and philosophically–minded rulers in their effort to educate the citizens, form their character, and teach them appropriate opinions. The philosophic contribution, then, consists of both the theory itself and the description of the new context within which these arts are to be employed, how, and for what purpose.

By and large, the philosophic tradition is interested not in the technical details of the art of composing poems and rhetorical speeches, but in the overall character of

these arts and in their use. In contrast, nonphilosophic critical theory in Arabic is largely devoted to such technical details. One of the models from which the two traditions work is the prophet–lawgiver. Thus the question of the use of the "art" of poetry and rhetoric (not poetry and rhetoric in the customary sense) by the founder of a religion is common to both traditions. The question is whether what is termed the "miraculous" character of the Koran consists in its unique excellence in the use of technical details (on which Arabic literary criticism tends to concentrate) or rather in its overall moral intention, educative purpose and achievement, and ability to determine the theoretical and practical opinions of the Muslim community and its way of life (on which the philosophic tradition concentrates).

This question leads back to the question of imaginative representation or revelation:

of what, how, by what faculty? Does it represent the external world of nature, and the individual emotions and practical objectives of the poet and the rhetorician? Does it extend to common opinions, generally known or accepted notions, and the "ideals" of a particular community? Such things were, of course, known to be what rhetoricians and poets did, and Arabic literary criticism discussed the success or failure of the rhetorician and the poet on those bases. Or, does it involve Platonic "ideas"? Following Aristotle, these are consistently refuted in the philosophic tradition (the case is different in mysticism). They are replaced by "intelligibles" in the mind, hence, by things that become known or about which one can attain certainty in the theoretical sciences that deal with natural and voluntary things. This led to the philosophic distinction between the imaging in poetry and the persuasion in rhetoric that deal with theoretical things and those that deal with practical things. The former were criticized on the basis of relative proximity to the theoretical sciences (to the extent that these achieve certainty at any particular time), and on the basis of the skill of the poet and the rhetorician in convincing and moving the audience as closely as possible to the truth of things. The latter were criticized in terms of what virtue and vice were thought to be, as well as on the basis of the skill of the poet and the rhetorician in promoting the practical education of the audience.

Function and Experience

We have been trying in this seminar to isolate the various functions of public buildings and spaces in the Islamic world with particular attention to public buildings and spaces that have a religious use: mosques, madrasas, and Sufi zāwiyas. We have paid special attention to their religious symbolic function. Much of our discussion has centered on whether certain kinds of design (decorations, inscriptions, and so on) are symbolic, and if so,

whether any of them are indispensable to a building with a religious function. By posing the question in this way we are bound to reach an impasse, if not a negative answer; we are reminded that, historically, any public building that solved an immediate practical problem was considered satisfactory by men and women who were the very models of Islamic piety—in fact, by the Prophet himself and his companions.

My remarks are meant to suggest that we look at a work of art as something that performs a multiplicity of functions. What function a particular public religious building performs, and the means it employs for doing so, can be found only by considering that particular building. It seems to me that we have been trying to speculate in a general sort of way about what functions, if any, a public religious building performs above and beyond its solutions to immediate practical problems. By immediate practical problems, I assume we mean practical utility, or what is necessary if certain practical functions are to be served, as distinguished from what appears to be useless or arbitrary. What looks useless or arbitrary in a work of art may be just that, in which case it performs the function of merely confusing and disorienting the beholder or listener; but what appears useless or arbitrary may in fact aim at a higher utility and necessity and, depending on the onlooker or listener's taste and judgment, it may succeed in performing a higher function. For example, a public religious building may try to convey a sense of God's peace, glory, majesty, transcendence, or unity—in short, any one or a combination of God's beautiful names—and it may do this through sheer simplicity, some shape or void, colour, size, decoration, inscription, or a combination of these. Those aspects of a public religious building that go beyond solving an immediate practical problem in a narrow sense have to be looked at individually and together as symbolic in the larger sense of this term. One has to ask what the building is trying to convey and whether it succeeds or fails.

Finally, what if one or more of these

aspects that characterize the artistic traditions (in the plural) of Muslim communities is not unique to Islamic architecture, but is in fact present in one or another of the artistic traditions of some other religion? This question does not bother me at all; on the contrary, I wish that all these aspects would be present in all the artistic traditions of other religions. The seminar has pointed to the roots of spiritual beliefs and artistic traditions in the Islamic countries. If the majority of contemporary examples we have seen indicate anything, it is that some architects are trying to attach dead branches to these roots with rubber bands. Our task is to find out whether others have succeeded in grafting living branches to these roots, and whether the result is a living tree that can grow and under which contemporary Muslims can take shade. We cannot perform this task if we continue to assume that architecture in the Islamic world must reproduce certain forms or symbols that we students of Islamic history or culture have identified as "Islamic," in order to help us distinguish "Islamic culture" from Western or other Oriental cultures. Whatever the use of this approach may be, it is not a substitute for a philosophy of art that considers the kind of issues I have raised, or for an art criticism that deals with the rules of artistic production and with the individual and collective experience of a work of art.

As a last remark, I would like to point out a certain difficulty for which I see no easy resolution. When I try to "experience" a great monument of Christian architecture, such as the cathedral of Chartres, I am able to read about the history of its construction, the cultural history of the period, the techniques employed in its building, the meaning of the representations in its sculpture and stained-glass windows, and the stylistic features of the works of art that survive in it from different periods. I am also able to spend time looking at the monument, studying and enjoying its form and each of the works of art it contains, and attending the functions performed in it. However successful I may be, my experience is

quite different from that of a convinced Catholic who has been raised in the church and has participated in the mysteries of that faith from childhood, and who experiences the same monument as a living house of God. This would seem to indicate that there are certain limits to the effort some of us make to ascertain how religious public buildings function in the Islamic world and the way Muslims experience these buildings. Furthermore, at least some great religious public buildings are themselves "works of faith," which again indicates that there may be limits to an effort at understanding their spirit if we do not participate in the faith of the builders. There may be differences of opinion among us on how severe those limits are, and on the extent to which they can be overcome. But surely serious architects and their consultants, however creative or learned, need to confront these questions and constraints when called upon to design and build public buildings in the Islamic world that are meant to have religious functions.

Reference Notes

[1] Abdul Hamid el-Zein, "Beyond Ideology and Theology: The Search for the Anthropology of Islam," *Annual Review of Anthropology* 6 (1977), pp 227–54

[2] Al-Ghazālī, *Das Elixier der Glückseligkeit, übertragen von H Ritter* (Jena, 1923), p 148 Cited in Richard Ettinghausen, "Art and Architecture," *The Legacy of Islam*, ed Joseph Schacht with C E Bosworth (Oxford, 1974), pp 284–285.

[3] Meyer Howard Abrams, *The Mirror and the Lamp: Romantic Theory and the Critical Tradition* (New York, 1953), Chapter One.

Comments

Arkoun

Muhsin Mahdi said that philosophy, as it has developed in Islam, contains certain ideas of harmony, order and the aspiration for the absolute. All these ideas have aspects that interest the architect whom we can consider the mediator between philosophical concepts and a physical projection of these concepts in the construction of the city.

I think it might be fruitful to compare what occurred in Greek cities, for these ideas are more relevant to Greek architecture than to Islamic architecture. In other words, we have again the problem of selection. Is what we find Islamic or is it something else?

To clarify this point, I would like to indicate that it is an issue of historical research. I know that we have here something that is an ideal, but it is a historical problem to see the real relation which could or could not have developed between the work of the architect and philosophy. A vacuum prevents us from stating the impact of philosophy in this field, and it would be very interesting to know the real function of Islamic philosophy, its concrete function in shaping this way of life.

What has happened today? Not only have these cities of harmony disappeared, but this philosophy is no longer historical for us. Classical philosophical reflection has disappeared. The architect who wishes to know about the past on the level of philosophy and apply it in his work finds himself deprived. This is a problem that architects have to face today.

Mahdi

I should perhaps begin by saying that the question of the relation between philosophy and what is called the culture of a city is a very complex one. It is true that Plato talked a lot about the city, but the Greek city and its architectural form represented prephilosophic ideals and parallel developments within the culture itself more than it did philosophy. We should not forget that it was the Greeks who put Socrates to death and who gave Plato a very hard time. That in itself is symbolic of the tension between philosophy and the city. This tension continues during Islamic times and today, partly because philosophy tries to understand things independently of the city, and to transcend temporal and local kinds of conventions. Because it engages in a form of criticism, either explicit or implicit, of its own culture, the tension between the two is inescapable. In fact, if there is any use of philosophy for the city, one may even say it is largely because of this tension. So I think it is a very complex question. One cannot just take it for granted that Islam was against philosophy while the Greeks were for philosophy.

The modern situation is somewhat different. On the one hand, we had an age of liberalism, which unfortunately came to an end. In its place there arose what one might call an age of ideology. Governments seem to be not only concerned with running the practical affairs of the state but claim to know the ultimate things, to have a philosophy, to know what the nature of society is and so on. That necessarily beings us back to the same situation that existed with the Greeks and in Islam. Basically, free thinking and philosophy is in trouble with this kind of situation, and philosophers have to make adjustments or remain silent or migrate.

Suppose there are architects and others who have the freedom to think, to read and to do something in their art; after all, it may be hard for a party or a ruler to tell an architect that this is against the ideology of the state, because it is very hard to tell what the ideology of a building is. But maybe it isn't. Maybe our architects will tell us they have the same problems. Suppose this is the case. We still face the situation which Dr. Arkoun described. Islamic philosophy like almost everything else Islamic has become history. A few people, mostly outside the Muslim world, seek to reverse this situation—to think about Islamic philosophy philosophically rather than historically, rather than as a so-called aspect of a culture or whichever term we use to embalm and bury a thing in the past. I think they are just beginning. What they will achieve, what they can do in the future, I wouldn't know. The problem again is that philosophers have a peculiar knack of thinking, "I will be perfectly happy if someone should listen to what I am saying in two hundred years." This is the kind of range they normally have in mind which is not very practical, of course. On the other hand, I think there are shortcuts. We know who the Muslim philosophers were, we know what they wrote, and the texts are being edited in Arabic or Persian. They are being translated, so they are not inaccessible. People should just pick them up and read. They may have difficulties, but what is not difficult?

I. Serageldin

I frankly seem somewhat more comfortable in discussing self–identity, the second heading on the programme, than symbols, since I understand some of the difficulties which most of our colleagues have had. I would like to follow up what Prof. Arkoun has said about the difference between what existed in the past and the present situation.

Philosophy, if conceived in the broad sense of *fiqh*, contemporary thought, is what gives society a sense of identity. The society knows itself from the way it perceives itself, and that is reflected in its political system, its social goals and its semiotic system. This in turn governs the way in which its physical built environment is developed. With that I am saying that architecture is really the image or the reflection of the social, economic and cultural organization of society. I would

like to pose the question whether indeed philosophy in the broader sense of *fiqh* mentioned partly by Dr. Mahdi would not be essential at this stage?

In contemporary Muslim societies almost everywhere there are what are called "modernizing" influences. I put them in quotation marks to avoid getting into disputes whether they are modernizing or Westernizing or whatever. They are influences that impose a different way of life on people at the level of social praxis in terms of their economic interactions and the secular system of laws between people and nations. Accommodation is required of the individuals in contemporary Muslim societies. Invariably this leads to a sense of shaken identity and ambiguity, a lack of knowing who you really are. It is reflected in our architecture today and in our sense of the environment. I think that perhaps one of the fundamental tasks required of intellectuals in all of the Muslim world is to reverse the standard, to absorb these modernizing influences up to the level of practical ethics, and to discuss openly the questions which Prof. Arkoun has mentioned. In order to determine criteria that can help define what kind of contemporary architecture would be most meaningful in Islamic terms, we will have to rethink our political systems, our economic laws and our societal laws. We must consider, for example, the balance between private and public spaces, the orientation of forms, rights of privacy, the proper role and function of communal living, the type of family life prevalent in society and its impact on the plan of houses, the proper mixing of land uses and the separation of these uses between sacred and profane. We heard that recently the increased specialization of buildings has resulted in robbing the mosque of its great communal purpose and has turned it into a much more narrowly defined edifice. The presence of aesthetic sense, grace, decoration and so on is an overlay on all that.

I suspect that the heart of the problem of finding a harmoniously balanced urban environment comes from defining basic concepts which govern society and from which we can develop the criteria and feelings for articulating an architecture. I would like to ask Prof. Mahdi to comment a little on how he believes a rethinking of contemporary Islamic goals can be,best achieved.

Mahdi

I think all of this has to be done, obviously, but what its impact will be only God knows. The idea of having some sort of a think tank where people can acquire a new understanding of Islamic law or Islamic theology or Islamic art is a good thing. And if one does learn something— we do that at a place like Harvard only accidentally and not in an organized fashion—then one might be able in a serious and organized fashion to begin to get out of this terrible environment. People need the time and the opportunity to sit down and discuss what can be done under the circumstances. That certainly would be an important contribution in a small way.

Islam, Urbanism and Human Existence Today

Mohammed Arkoun

My title is intended as a framework for research,[1] a framework inspired by reading the *Proceedings* of the first seminar.[2] In presenting "Architecture in the Spirit of Islam" the ideological or theological presuppositions may well imply that the Islamic spirit is an immediate, simple, even atheistic notion. For me, within the framework of our research, it is problematic.

The title I have chosen avoids the implication of such presuppositions. It simply juxtaposes three main directions of thought in a particular order. Why have I placed "urbanism" between "Islam" and "human existence"? To the extent that urbanism is a physical environment designed by men, one in which their existence takes place, it serves to mediate between a projection of human existence, a general design, and real, concrete existence.

As a projection of human existence, Islam moves in two directions. The first is metaphysical, religious, spiritual, and therefore dynamic. The second is one which I personally hesitate to qualify with the adjective, "Islamic". Here I react against what is presented as "Muslim" philosophy, "Muslim" politics and the like. The second direction, the second level of signification, is the sociohistorical space in which human existence unfolds. This space should be restored to a real, positive signification. It should in no way be arbitrarily concealed by the term, "Islamic."

I wish to relate a personal experience in order to make this theoretical and analytical presentation less abstract. The example is that of Algeria, a unique laboratory for those who wish to reflect seriously on these problems. What I have to say about Algeria can be applied with proper correctives to any Muslim country, but owing to its recent history a number of problems appear there in extreme form. At the time of its independence in 1962, a unique upheaval occurred. An extremely active European community, a very mixed community, left the country. Entire towns were emptied of their inhabitants. An

Algeria: a recently constructed rural village
Photo: M. Al-Hariri/Aga Khan Awards

urban way of life conceived by and for the French and differing entirely from that required by a Muslim population was now vacant.

In terms of the Islamic definition of housing a significant problem arose. The colonial departure provoked an upheaval of the Algerian population. Apart from a few exceptions, the essentially rural population was unprepared to live in this physical environment. Consequently, the entire traditional semiotic universe was disrupted. Another framework for life was installed in its place, and this translated into all kinds of behaviour. For instance, people used their balconies to raise chickens (this striking example was provided by André Raymond). But there is more. All kinds of behaviour which are part of the Islamic way of life were uprooted and displaced. As it does not correspond to the functions demanded by the new population, the urban fabric

deteriorates. There is clearly room for psychological and sociological research here. I am persuaded that much can be learned from this experience.

A second point to remember is that after independence, Algeria wished to break with its colonial past and pursue its own development. In terms of housing and urbanization two phenomena had great impact: industrialization and the agrarian revolution. In turning to heavy industry, Algeria installed complexes that rival those in Europe in terms of their impact on social structures such as housing and work. Consequently, we must now deal with problems identical to those faced by European industrial societies in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

The problem is where to house the new workers. Should the most common type of urbanism be chosen, the low–rent housing development? In other words, there was no tradition of urbanism. Nor was there
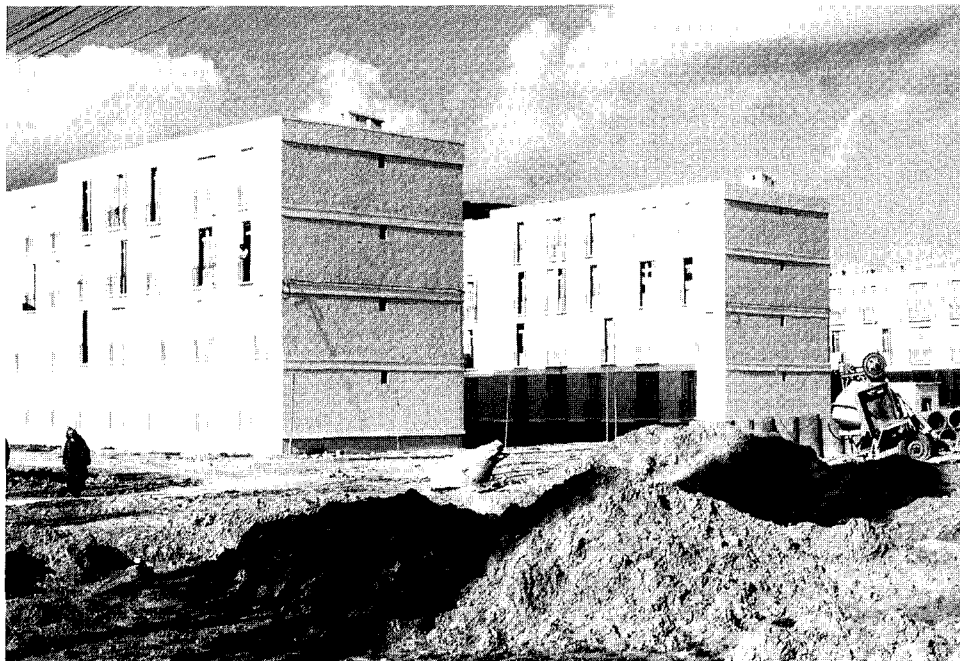
Kasr al–Boukhari, Algeria public housing under construction

Photo: M Al–Hariri/Aga Khan Awards

any preparation at the architectural research level to accompany this great historical movement.

The leap into modern industry was a bold policy. At the same time it was deep-rooted in an ideology that calls for the remodeling of the Algerian identity. That is to say, national construction had as its first principle not only the recovery of an identity, but the remodeling of an identity, first, by regenerating its historical and cultural constituents, and second, by integrating new wealth and modern methods.

In the case of Algeria, for example, if we wish to identify the typical urban tradition, we should not look at those great monuments or mosques which engage the attention of the specialist and even amaze us. I emphasize that our approach must be pragmatic. When considering the history of Islam, Muslims as well as Islamicists usually take into account a

factitious historical continuity represented by architectural monuments or great philosophical works. In so doing the real social fabric is totally omitted. Classical Arabic historiography is the intellectual priest serving in the defense of dynasties. It celebrates works of civilization which we continue to protect at the expense of local invention and creativity.

As an illustration, we turn to the architectural methods of the Mzab. A religious minority within a social group extending far back, the Mzab offers a particularly instructive lesson. Taking refuge in Southern Algeria for political and religious reasons, they built right in the middle of the Sahara. This is, in fact, Hassan Fathy's formula, "to build with the people." Their solutions met very precise ecological constraints before meeting the standard Islamic models which were certainly overlooked by the Berbers of that time.

Concerning the agrarian revolution in

Algeria, socialist villages have been built. This is indeed an interesting phenomenon. A socialist village is one of those new villages built in the countryside to lodge the new agricultural workers. They adhere to what we call "modern" architectural models. Apartments are ordered in blocks; streets follow straight lines. The only sign of Islam's presence is, of course, the mosque, and this raises an important issue.

The mosque fulfills the function of mediation not as a building that has Islamic architectural attributes such as the *miḥrāb* or the *minbar*, but as a building with a functional semiotic system, a building in the midst of those smells, noises and movements which characterize what we perceive as an Islamic milieu. The mosque mediates only when it is integrated into a lively system. But in a socialist village this system has practically disappeared. Here we are dealing with something different, with another language, a language of revolution which has nothing to do with the traditional Islamic language. The modes of relation and exchange are different, and an entire system of signs has disappeared. Consequently, we must revise the Islamic language to adapt it to new realities. That is why I have chosen as my theme, "Islam, Urbanism and Human Existence Today." The word "today" has considerable weight for we must make our way through towns shattered by demographic pressures and a disrupted semiotic universe.

If we do not now seriously search for an Islamic language adapted to this new situation, we will find ourselves in the usual predicament of Muslim societies. When confronted by economic, demographic and social pressures, they practice a kind of evasion. Always they resort to a Western technology which only further aggravates the problems of their interior universe.

What goes with this evasion? An Islamic discourse of an ideological nature which tries to legitimate these actions by referring to the authority of the Koran, the authority of Islam, which is supposed to function on a transcendental level. I

make an appeal for a political philosophy adapted to the current historical situation of Muslim societies, a philosophy that would take up again the issues raised by the philosophers of the past—the relation between the authority of the Koran (divine, transcendental, religious) and that of the human powers and ideologies which seek legitimacy by referring to that authority.

I call your attention to the problem of signs and symbols. Here I cross paths with Prof. Grabar. He began with an analysis of art history while I started with an analysis of the Koranic text. Both of us have independently employed the term "sign–symbol."

I prepared an essay, *"Peut–on parler de merveilleux dans le Coran?"* for a colloquium.[3] When people queried me on the notion of the supernatural in the Koran, I began to reflect on the semiotic status of the Koranic verses and wondered whether we should consider them as symbols or as signs. I linked these two words in order to indicate two possible directions which are continually manifested in Islamic life and in the relation of the Muslim to the Koran.

The first direction considers the verse as a linguistic sign, a linguistic expression referring directly to definable significations. This permits the definition of Muslim law and in fact indicates the direction of thought in the *Shari'a*. The *Shari'a* is inconceivable if we do not consider the Koranic discourse on this literal linguistic level where, according to lexicographic method, each word refers precisely to some referent. At this level the *Shari'a* continues to influence Islamic discourse, for instance, the decisions Muslims make in urbanism or economics.

In the second direction the verse functions as an opened space of projection, that is, a system of significations that materializes in the individual and collective experience of the community. Of course, you will tell me that these things are too complicated for an architect and he cannot follow all these directions.

What I emphasize is that thought is first of all an act of historical solidarity. Philosophers, ethnographers, architects, economists and sociologists should consider things within the context of reality, the reality in which Muslim societies presently live. Then, if we find a path through all the confusion, horizons will open in which we can inscribe our thought and our action.

Reference Notes

[1] This text is an English resumé of a presentation made in French by Prof Arkoun

[2] *Toward an Architecture in the Spirit of Islam*, sponsored by the Aga Khan Award for Architecture and held at Aiglemont, Gouvieux, France, in April 1978

[3] *L'Étrange et le merveilleux dans la civilisation islamique médiévale* Colloquium held at the Collège de France (Paris, 1978)

Comments

Raymond

I would like to make a remark concerning the attitude of historians. Dr. Arkoun has raised an important point regarding the existence of urban planners who realize this integration of divine will in the urban space. In fact, this is a big problem upon which historians are working. But the problem is difficult because we have very little historical information relative to the role of a central concept of cities.

Finally, I think that it is the individual, the *qāḍī*, who plays the role of mediation. I refer to the period which I know, i.e., the modern times. From the fifteenth to the nineteenth century the *qāḍī* performed this mediation by the very act of daily interpretation of the urban problems of Muslim cities. Thus we should identify the implicit body of doctrine which the *qāḍī* obeyed when making his decisions. This would involve perusing thousands of registers scattered in most big Muslim cities. It represents not only the work of a historian during his lifetime, but generations of historians. When this task is completed, I think we will have a clear idea of the problems confronting us, and maybe we will find some solutions.

Arkoun

The mediation of the *qāḍī* is entirely different from the mediation of the mosque. The mediation of the mosque is a mediation for the sacred, the transcendent. Muslims pray in mosques and when a Muslim prays, he is in relation with God. The mediation of the *qāḍī* is a mediation of censure, and eventually one of repression, of political integration for the benefit of the secular branch. There is a difference between these two kinds of mediation. The first one is the Islamic projection of human existence which is translated on the level of the prayer in the

mosque. The second is the mediation of the *qāḍī*, of law, which evolves from the struggle of men within the city.

Wahid

I do not think that we should make too much of a distinction between the two kinds of mediation. In some cases an institution used for one kind of mediation can also be used for another purpose. For example, the mosque is used for the mediation of God but also for that of law and politics.

I would like to point out a unique Indonesian institution which exerts influence in the rural areas. The *pesantren* is a learning community where students are sent by their parents to live and study with the *'ulamā'* in the same compound. It represents a cultural mediation through its integration of pre–Islamic concepts and Islamic signs and symbols.

In Indonesia there is no specific symbol for good and bad, but there is a distinction between aspirants and those who have achieved a perfect understanding and knowledge of God. To express this idea in Sufi terms, pre–Islamic concepts of the *wayang* puppet show were adapted. Specifically, in the middle of the screen used in the puppet show there is a mountain. On one side you have the *pandavas*. These are not the heroes in the Western sense as you see them in the movies, but rather those who have obtained perfect knowledge of God. On the other side there are the *kauvaras* who still aspire to perfect knowledge.

In the *pesantren* the symbol of the mountain is employed by placing the mosque in the middle of the compound. The *'ulamā'* live on one side while the students live on the other. Also, by being in the middle, the mosque functions as a centre in which the community can come and go. Therefore I think we should avoid making a distinction between the two kinds of mediation. An institution can be used for many purposes.

Mahdi

Prof. Arkoun insists that we should look at things somewhat problematically. But between the problematic character of these things and the way he invites us to look at them, there seems to be some tension. For instance, I wonder whether his distinction between social reality and transcendence as two opposite things that have to be mediated is in itself not problematic. The separation between the literal and legal aspects of the Koran and the symbolic sign aspect, both of which have existed throughout Islamic history, is another example. Can one throw one of them overboard and preserve the other? You see my difficulty. Either we go all the way in our effort to make things problematic, or we stand, as Prof. Arkoun seems to stand, on these premises, and then our project is not problematic.

Arkoun

Yes, of course, analysis separates, but separation does not imply the existence of an opposition. Analysis is undertaken in order to afford better understanding. What goes on in the life of a man when he is talking about God, about transcendency, and when he is doing his business, when he is engaging in politics, for example? We would like to know how these things are expressed and how they fit in the existence of man. It is obvious that for a believer in general—a Muslim, a Christian or an ideologist—this separation by analysis does not exist. Analysis is a search undertaken for better understanding. It is therefore not a rupture–causing element.

The *Rab'*: A Type of Collective Housing in Cairo During the Ottoman Period

André Raymond

Our knowledge of housing in Cairo during the Ottoman period from the sixteenth to the eighteenth century is uneven Various sources (*waqf* documents in particular) furnish detailed descriptions of important residences such as mansions and palaces. It is possible to examine numerous extant buildings of this type.[1] Unfortunately, we have little information on "average" dwellings. Although great variety exists within this building category, the general concept remains fairly constant. The private house of the Ottoman period opened onto a secondary street or cul–de–sac. A corridor gave access to an interior courtyard. Windows opened either on this or, in the case of important dwellings, the arcades of a *maq'ad* (loggia). The house was often two or three stories tall and included a closed reception room, the *qā'a*. These houses were located in areas near the central commercial districts inside the Fatimid region of the town (Qāhira).

At the other end of the social spectrum (and geographically on the outskirts of the town) was poor housing. This is not well understood due to the lack of contemporary description or remains which might encourage archeological investigation. Although the *hāra* (residential quarters) of Cairo offered many houses conceived on a reduced scale after the model just described, there were also many groups of houses called *haws*.[2] These consisted of poor dwellings built around a common courtyard. Jomard described this kind of semi–rural dwelling as "large courtyards or enclosures full of four foot tall huts where throngs of poor people lived crowded together with their animals."[3]

Between these two extremes lie the collective residences, the importance of which has only recently been acknowledged. They are of two main types. The first, the *wakāla* or *khān* (caravanserai), was used as lodging for a transient population (travellers, foreign traders, military people, etc.). As a place of wholesale trade it also performed an economic role.

The *rāb'* (plural, *ribā'*) is a very original but lesser known type of tenement
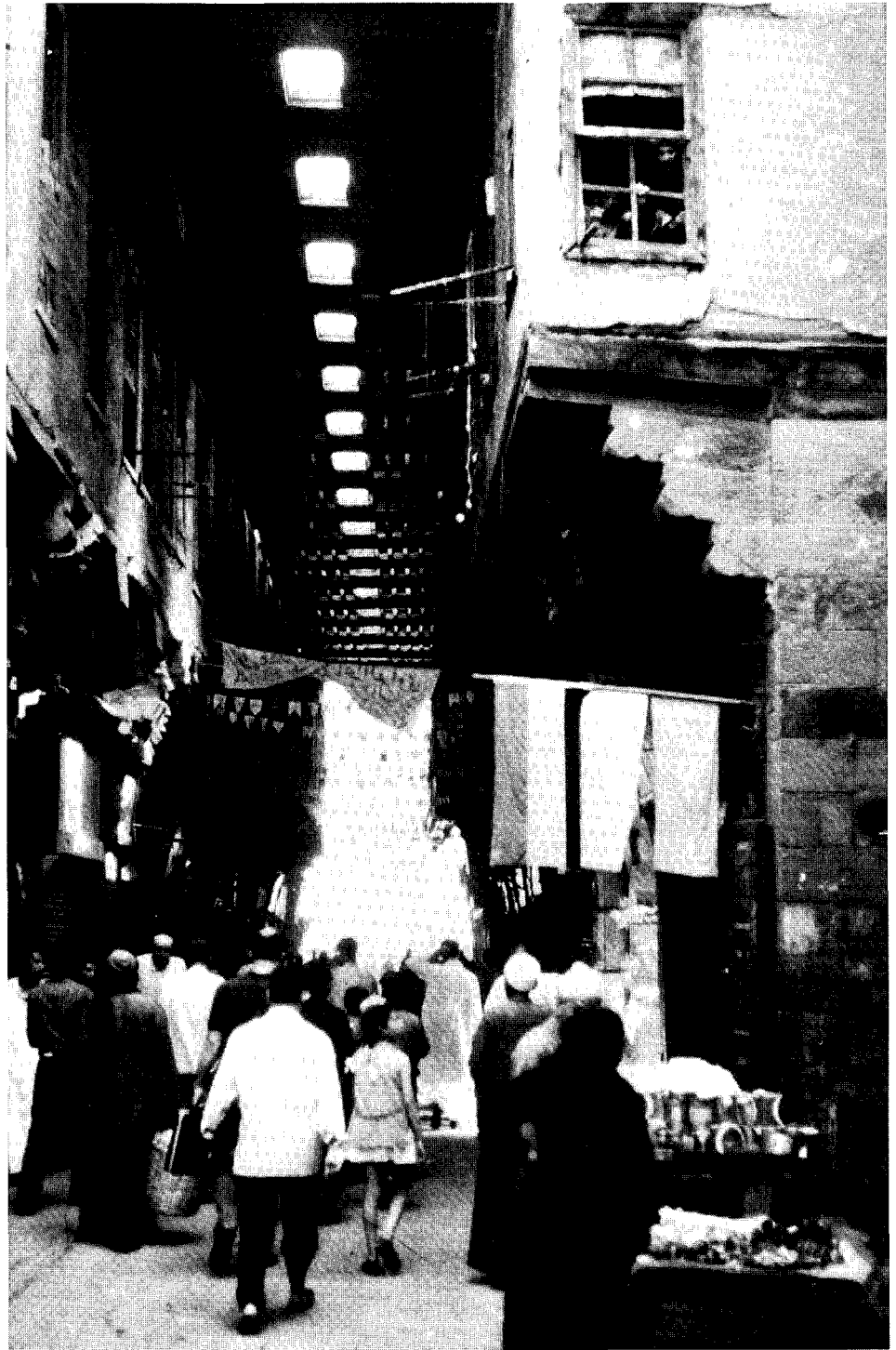
Cairo, Egypt. street scene outside the rab' *of Riḍwān Bey*

Photo: A Raymond

building. Recent studies by Laila 'Ali
Ibrahim have shed some light on the *rab'*
of the Mamluk period.[4] Here we are
dealing with a traditional structure; the
oldest specimens go back to the middle of
the fifteenth century, but texts mention
the existence of the *rab'* in Fustat and
Cairo at a much earlier date. It continued
to play an important role in the daily life
of Cairo's citizens until the middle of the
nineteenth century.

The word *rab'* is frequently met with in
the Arabic sources and in archival
documents. M. Clerget has given the *rab'*
a precise definition:

> The tall tenement building or *rab'* is . . .
> really a specialty of Cairo . . . The *rab'*
> is a kind of furnished hotel where up to
> ten or fifteen apartments can be rented,
> each lodging up to ten people. It
> corresponds to the Roman *insulae* and is
> located along the main streets or their
> immediate vicinity between the main
> bazaars. Rarely does it have a courtyard
> . . . The shops or warehouses for mer-
> chandise frequently occupy [the ground
> level]. Ordinarily there is no communi-
> cation between the ground level and the
> other levels . . . It is hard to know
> exactly the maximum height of the *rab'*
> during times of overpopulation . . .
> During the Turkish period . . .
> [travellers] mention . . . two, three, and
> sometimes four stories.[5]

The Location of the *Rab'*

By searching the archives of the *mahkama*
or Religious Courts of Cairo we located
forty–six *rab'*s: thirty–six situated inside
Qāhira, seven in the southern sector, and
three in the western sector of the city.[6]
More than three–fourths of the *rab'*s were
located inside Qāhira, along main com-
mercial streets in the vicinity of the main
*sūq*s of the town (Baïn al-Qaṣraïn,
Ghūriyya, Khān al-Khalīlī, Jamāliyya).
This distribution corresponded to that of
the *wakāla* (caravanserai). Significantly,
there were no *rab'*s in the *ḥāra* region, the
poor housing areas of Qāhira. In the
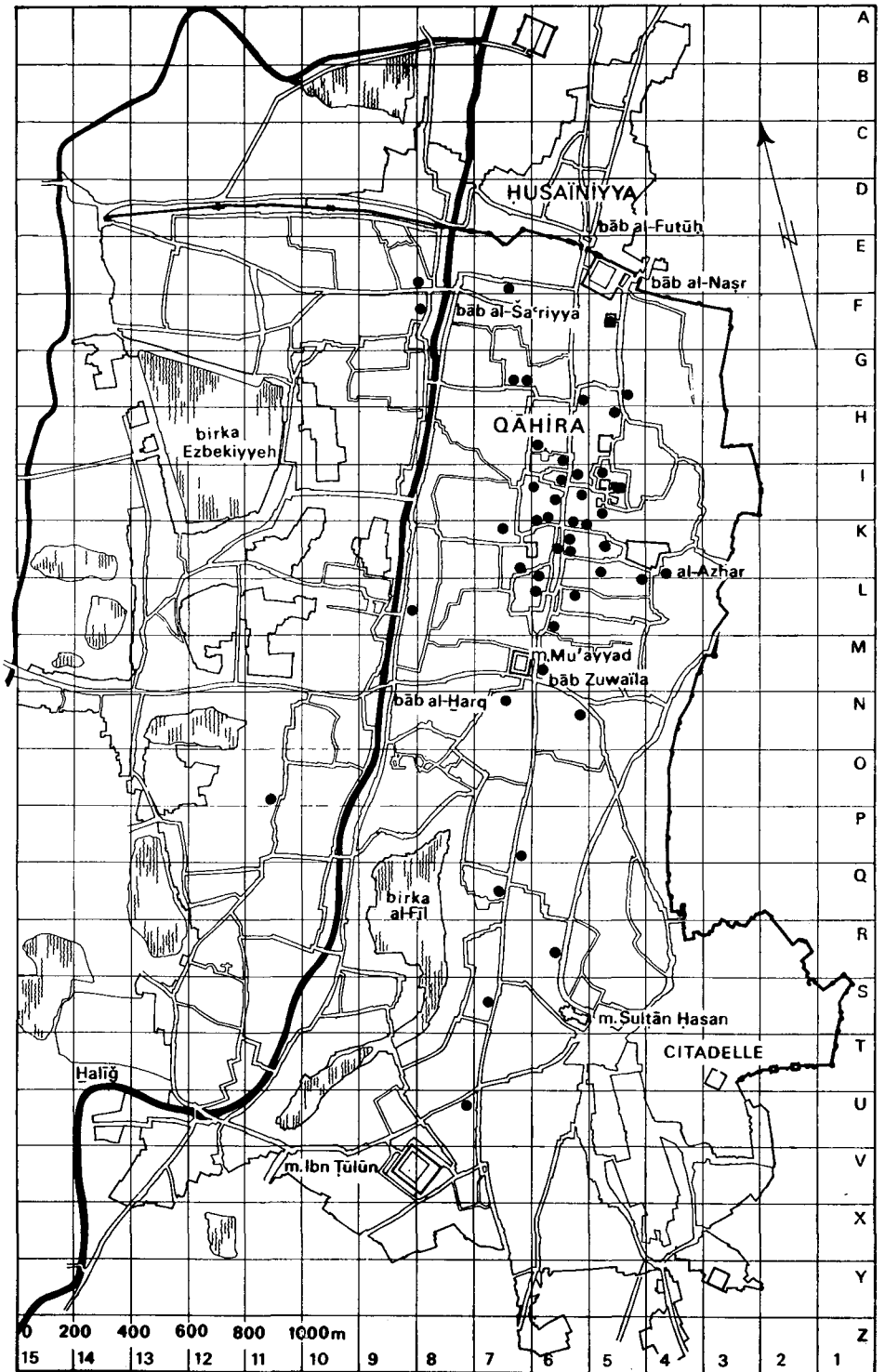
Map showing location of rab's *in Cairo*

Source: A. Raymond

southern sector, the *rab*'s were for the main part concentrated either along or in the vicinity of the main street leading from Bāb Zuwaïla to the southern limit of Cairo. In the western sector, which was mostly residential, there were only three *rab*'s: two were located in the neighbourhood of Bāb al-Sha'riyya, one of the main commercial centres in Cairo.

Thus the *rab*'s were limited to areas of high economic activity (commercial and artisanal). The distribution resembles that of private residences belonging to shop-keepers and artisans. As will be seen below, the inhabitants of the *rab'* were indeed average artisans and shopkeepers who had their shops and workshops in these areas. The *rab*'s, however, were built along main streets whereas private houses were usually located at a distance from the *sūqs* along small streets or in adjacent culs-de-sac. The *rab*'s were in fact often linked to the *wakālas*. There were fewer *rab*'s in the western region, as this was a residential district with both poor and elegant quarters and fewer specialized commercial centres

The Inhabitants of the *Rab'*

We cannot determine with any certainty the number of *rab*'s in Cairo. The forty-six which we have found in the archives represent only a partial sampling. Al-Jabartī mentions the probably fairly numerous *rab*'s which were located in the region of al-Azhar, in Ghūriyya, and in Bunduqāniyyīn. A number of still extant *rab*'s must be added to those mentioned in the *mahkama*.[7] Since a number of *wakālas* included *rab*'s in their upper stories,[8] we can infer that the actual number of *rab*'s exceeded a hundred, each of which could lodge between one hundred and one hundred and fifty people.

The inheritance register for Cairo for the years 1776 to 1798 lists as *rab'* inhabitants twenty-nine out of the 334 individuals whose residences are mentioned in the documents. This represents a proportion of 8.7 percent, but the real proportion was

certainly higher. In Qāhira, where most *rab*'s were located, twenty-three out of 173 individuals, or a proportion of 13.3 percent, were *rab'* inhabitants. If we extrapolate, we may conclude that as many as 15,000 people were *rab'* inhabitants out of an overall 1798 population of 250,000.

Concerning the socioeconomic status of the *rab'* inhabitants, our calculations show that the median inheritance of the twenty-nine cases during the years 1776 to 1798 came to 22,646 *paras*.[9] The median inheritance of the 334 individuals studied for the same period was 109,101 *paras*. We therefore conclude that *rab'* inhabitants were comprised of members of the lower middle class population of artisans and small shopkeepers, situated at equal distance from the "proletariat" of Cairo (itinerant workers, craftsmen) and the upper middle class (mainly fabric merchants or cafe owners).

The range of social status among *rab'* inhabitants was, however, wide. A thread (*ghazl*) merchant from Ramla (inheritance at 692 *paras*) and a saddler from Asyut (inheritance at 1,335 *paras*) were among the poorest. A textile merchant (*tājir*) from Aleppo (inheritance at 214,941 *paras*), a bathkeeper (inheritance at 131,578 *paras*) and a coffee merchant (inheritance at 69,323 *paras*) were among the richest. But these were exceptions. Most of the *rab'* inhabitants (seventeen out of twenty-nine) had an inheritance between 5,000 and 50,000 *paras*, well within the limits of the Cairo middle class.

Similarly, despite great variety in the professions practiced by *rab'* inhabitants, most were small shopkeepers and average artisans: four tobacco merchants, three shoemakers and saddlers, three lacemakers, five weavers and textile merchants, two tailors, two spice merchants, etc. These were individuals whose social status was as modest as their material situation. Al-Jabartī mentions "the people who live in apartments" (*sukkān al-ṭibāq*) when he refers to professions of fairly low status (*wakāla* doormen and itinerant snuff dealers).[10]

We should note that there were relatively few non-Egyptians among the *rab'* inhabitants. Among the twenty-nine individuals mentioned for the period between 1798 and 1801, there were three Turks, one Maghribi, and one Syrian. In contrast to the *wakāla* or *khān*, the *rab'* was not a temporary residence for transient people, but a type of fixed lodgings for Egyptians.

Even though we have only little information on this point, we assume that most *rab'* residents were tenants.[11] Although many *rab*'s belonged to the *waqfs*, others were owned by individuals. In general, the *rab*'s represented a common type of economic investment in Cairo, and their owners expected to receive substantial revenue in the form of rent. For lack of information we cannot estimate the average amounts of revenue, but we do have a relatively precise idea about the value of the individual apartments (*ṭabaqa* or *makān*): 3,945 *paras* (constant) in 1690; 3,360 in 1696; 4,093 in 1752; 3,600 in 1785; 7,200 in 1785; 15,318 in 1792; 3,240 in 1797. The average price was about 4,000 *paras*. Although modest when compared to the price of private houses, this represented a rather substantial portion of their owners' inheritance: for a tobacco merchant, 3,600 from a total of 8,783 *paras*; for a confectioner, 7,200 from 8,791 *paras*; and for a spice merchant, 3,240 from 13,897. Thus the possession of a *makān* in a *rab'* could mean an investment comparable to a shop.

The Structure of the *Rab'*

Although research has been carried out concerning the architectural design of individual residences and *wakāla*, regrettably few studies have been undertaken with regard to the structure of collective dwellings. Both documentary and archeological sources, however, provide ample scope for investigation. Many *waqfiyya* describe *rab*'s in detail. In Cairo there still exists an appreciable number of independent *rab*'s or *rab'-wakālas* presently inhabited by a poor population.

They are rapidly deteriorating and require urgent study. Consequently, the afore-mentioned studies by Laila 'Ali Ibrahim on the Mamluk rab' and Mona Zakariya on the Ottoman rab' are of great importance.

Laila 'Ali Ibrahim's research shows that the structure of the rab' has undergone little change from the earliest preserved specimens (Inal complex in the northern cemetery, 1451–6; rab'–wakāla of Ghūrī, 1504–5, waqfiyya no. 64; rab' of Khaïr Bey, 1523, waqfiyya no. 292) through the Ottoman rab' of the seventeenth and mid–eighteenth centuries (rab' of Riḍwān Bey, 1638, waqfiyya no. 996; rab' of Ibrāhīm Agha, 1645, waqfiyya no. 952; three rab's of 'Abdarraḥmān Čāwīsh, 1746, waqfiyya no. 941) This remarkable permanence indicates that by the end of the fifteenth century the structure had reached an equilibrium. It proves that the rab' was a perfect adaptation to precise needs. It further points to the stability of the socioeconomic conditions in Cairo from the fifteenth to the eighteenth century. However, only a detailed study of extant rab's and waqf documents will show to what extent there was continuity and evolution in the development of this monument.

The rab's of the Ottoman period are of two different types. In the case of the rab'–wakāla, a wakāla occupied the ground floor and the lower levels of the building while a special entrance gave access to the rab' on the remaining floors. Numerous specimens of this type can be found in Cairo, and they are often mentioned in the waqfiyya. The other type was the independent rab', of which a superb specimen exists in the Tabbāna quarter. In spite of differences in conception, the fundamental elements of these two structures are identical.

The number of apartments varied with the individual rab'. The waqfs offer descriptions of rab's containing from seven to thirteen and nineteen maskan or sakan. In the rab'–wakāla, the apartments were generally built along a corridor and laid out in pairs. The individual apartments,

Cairo, Egypt: rab'–wakāla *al–Ghūrī*

Photo: A. Raymond
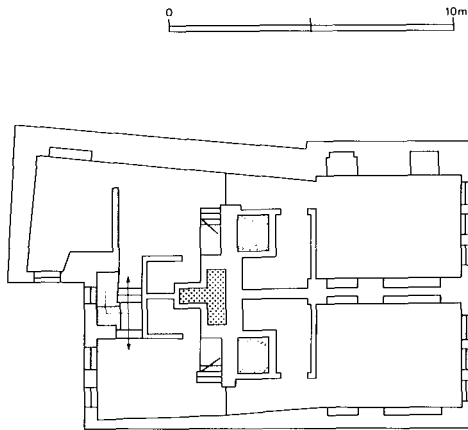
First floor

Mezzanine

Cairo, Egypt: rab' *of Tabbāna*
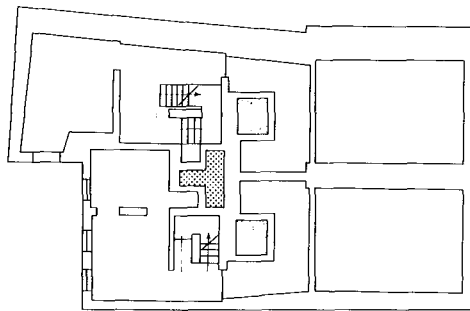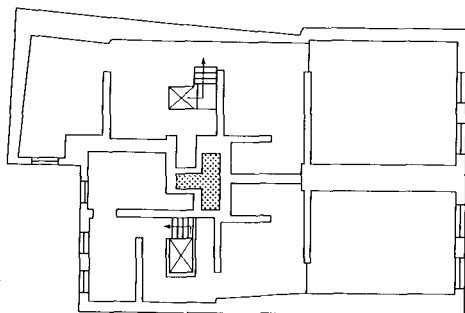
Photo: A Raymond

Second floor

Plan of an apartment in the rab' *of Tabbāna*

After M. Zakariya

occupying two or three levels, had interior stairways and terraces. The windows opened onto the interior courtyard of the *wakāla* or, as was often the case, the exterior façade. In the independent *rab'* the ground level was ordinarily occupied by shops and warehouses. Stairways gave access to the apartments on the first floor. These occupied two or three levels connected by interior stairways.

Several principles of construction seem to be constant in both cases: the grouping of two apartments to form the basic unit, the vertical disposition of duplex or triplex apartments served by interior stairways, the juxtaposition of different volumes, and the inclusion of a *riwāq*, the principal

reception room generally situated on the first level and occupying a double vertical space.

Two examples will illustrate these general considerations: the *rab'* of 'Abdarrahmān Čāwīsh in Khatt al–Wazīriyya,[12] and the *rab'* of Khaïr Bey.[13]

The *rab'* of 'Abdarrahmān Čāwīsh was situated above the *wakāla* of Khatt–Wazīriyya, which was comprised of four shops and seventeen storehouses (*hāsil*). The entrance to this *rab'* was adjacent to that of the *wakāla*. There were nineteen lodgings (*sakan*) along the corridor (*majāz*): five opened on the eastern façade (*sharqī*) of the *wakāla*, seven on the courtyard of the *wakāla*, six on the

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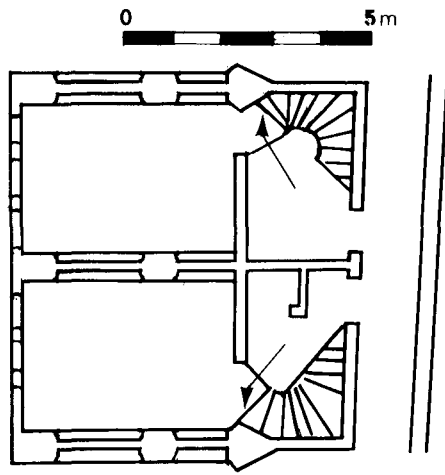
First floor
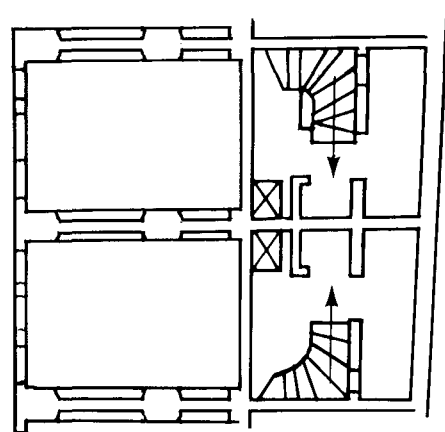
Second floor
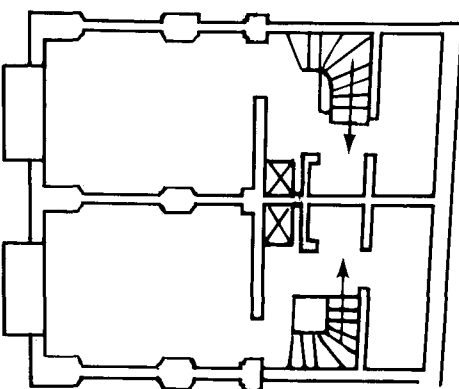
Third floor

Plan of an apartment in the rab'–wakāla *al–Ghūrī*

After L. Ibrahim

northern façade (*baḥrī*), and the nine-teenth had no openings (*ḥabīs*). The door of each lodging opened onto a vestibule (*fasaḥa*). Each *sakan* was comprised of a *riwāq*, an alcove (*khizāna nawmiyya*), a kitchen (*maṭbakh*), and the latrines (*kursī rāḥa*). A staircase led to a terrace (*saṭḥ*). Although we lack the exact dimensions, we know that the apartments were small and consisted of only two levels.[14] In the *rab'–wakāla* of Ghūri, studied by Laila 'Ali Ibrahim, we find that the apartments, organized on three levels, were of two types with areas of $30 + 36 + 36 = 96$ m^2 and $25 + 30 + 30 = 85$ m^2. Assuming comparable dimensions, the apartments of the *rab'* of 'Abdarraḥmān Čāwīsh would have had an area of about 60 m^2.

The extant *rab'* of Khaïr Bey, built during the first years of the sixteenth century (the *waqfiyya* is dated 1523), consists on the ground level of fourteen *qā'a*, probably for commercial purposes, and a passage leading from the eastern façade (opening on Tabbāna) to the western façade where the doors of the apartments are located. The *rab'* includes fifteen *riwāq*. Fourteen are served by seven staircases each leading to a landing (*basṭa*). On each landing there are two doors which give access to two apartments. A corridor (*dihlīz*) links various rooms (*baït azyār*/room containing water jars; *kursī khalā'*/latrines), and a *riwāq* (5 m x 3.5 m) which occupies two levels (height 4.5 m) and has six windows overlooking the main street. The *riwāq* has an *eyvān*, a *dūrqā'a*, and an alcove (*khizāna nawmiyya*). A staircase leads from the *dihlīz* to the second level where a *ṭabaqa* is located. A staircase also gives access to a terrace (*saṭḥ*). The interior area of the apartments of the *rab'* measures 52.5 m^2 per level or approximately 160 m^2 for the total surface.

Conclusions

As *rab'*s housed between five and ten percent of Cairo's population at the end of the eighteenth century, they obviously played an important role in the urban

organization of Cairo during the Ottoman period. It was a type of housing well adapted to high density living as was the case in the centre of the town where it was not possible to spread residences horizontally. As a perfect answer to socioeconomic needs, the *rab'*s of Cairo housed a population economically active in the *sūqs*, stores and workshops of the vicinity.

The existence of the *rab'* raises two issues. The first is on a theoretical level. In his study of Cairo cited above, Clerget remarks that the *rab'* "is a derogation of the customs of Islam and is ill–suited to the physical environment."[15] His second remark is completely incorrect. Concerning the first, it goes without a doubt that the *rab'* of Cairo does not correspond to what is considered the "traditional" dwelling in Islamic regions. This is supposed to display certain well–known characteristics: the segregation of the family secured by the isolation of the house at the end of a blind alley, and an introverted orientation of the residence marked by an interior courtyard and the absence of openings on the exterior. Here one may pass from social and climatic considerations to propositions of a metaphysical nature: for example, the interior courtyard (*samāwī*) is the central element through which communication with the universe can be realized (the "celestial" courtyard).[16]

As a collective housing unit comprised of common areas, located on streets with heavy traffic, opening to the outside, and lacking individual courtyards, the *rab'* may be considered a total rupture with "traditional" plans. Should we, for this reason, ignore its existence? I think not, for although a specialty of Cairo, the *rab'* is not exceptional in the Arabo–Islamic world. We know of collective housing in earlier times in Fustat, for instance, as well as vertical housing in other regions such as Yemen.

Consequently, the study of the *rab'* should lead us to revise our understanding of Islamic housing and to admit that the traditional schemata are not valid in all

cases and represent only part of the reality. Moreover, many of the characteristics which form our notion of "Islamic" housing are, in fact, Mediterranean features which correspond to earlier modes from Roman and Greek antiquity. Collective vertical housing corresponds to the *insulae* of the Roman era (and undoubtedly the Byzantine period, too).

The second issue concerns the technical aspects of these structures. In terms of its architecture and its adaptation to a particular way of life, the *rab'* merits consideration on several accounts. First, great variety in the surfaces and volumes of its rooms contrasts with the disastrous uniformity of "modern" residential apartments in the West. One should note in particular the importance of the *riwāq*, the reception room, which generally extends to two levels inside the apartment and which offers a larger setting for family life than the contemporary "living room." Second, technical problems such as interior circulation and ventilation are ingeniously solved by the use of a series of interior stairways and ventilation columns. Lastly, the general use of a vertical structure, which offers a striking contrast to the horizontal aspect of contemporary collective housing, solves most of the problems related to collective housing in a more satisfactory manner. First, the use of two– or three–level apartments overcomes the traditional aversion to stacking horizontally arranged modules. Second, the vertical disposition of the *rab'* allows a stricter separation of activities by isolating the reception area (*riwāq*) from areas reserved for family life. Interior stairways assure easy circulation and privacy which "traditional" contemporary apartments with their central "patio" do not. And finally, each family has access to a private terrace completely isolated from those of other families. Climatic as well as sociological reasons justify the necessity of such a collective open air space. In contrast, contemporary buildings only afford their residents more or less tiny balconies which are badly isolated from the exterior. These can scarcely be transformed into a space for recreation,

rest, or even chicken raising—a tendency which modern urban planners as well as the authorities find reprehensible.[17] Contemporary architects and urban planners can find a lesson here. The Egyptian *rab'* of the Mamluk or Ottoman period is a typically traditional category of collective housing more suitably adapted to the needs of its population than modern collective housing which incorporates the worst elements of Western architecture. Undoubtedly, the original occupants of the *rab'*s of Cairo, ordinary artisans and shopkeepers, were better lodged in terms of available space and the adaptation of housing to their needs than their descendants who live in the low–rent housing developments which deface the old city and its environs.

Reference Notes

[1] A French team under the direction of M R Mantran (E R A 648 of the C.N R.S) has studied the palaces and mansions of Cairo Four volumes have already been published by A. Lezine, J Revault, B Maury and M Zakariya

[2] See A Raymond, "La Géographie des *hāra* du Caire," *B.I F A O* (Cairo, 1980).

[3] E F Jomard, "Ville du Caire," *Description de l'Egypte* (Paris, 1822), II, pp. 662, 696

[4] In particular, see Laila 'Ali Ibrahim, "Middle Class Living Units in Mamluk Cairo: Architecture and Terminology," AARP (December 1978), pp 24–31 Mona Zakariya, collaborator with the E.R A 648, is publishing the *rab'* of Khaïr Bey in the *Annales Islamiques*, XVI, (1980).

[5] Marcel Clerget, *Le Caire* (Cairo, 1934), I, pp 316–317 See also Edward William Lane, *An Account of the Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians* (ed Everyman's Library, 1954), p. 21

[6] By Qāhira I mean the Fatimid foundation which is surrounded by the city wall (Bāb al-Futūh, Bāb al-Nasr) in the north as well as in the east and south (Bāb Zuwaïla), and by the Khalīj (canal of Cairo) in the west. The southern sector comprises the area which extends south of Bāb Zuwaïla and is bordered in the west by the Khalīj The western quarters extend west of the Khalīj

[7] For example, the *rāb'* of the *wakāla* of 'Abbās Agha (Index no 396 and located in G5), the *rab'* of Ridwān Bey (Index nos 406, 407, 408, 409/N6–7), the *rab'* of Khaïr Bey in Tabbāna (in P5).

[8] We have identified 360 Cairo *wakālas* of the Ottoman period

[9] I use one *para* of constant value (base 100: its value between 1681 and 1689).

[10] 'Abd ul–Rahman al–Jabartī, *'Aja'ib āl–āthar fī al–tarājim wa–al–akhbār* (ed Bulaq, 1880), II, p. 263

[11] It is understandable that the documents do not mention this aspect; in the settlement of inheritances, rents are not generally mentioned, being neither active nor passive

[12] *Waqfiyya*, Index no 941 Ministry of *Awqaf*, Cairo, pp 74–79 (dated 1159/1745)

[13] *Waqfiyya*, Index no. 292, pp 94–96, kindly communicated by Mona Zakariya

[14] Another *rab'–wakāla* of 'Abdarrahmān Čāwīsh (*waqfiyya* no 941, pp. 70–71) consisted of thirteen *sakan* (two levels) A third (pp. 53–57) consisted of seven *masākan* entering onto a corridor (*majāz*) Each *sakan* had three levels with a *riwāq* on the first level, a *ṭabaqa* on the second, and a terrace (*fasaḥa*) and a *riwāq* on the third

[15] Clerget, *Le Caire*, p 317

[16] A Abdel Nour, "Types architecturaux et vocabulaire de l'habitat en Syrie," in *L'Espace social de la ville arabe*, ed D Chevallier (Paris, 1979), pp 82–83

[17] For a recent example concerning Algiers, see Daniel Jurga in *Le Monde* (October 5, 1979), p 4

Comments

M. Serageldin

I just want to add to André Raymond's remarks that Cairo is now one of the most dynamic housing markets. Developments are growing and sprouting all around the city which in a way duplicate this system. The builders build on very small lots, two to three floors high and with almost the same total surface area that you have quoted. I have surveyed several of these houses and they run in between eighty and one hundred square metres for the family unit. They are structured very comparably to what you have shown us.

Grabar

Who paid for the construction of these large buildings? What initial investment was involved? And who received the income from the shops that were in the *wakāla* apartment group? What you are suggesting here is the existence of apartment units with up to fifteen apartments in any one group. We are talking about one hundred and twenty Cairenes of a certain social base having families and living together. Is there any evidence that people who lived in these apartments worked or prayed together or tended to go to the same mosques? Did they have collective activities that separated them as a group from other people within the city?

Raymond

On the first point, who paid for it, I think many of these *rab*'s were built in the framework of the *waqfs* in Cairo for the benefit of the mosque or the two sanctuaries of Mecca and Medina or for social work. But I also think that quite a lot of these buildings were built by private people for investment. As for the second point, I do not think that the people in these *rab*'s were homogeneous. I doubt that there was really a community life in these buildings. There could have been, but we need figures for the Ottoman period. Once people study the archives, I think we may find many correlations

Fathy

I want to add something to the idea of the *wakāla*. In a sense the *qā'a* is a transposition of the courtyard house in which we have the courtyard, the two *eyvāns* and the loggia. This provided the occupant with the different kinds of climate which he required. He could be in the shade or out in the open or right inside. With urbanization this has been altered. The centre part of the courtyard was covered and the loggias, which were not demolished, were put somewhere on the courtyard to catch the north breeze.

When we come to the *wakāla*, the same idea, that of interiority, holds. People lived mostly indoors. That is where they had their community space. The idea of the duplex came from the *khāns*. Although the unit is very tiny, it articulates the inner space in such a way that the occupants feel they have more space. Were the apartment covered with a concrete slab roof only three metres high the largest room would measure three by three by four metres and provide little space. With the *qā'a* we have one hundred and twenty cubic metres which provides for cross–ventilation and everything else. Above all, the occupants, who are very poor, enjoy the luxury of the *qā'a*. These are people who otherwise would not have a courtyard with a fountain and so on.

In the triplex, the ground floor is used for reception, the middle floor for the kitchen, and the top floor for sleeping. Again we have the concept of interiority, but in addition, the apartment is cooler. If you have an apartment on a single level with a flat concrete slab on top, it may be larger, but you never have the same sense of space or ventilation. What Islamic architecture has to contribute is the idea of respect for the whole man. Thus it gives him the luxury of a palace by providing a large interior space.

The View from Within

Hildred Geertz

As a cultural anthropologist, challenged by the audacious and imaginative purpose of the Aga Khan Award—which is no less than to change the "cultural and environmental sensibility" of the Muslim world[1]—I would like to set forth some practical suggestions. My immediate concern is not so much how to bring about such a change, but how to locate the kinds of "cultural sensibilities" at work in specific situations. Oleg Grabar has narrowed the problem a little by asking if there is an Islamic system of visually perceptible symbols and signs. Grabar's question suggests that at least one aspect of the Muslim "cultural sensibility" can be investigated as it appears in distinct systems of visually perceptible symbols and signs. But Grabar's question is very general, and it presupposes the solution of a number of highly specific questions which may, however, be practicably researched. Before we can attempt to answer whether or not there is an Islamic system of visually perceptible symbols and signs we need to find out, in particular situations and particular places, what sorts of systems of visually perceptible symbols and signs are actually being employed.

The art historian's methodology focuses on visually perceptible forms (e.g., buildings and their elements) and attempts to deduce the semiotic system from which these forms may have been derived, the *langue*, so to speak, of which the buildings are the *parole*. But an anthropologist usually approaches the matter from an entirely different direction. Rather than attempting to discover the systems of meanings from the objects themselves (e.g., comparative studies of the minaret forms or of explicit statements in Islamic philosophical writings referring to living and ceremonial spaces), an anthropologist would try to design a study of the acts of interpretation that ordinary people make when they move through those spaces: their homes, streets and markets. In other words, an anthropologist would look not at the buildings primarily, but would study empirically the responses of the people who use those buildings—what they do in them, what they understand about them,

and particularly what sorts of connotative images they themselves call up in the course of their involvement with the buildings.

What we need are a series of studies concerning the perspectives used by the people who live inside the buildings and inside the culture that specifies and organizes those perspectives. In what follows below I describe some of the ways that anthropologists might go about doing this. At the outset I shall present an analysis of five methodological obstacles that need to be faced in any empirical study of the way ordinary people impose or derive "meaningful statements" from aspects of their built environment.

Five Methodological Obstacles

The first obstacle derives from the fact that most of what the researcher wants to know is normally unstated or unstatable. As a member of a cultural system, one's knowledge of it, as with the grammar of one's native tongue, is implicit. The actual application of much of this knowledge is neither verbalized nor even verbalizable. Speaking Arabic is a highly complex cultural act, but it by no means requires an awareness of the grammatical rules by which intelligible sentences are produced and their meanings interpreted. Sometimes much of the cultural system is verbalizable but no one would think of laboriously paraphrasing that which is obvious. Only when what one says sounds like nonsense will anyone attempt to specify the rule which was broken.
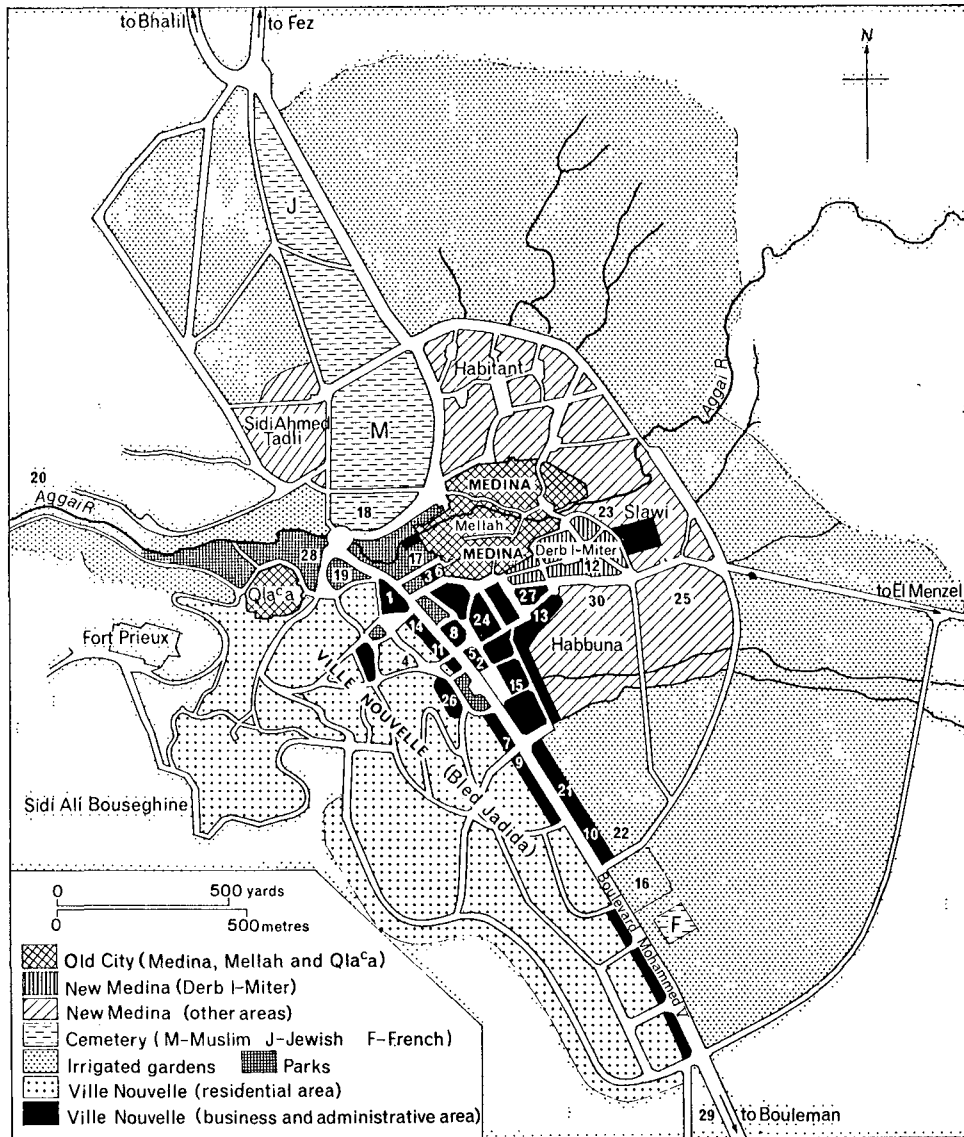
The methodological difficulties are even greater when one attempts to study interpretive acts involving nonverbal symbolic structures. There yet another form of implicitness is at work. Statements in nonverbal structures cannot be transposed into verbal statements without distortion, dilution or loss of connotative meaning. Artists always protest that if they could put the "message" of their painting or dance into words, they would not have to paint or dance it.

Third, most of our ordinary experiences do not occur in a systematized way. Rather, we acquire fragmentary bits of knowledge which are embodied in very concrete and specific images and actions: this street corner, this fountain, this act of buying something, this act of prayer.

A fourth difficulty is that of the multiplicity of meanings which are or can be condensed into a single image, form or object. Moreover, when that object is as complexly composed of multiple forms as a building or town, the complexities of association can be astronomical. The multiplicity of meaningful associations pertinent to a single structure may be one criterion for saying that a certain object has cultural importance or even that something is excellent.

That an object, a painting, a poem, a building or an environmental form such as a grand avenue has multiple meanings implies that many different interpretations can be made from it and that different people will interpret it differently. Some of these versions may be so contradictory as to be labeled misinterpretations. However, it may be that some idiosyncratic misinterpretations are actually creative inventions or inspired associations which further deepen the cultural burden of the symbolic forms or actions. In fact, I venture that "vitality" and "aliveness" of meaning—as opposed to "deadness" or "dilution"— have something to do with the presence of multiple interpretations and the potentiality and presence of new meanings.

As an outsider, to presume to intuit or deduce those meanings which local inhabitants ascribe to parts of their environments is to invite disastrous falsification. An example is the romantic interpretation by nineteenth–century European visitors of the significance and intentions of the Taj Mahal. Wayne Begley's painstaking iconographical analysis has revealed that the meanings of the monument and its garden to the original patron were very different from those imposed by Westerners.[2] Except that it was based on documents, his approach was similar to the close contextual examination of an anthropologist. The

KEY:
1. Super–Qaid's office
2. Qaid's office
3. Pasha's office
4. Police station
5 Civil court
6 Qadi's court
7. Gendarmerie
8. Rural tax office
9. Forestry and irrigation office
10. Fire house

11. Post office
12. Nadir's office
13. Hospital
14. Bank
15. Movie house
16. Soccer field
17. Swimming pool
18. Bus and taxi station
19. Tennis club
20. Power station

21 Livestock market
22. Vegetable market
23. Dry–goods and rug market
24. College
25 Lycée
26 Former Jewish school
27. Jewish school
28 Public prayer ground (mṣellā)
29. Military barracks
30. Prison.

The town of Sefrou, Morocco: Major areas

Source: C Geertz, H. Geertz and L. Rosen, Meaning and Order in Moroccan Society (Cambridge University Press, 1979)

written texts and drawings hinted at the processes of interpretation that were made by the builder, the patron and possibly the audience themselves. I propose that the same sort of close study should be made of the statements made by the users of contemporary buildings.

Some Cautionary Advice

Anthropological methods are encapsuled in three admonitions:
1) *Approach research subjects in interviews indirectly, thus allowing the person himself to determine as much as possible what will be spoken about and in what terms.* Ideally, one should simply participate in everyday life and allow interpretations to emerge spontaneously in the course of normal conversation. The extreme antithesis of this procedure is the set questionnaire in which the questions define the answers. (Example: "Would you rather have two children or four?" The question does not offer the respondent other alternatives or permit specification of circumstances.)

2) *Find ways to allow the person to express himself nonverbally as well as verbally.*

3) *Reduce complex characteristics of the problem to simpler elements.* This makes the problem researchable in practical terms. At the same time the very complexity of the problem should not be overlooked.

Sefrou: A Case Study

To indicate how an anthropologist may discover the way in which the inhabitants of a certain town experience and interpret its spatial forms, I offer a concrete example. Some years ago in the town of Sefrou in Morocco I conducted a set of structured interviews. Following the suggestion of Kevin Lynch, I asked four Sefrou people to draw maps for me of their town.[3] Two of these people were townsmen, and two were countrymen; two were school–educated young people, and

two were older and illiterate. The latter two had never faced the task of drawing maps before and had no preconceptions about what a map should look like. The four of them also differed in degrees of familiarity with the town itself.

The first man, whom we will identify as Respondent A, was a middle–aged Berber who lived in a village located some twenty kilometers from Sefrou in the mountains. As a political representative of his village he often came to town. One day when he was visiting us in our house I produced a very large piece of paper and a pencil and asked him to draw me a map of the town. He was delighted with the idea and said eagerly, "Yes, yes, I'll draw all of it for you. First I'll put down the quarters of the town, Nas Adlun, Shebbak, Sidi Messaud, and then I'll put in the mosques, Djemaa Kebir, Djemaa Semarin, Djemaa Sidi Messaud. But first, could I have a ruler to make the lines straight?"

Although he was illiterate, he had had a great deal to do with surveyors in the course of a legal dispute involving his own tribal land. Thus he presumed that a map always involves ruled lines. As his work proceeded he asked me to write in the names of the various landmarks. I happened to note the sequence by which he went from item to item on the assumption that those that he mentioned earlier were of higher importance in his landscape. In order he drew the road from Fez, the other roads, a bridge over the river, the

squares, and then he devoted a great deal of attention to locating all the major government buildings. To my own surprise, the most salient aspect of the town, the conglomeration of the old city with its wall and narrow crooked streets, was completely omitted by him. In its place he merely indicated the "walk through the madina." Most of the wall is still standing, and elaborately built gateways cut through in several places. Rather than indicating the gates, however, he specified the open squares located at the entrances where a good deal of small marketing takes place and where countrypeople like himself bring small amounts of produce or chickens for sale to the citypeople.

The sequence of Respondent A's four
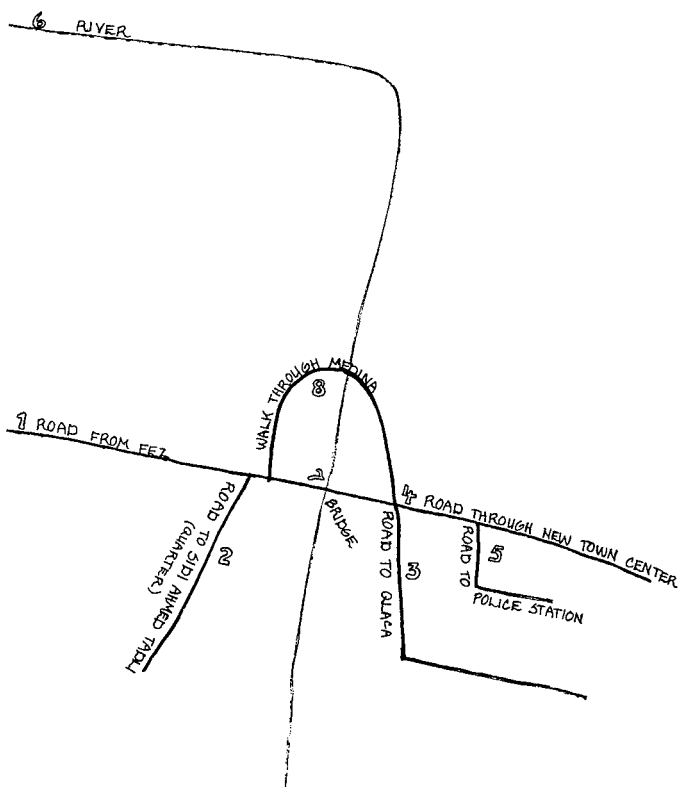
Respondent A's first map of Sefrou. Numbers indicate sequence in which places were named
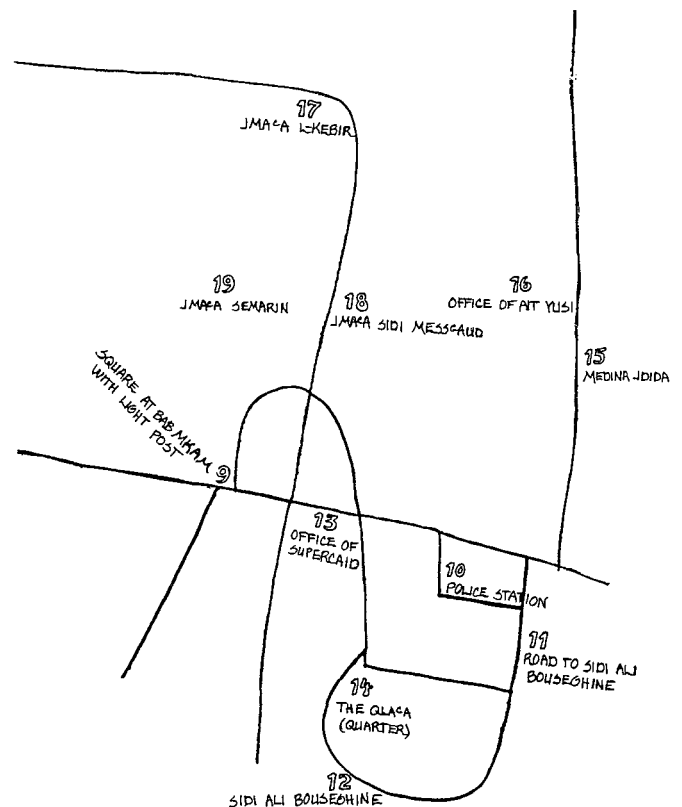
Drawing: H Geertz

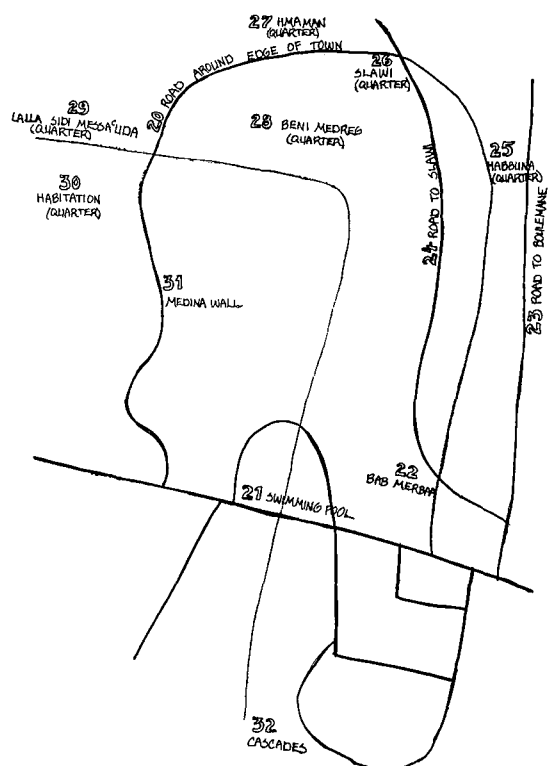*Respondent A's second map of Sefrou*

Drawing: H Geertz

maps shows fairly well the kinds of spaces and activities that are important to him. He put considerable stress on the burial place of the town's patron saint, on a bluff overlooking the town, and especially on government offices with which he had much business, and the markets where he bought and sold. His is an outsider's view, a rural man's conception of the town. The old city, the residential heart, is left completely unmentioned.

The second man, Respondent B, was a young school teacher who had grown up inside the old city. He came from a family that had been important within the town for the last three hundred years. Highly educated, he taught French in the *collège* of the town. His map was quite different.

When presented with the task, he first drew a very large circle. Still ethnocentric in my presumption that the old city/outer city distinction as marked by the wall and gates was "obviously" the primary starting point for anyone, I assumed that this circle was the wall of the old city. As a matter of fact, it stood for the rather densely built-up areas as a whole of which the old city is only a part. He then set forth a set of secondary circles, one indicating a very large "suburban" area while the others marked very small landmarks. Having done that he then segmented the first circle into various quarters. As with the first mapmaker, he indicated the areas around both sides of the madina gates, rather than the gates or roads themselves

as significant. He spent some time providing etymological explanations of the names of each of these neighbourhoods or sectors. This second mapmaker had no sense of spatial proportions, and several of his quarters were clearly misplaced. It was evident that this man sees his town not in terms of routes, walls or spatial relationships, but rather as a collection of relatively autonomous neighbourhoods. As he drew, he spoke of groupings of people and activities, not of roads or the river or the gardens or built structures. He too put some stress on the tomb of the patron saint of the town.

By his strategy Respondent C revealed an entirely different semantic and pragmatic environment within which his Sefrou lay.

Respondent A's third map of Sefrou

Drawing: H. Geertz
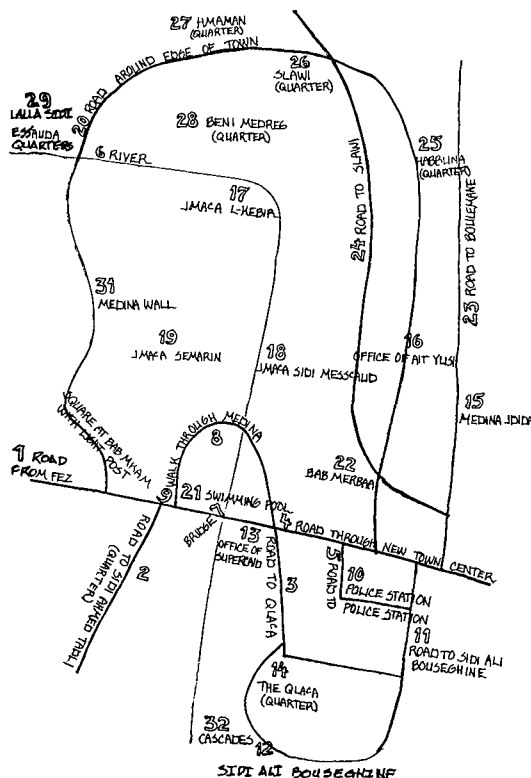
Respondent A's fourth map of Sefrou

Drawing. H. Geertz

He was in his late seventies, an illiterate merchant who had grown up in the old city and never moved out. He instructed me to draw a very large circle and then to write in the names of various items. In this instance, finally, the large circle represented the wall of the old city. He next indicated the gates and then proceeded to lay out a sequence of named spots that moved in a line from one gate through the centre of the town and out another gate. As there were six gates, the result was a spider–like pattern with the markets and the mosques in the centre as he himself pointed out. The key named spots for him were not neighbourhoods or groups of residents, but mosques and religious lodges (zāwiyas).

Respondent D, whose map is not illustrated, was a student in his teens. Rural by birth, he lived in town in order to attend school. He commenced his map by drawing a long line from the right–hand edge of the paper. This represented a road and, as if he were himself moving along it, he indicated landmarks along the route. He soon came to the edge of the paper.

While the others confined their maps to a single sheet, and in some way or another indicated the bounds of the town first and then filled it in, this young man's walk through the town spread onto nine sheets of paper. In the end they did not really fit together, even though his first pathway was a roughly circular road, planned by the French and recently installed by the Moroccan government, which went around the entire periphery of the built–up part of the town. His starting and end points on this route did not meet, nor when he started to fill in the middle was he able to make any spatially adequate subdivisions of space. We can attribute this to his kinesthetic scheme of walking along the streets and noticing the corners of other branching streets and various landmarks as he passed.

Upon completion, Respondent D had produced a rough map of the town with the old city entirely omitted. In its place was a blank portion of paper, uncrossed by roads. I prodded him to draw the madina and he resisted. Finally he relented and drew the wall and gates in a

hesitant manner. At this point he paused again and I urged him to continue. He proceeded to indicate a number of landmarks around the outside of the madina wall (cafe, swimming pool, the "new city" of French villas, the house where American Christian missionaries lived, the gas station, the hotel, and all the schools). Further prodded to enter the madina, he reluctantly indicated the minarets, the river, the central bridge and eight quarters. Did his difficulty with the madina stem from an inability to construct a mental image of the tangle of paths?

The items he mentioned are mostly modern Westernized ones: gas station, Frenchman's house, schools, hospital, pasha's house, Western Christian church, water reservoir, park, hotel, cafe, swimming pool, bus and taxi stand.

These maps are tantalizing, if insufficient, glimpses into the experiences of their makers. As such they raise more questions than they answer. The differences among the mapmakers are obvious; they might have been describing different towns. The
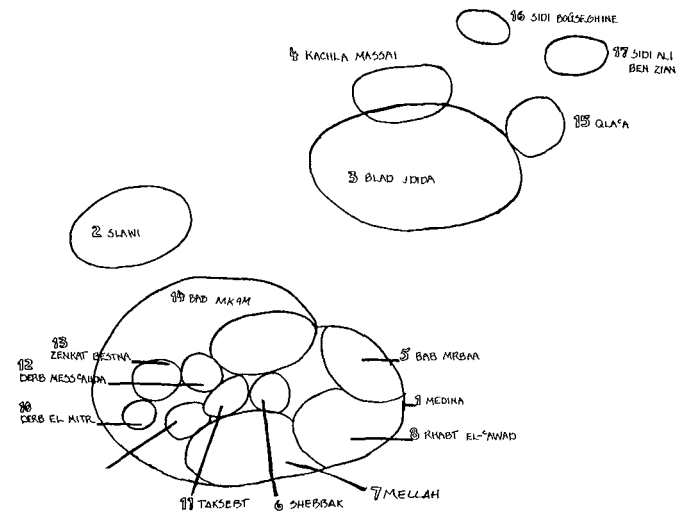
Respondent B's map of Sefrou. Numbers indicate sequence in which places were named
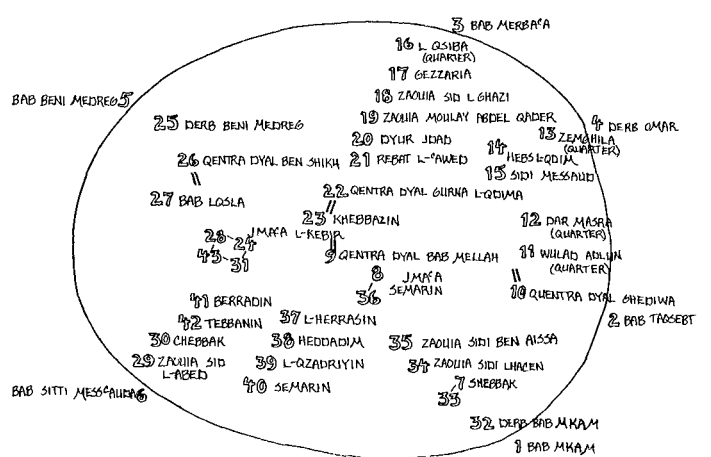
Drawing: H Geertz

Respondent C's map of Sefrou. Numbers indicate sequence in which places were named

Drawing: H. Geertz

similarities, however, are interesting. All mentioned the mosques, and all but one the saint's tomb. The maps present us with a firm sense that in normal everyday life the kinds of meanings read into landmarks and pathways are what the semanticists call indexical signs, rather than symbols or complexes of symbols. Specifically, the mapmakers viewed the landmarks as symptoms of some underlying cause. Thus they picked out only that one meaning of the object without mentioning any complex connotations. They did not see the objects, or at least did not mention them, as representing ideas or images of some other experience.

My last example is not a map but a song about the town of Sefrou. This song, however, resembles a map as it describes a walk through the town. It was composed by Sheikh Mimih of El Menzel, a man from a village some distance from Sefrou, to be sung at wedding festivals for a totally male audience. A humorously erotic song, it advises where to find the easy girls in Sefrou and what to do with them when you find them. It sings of walking from quarter to quarter in Sefrou and of the kinds of girls you find in each place. In the last verse he describes the climb up to the tomb of the patron saint. Curiously, here the song shifts in tone, and he sings of the saint. The saint is testing him, and he prays for the saint's protection. He addresses the saint as one human being to another. Throughout the song, the image of the town is one of a group of people relating to one another in various personal ways, either sexual or protective. For him the town consists of enclosures: rooms, houses and quarters. These one enters and exits as one goes in and out of personal relationships, some of which are dangerous, some delightful, some free of responsibility and some completely entangling.

For the singer, as for each of the mapmakers, the town is a place of intimately relating human beings. For all of them the town is also a place of movement where people are always moving in or out. These efforts at mapmaking (including that of the poet) all, in their diverse ways, reflect a characteristic Moroccan mode of engagement. In their vigorous approach to life Moroccans express a concern for particularistic personal interests and for specific social ties.

Some Applications

A number of practical anthropological techniques could be used by the staff of the Aga Khan Award in preparing materials for the evaluation of particular architectural projects. These techniques involve personal contact with people who use the buildings or other structures as well as other sources. Among the techniques involving personal contact is the one described above, requesting people to draw maps as a form of structured interview. Similarly, one might ask people to draw pictures in answer to the question, "What does such and such a building look like?" The elements that they choose to emphasize may be those of greatest significance. Which aspects of a particular mosque are picked out: the minaret, the inscriptions on the doorway, the fountain? Or, for those who will not draw, one might ask for a verbal description of the building.

Another technique is to ask the person to make up a story using the particular building as the setting. One might also conduct an open–ended interview which starts with highly general, "open" questions and gradually moves to more specific ones. One could start with questions of the sort: "What does this building remind you of?" "What can you do in this building?" "What other buildings is it like?" "What parts of this building do you like best?"

Another very productive technique is to study those words which the local language applies to aspects of the built environment and, in particular, special vocabularies used by craftsmen and builders. All of these techniques require personal participant observation of those activities which occur within the context of the structure being studied.

Techniques which do not involve personal contact include the analysis of songs, stories, films, novels and other imaginative productions which invoke or depict the types of structures under study. The poem by Sheikh Mimih of El Menzel has been cited as an example. Written documents such as newspaper articles, memoirs and guidebooks could also be examined. Comparisons of the new building with older ones in the same locality can be very suggestive; a building, like a poem, may contain allusions to other buildings known to the makers. In some buildings this may occur through a complex incorporation of imitated elements, in others through more subtle allusion. Such comparisons can inform us of the system of meanings and association which the makers of the building, both architect and patron, may have employed in its conception.

Each of these techniques, taken alone, gives only one dimension of meaning and is necessarily an oversimplification of the experience of the built environment and a violation of its wholeness and complexity. The connotatively rich, sensuously immediate experience of entering a great mosque such as the Moulay Idriss of Fez or moving through an intricately pathed market place can never be fully probed through such anthropological techniques. Nevertheless, they represent an attempt to view a particular architectonic world through the eyes of the people themselves who inhabit it.

Reference Notes

[1] "Projects will thus be chosen as much for their catalytic value in the evolution of a new cultural and environmental sensibility, as for their individual design merits The aim is to nurture within the architectural profession and related disciplines a heightened awareness of the roots and essence of Muslim culture, and a deeper commitment to finding meaningful expressions of the spirit of Islam within the context of modern life and modern technology " *Information Brochure*, The Aga Khan Award for Architecture (Philadelphia, 1980), p 2

[2] Wayne E Begley, "The Myth of the Taj Mahal and a New Theory of its Symbolic Meaning", *The Art Bulletin* 61 (1979), p 7–37

[3] Kevin Lynch, *The Image of the City* (Cambridge, Mass., 1960).

Sefrou

A qṣida by Sheikh Mimih
of El Menzel,
translated by Hildred Geertz

The following are quarters of the town of Sefrou: Habbuna, Slawi, Sitti Messauda, Kasba, Mejlish, Derb el–Miter, Bab Mkam, Qlaʿa. The tomb of the local Muslim saint, Sidi Ali Bouseghine, is on a high bluff overlooking the town of Sefrou.

Ah . . . my eyes wander around and take delight in Sefrou
Where, if we wish for girls, there they are.
There I find pleasure any day.

Ah . . . my eyes wander around and take delight in the cities
Where there are stylish girls with mascara–ed eyes.
We visited you, yes, Habbuna, and our minds were in torment.
Ah . . . we found no ease with you, oh girl with the fine tattoos.

We visited you, yes, Habbuna and returned by way of Slawi.
When I was young and had an empty head
I found my desire, some virgins in nice clothes
Not improper for them nor for me the singer.

We went to Sitti Messauda of the new houses.
There the girls dress so fine you'd think it was always a holiday,
And when I look at them I'm afraid I'll do something sinful.
Perhaps I won't have money and go to jail.

I finished there and went back to the Kasba
Where there are young girls, but I didn't have a chance
And the love magic was of no use.
She took my mind away and I "worked" on her a long time.

I finished there and went on across the river.
I stayed in Mejlish and I was happy with the people there.
So many days we stayed there and every day we did as we desired.
God bless the parents of those girls—I need not say more.

I visited Derb el-Miter and I felt calmer.
There we found flowering roses that we loved.
There we found a harvest that we bought.
They pluck only those fruits of the tops of the branches.

The money Allah has given us we used as we desired.
And why should we stay in torment, troubled every day?
Buy a dove and put her in your house, and take the straight path,
One who wears stylish modern clothes, who is educated and neat.

I finished there and went along to see what was going on
At Bab Mkam, where we found some little girls.
We spoke together; we said come home with us to the house.
Not until we got to the room did we say another word.

I sent them along and then I went to the house, too.
There we found a garden blooming with flowers and green plants.
There I found pleasure day and night,
Beautiful clothes, lovely scarves, perfect and plenty.

I finished there and climbed up to the Qla'a
In hunger, with fear and desire deep inside me.
The fire of the girl burns and he goes crazy who follows it.
I pray to Allah the Highest to protect our faith.

I finished there and climbed right up to the tomb of the saint,
Sidi Ali Bouseghine, my beloved.
I am under his shelter, happy and contented,
And I pray to him and he prays to the Ruling One.

We are under the protection of Allah and of our saintly ancestors, oh people,
Both you who are here and those of my village,
And I pray to them to fulfill my wishes.
We will be at peace and I'll say nothing wrong.

Comments

Wahid

I have a question for Prof. Geertz that has to do with interpreting what she terms a "thin" description of how people view their towns. For a universal sense of signs, symbols and so on, we need to know what you call the "thick" description. How do we make the transition from thin to thick?

For example, in an old Javanese town plan there is always a plaza in the centre with a mosque on the western side and the residence of the highest official on the eastern side. On the southern side we find a railway station and on the northern side schools or government buildings. What do people think about that? Here we have the government or a committee assigning meaning.

Geertz

I know Java well because I have done field work there. The first answer is to use a multiplicity of methods. You come at it in different directions and then try to bring it together in some way. In Java they have a very geometrical way of designing every town. It is always very clearly established on which side of the main square each thing should be. There is a cultural commitment to a notion that the things of this world are microcosmic replicas of the larger world. This is not necessarily true of Morocco at all. But the notion of microcosm and macrocosm makes things much easier for a person who is trying to interpret the meaning of a particular built environment in Java or anywhere in the East as opposed to the West.

Mahdi

I think when Prof. Geertz speaks about the marabouts, she reminds us of something that is not really peculiar to Morocco
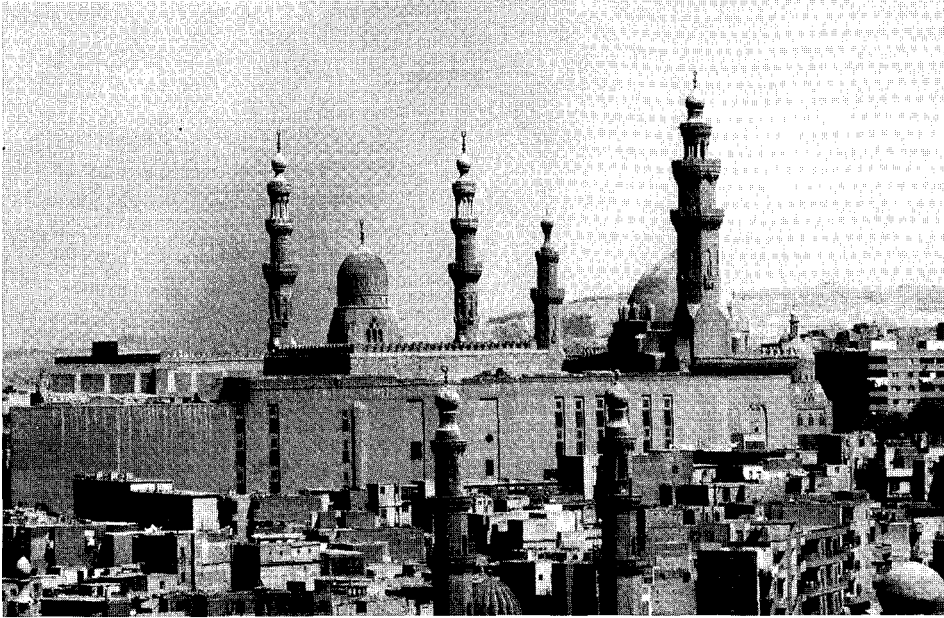
Cairo, Egypt: Sultan Hasan mosque

Photo: S Blair/J Bloom

or to non–urban centres. When one thinks of Cairo, for instance, it is the shrine mosque of Sultan Hasan which is the important thing rather than the mosque of al–Azhar. Surely it is the shrine that is essential in Iraq, Iran and Pakistan. I am wondering why, given the situation, nothing was said about them because they seem to be socially and religiously important. Man's relation to God is not direct; there is some sort of a mediation by the saint. Obviously this gives the whole texture of religious feelings a different sense than a mosque where only you and God are somehow in context.

What is not clear to me is the relationship between design and this kind of situation. Surely the place, whether it is a tomb or not, reminds you of a historical or religious figure. It may be a pre–Islamic prophet or an important person connected with the Prophet or an Islamic saint or imam. Or it may be a leader of some sort, a ruler who somehow acquired a religious

connotation. This is very important, because the Koran insists that you remember all the prophets. The historical sense is what is continued through Islamic times. This memory is an integral part of being a Muslim. But stylistically in terms of design there are certain specific problems. You may have a tomb in the middle of the mosque or the side of the mosque. Or there might be certain kinds of designs for the structure and the surrounding area used for prayer and so on. Is this a special problem separate from that of the mosque in general, or do we normally consider the shrine when we think of the mosque?

Geertz

The only thing I would say is that the shrine is for ordinary people. It may not be designed by a designer, but it is a crucial part of the whole topography in their minds.

Grabar

I think that part of the problem here is related to what Prof. Arkoun was talking about earlier, this question of depersonalization in the creation of new towns, new space and so forth. You cannot invent a saint in a new town being built near an industrial centre. One has to start creating new industrial centres near old existing locations of saints of one kind or another, which would be a fascinating exercise, or perhaps one simply has to wait for a sheikh to appear. One of the difficulties is that in planning theoretical towns for settlement one plans according to a false idea of what a traditional Muslim city is. They have to have a mosque, a bazaar, housing, whereas the reality of the polity is different. That grows out of an existing place rather than being created.

Fathy

I would like to say something about symbolism. If we take the minaret and the campanile of the church, the spire, we see them as the means of expressing aspirations toward the Divine. Kazantzakis described the effect of a Gothic cathedral on him when he said that everything in this architecture shoots up to divine heights. In Europe the sky is not a kindly thing as it is in the desert countries.

With the minaret, it shoots up in a different way, not just in meaning but also by its acceleration. With the shooting toward the sky you have the notion of bringing down. What do we bring down? The mercy of Allah. In the hot desert countries the sky is the only friendly element in the environment.

When architects want to modernize they change the symbol from something collective to something individual. People living in temperate zones have the church and the cathedral. For people living in the hot, arid countries there is only the idea of the minaret and the courtyard.
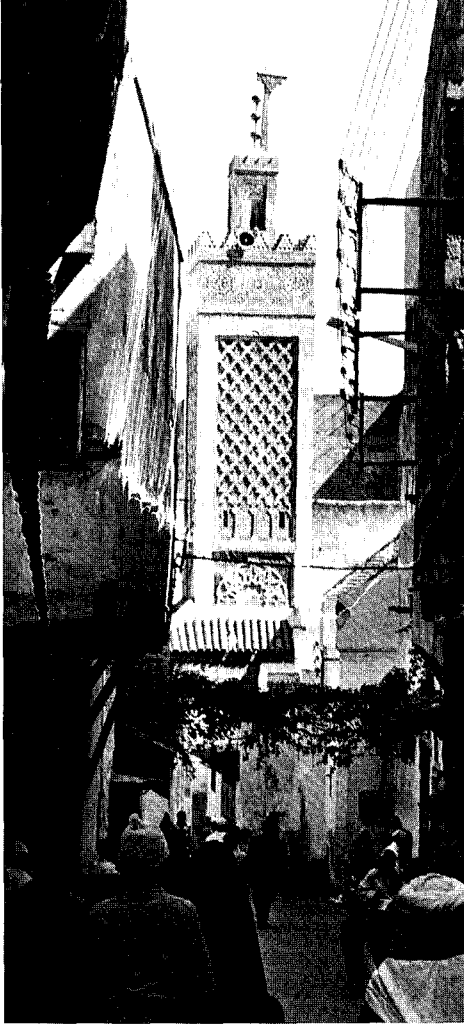
Fez, Morocco minaret of a local mosque

Photo: H–U Khan/Aga Khan Awards

One architect tried to make his campanile in the shape of a man praying. The idea might have been all right, but the effect was a coming down instead of a raising up. This is what happens when an individual wants to enter the field of religious architecture. There are certain implicit things which we have to respect. We have to judge by wisdom, not haphazardly or just because we are trying to be innovative as architects.

Listening to Prof. Geertz I am reminded of a very beautiful saying by Antoine de Saint Exupéry in his book *Citadel*. There he says that in the house of my father every step has a meaning. Here we have to consider that even in the town of my father every step has a meaning. But unfortunately, that has changed. Now it is no longer the house of my father. In most Arab countries it is the house of my Uncle Sam. Every step has a dollar on it. And in the city there are no more steps. We go by car. Our modern cities are designed by engineers without reference to human scale.

Some critics have classified the arts into the abstract and the imitative. Architecture and music are said to be abstract; painting and sculpture, imitative. But we cannot classify things so bluntly. If painting were just an imitation of nature, it would be photography. Sculpture would be simply cast moulding. And if architecture doesn't have a human reference, it is just engineering.

Architecture is in a way abstract. But how can we introduce the human reference? This is where we have to come together, to convene so that a symbol means the same thing and gives the same psychological association of ideas as we indicated with the campanile.

Today, to my mind, we suffer from alienation. We have to reach a decision on the meaning of so many words which we repeat with no understanding at all—words like modernity and progress. All this is brainwashing the masses.

We know that culture changes. Change is implicit, but it is neutral. We cannot borrow. There are interchangeables between cultures as well as non–interchangeables. Unfortunately, we are taking the non–interchangeables and leaving the interchangeables. After all, what is the meaning of the word "technology"? I was once attending a U.N. conference in Addis Ababa where I said that we must subject technology to the economy of the people. One of my colleagues objected. "Technology has no country," he said. I disagreed. It has a country, because ac-

cording to the dictionary, the definition of technology is the use of science for commercial purposes. It is directed toward the economy of the importing or the exporting countries.

When we come to this cultural change that has taken place in our cities, what can religion offer? The Koran and the Hadith cannot give us technical advice. But they do enter into town planning. They guide us on how to join houses together, how to make the interior of the house, the height of walls and so on. I mention this because we are misusing the idea of the symbol.

Correa

To follow up on what Mr. Fathy has said, if, as an architect today, one looks at an Islamic city or an Islamic environment, one sees that the determinants are really the classic determinants of good architecture: the response to climate, appropriate technology, materials, good design. Yet there is more to the Islamic city than that. The Islamic view of life, with the combination of a rational response to climate, technology and materials, has provided a certain set of symbols. So I think that symbols are the interaction of two elements, first, the classic view of dealing with climate, and, second, the Islamic view of the sky. Given another set of materials and another set of climatic conditions one might have come up with another set of symbols.

In spreading East and West all the way from the Alhambra to Delhi, Islam was extraordinary in its ability to assimilate local ways of building and superimpose something which transcends that and gives it unity. Hence you have great pluralism in the towns of Yemen. Fatehpur Sikri in India actually uses Hindu elements, but its synthesis is Islamic. I think our problem is that we are too timid. When people did all this they probably did not even use the word "symbol"; they did it naturally. It is a natural synthesis of what was the local problem and the overriding concepts in their minds.

It seems to me that if Islam had stopped at Delhi, then our only problem over the next twenty-five years as modernization takes place would be how to express continuity. But unfortunately, that is not the only problem that we face. In actual fact, the majority of Muslims live beyond Delhi. I see a completely different set of climatic conditions and materials. To put across images of what is basically desert oasis architecture or urban architecture is really an act of colonialism. When you show me a slide of Isfahan, it is equivalent to someone saying this is the only way to build a church or an auto or whatever you want. This image of a courtyard house actually works against the planner. What most Muslims face is a hot, wet climate, not a hot, dry climate. They live in a rural environment, and if they have any paradise, it may not be the tropical paradise in which they already live, but a big city, that is, the opposite of what they have. What I would like to know is what flexibility do we see today. What are the symbols that emerge and the interactions that produce such symbols?

I. Serageldin

To mention one thing very briefly on the question of urban versus rural, I would like to point out that throughout the last three centuries there has been an intellectual fascination with idealizing the rural way of life as being pure. And yet nowhere in the world do we find evidence that the drift towards the cities is reversible—even with massive government intervention in such places as Cambodia, for example. The modernization of the economy has inevitably been linked with a growth of the urban population and the migration to urban centres. It is not so much a matter of ignoring the reality that many Muslims presently live in rural environments, but perhaps recognizing the fact that so many of them are changing their environment. They are going towards the cities. There is very little we can do except to try to see what sorts of cities work.

Prof. Geertz made a very important point when she admonished us to remember the connotative aspects of the environment as seen by its inhabitants and not by specialists. Prof. Arkoun gave us the negative example of a socialist village designed by specialists and outsiders. The definitions therefore are not clear in my mind as to what extent one can just create the determinants of an environment. To what extent is formal intervention required in order to give some shape and direction to an urban built environment?

Finally, we have discussed whether an element of continuity is necessary. Recent Western experience shows the difficulty in maintaining continuity between contemporary modern architecture and the previous type of architecture. In fact, architects rebelled against the prevalent construction of the time because they felt that it was no longer relevant to what was happening in their societies. They were able to make a conscious break with the past and find a more responsive type of construction and environment. They did this only because of advances that had already preceded them in the sciences, in philosophy, in sociology and even in engineering. We must not forget that in the last part of the nineteenth century the breakthroughs of earlier engineers were then taken up by architects. This appears to me to be one of the areas in which Muslim architects are lacking. There may well be great merit in asking questions about what led to the creation of these symbols in the past. But that alone may keep us locked in the past. Architecture must be complemented by a search for what is meaningful today. Perhaps through the kind of techniques which Prof. Geertz has indicated, we can find what people need in today's society and discover how to make the environment a little more adaptive to them.

Geertz

I would like to make two points. First, continuity is unavoidable. For an anthropologist looking at human activities there is no such thing as a break with the past. In architecture there is the example of the so-called international style, architects who self-consciously attempted to make something entirely new. But simultaneously there are countless structures not only in the United States but in England which constantly repeat the past. If you see any bank in the United States, it looks like the Parthenon, even the ones that are being built today. If you look at any housing development in the United States, they are new colonial houses. There is a constant allusion to the past which the people who live in those houses prefer. They want to feel that they live in an American house which is colonial. A grand bank must convey a notion of stability and wealth and so on. Continuity is not something that has to be built in; it happens.

Second, I understand that the Award is for buildings which have already been constructed and which have solved at least some problems of the relationship of technology and spirit. The purpose of these discussions is not to set up rules for how buildings should be built but criteria for evaluating buildings that already exist.

[In Fez] the structuring principles of the Muslim city are rigorously maintained—the separation between public and private domain, the interaction of public space and the volumetric articulation of space . . . Despite [a] pronounced functional differentiation, the city forms an extremely coherent volumetric unity owing to the morphological affinities of its architectural elements . . . The unity that emerges from particular variations on certain collective forms is obvious—one has only to look at an aerial photograph to see it. The fabric appears as a crystallization of the internal laws that regulate society, transposed into architectural patterns. This evocative, signifying, even symbolic force is one of the greatest qualities of the urban fabric of Fez. Because of it, Fez can be regarded as a 'model Islamic city.'

Stefano Bianca

Whereas the Istanbul seminar presented Fez as an opportunity and a challenge for preservation (see Stefano Bianca, "Fez: Toward the Rehabilitation of a Great City," in the *Proceedings* of Seminar Two, *Conservation as Cultural Survival*), the seminar held in Fez itself, in keeping with its overall theme, focused on the form of the madina as a symbolic prototype and as an expression of the Islamic urban ideal.

The programme included a presentation of the 1978 Master Plan coupled with a tour which encompassed both the madina's essential building types and spaces and the city's many later additions and satellites.

As the largest cell in a cellular city that includes an old palace quarter, newer European quarters and unplanned housing resulting from rural migration, the madina's message is poignant. Surrounded by competing alternatives, it must struggle to survive either through preservation or transformation. In this regard the city of Fez, as projected by its new Master Plan, addresses the need for an architectural discourse that speaks to the modern Islamic world. To the seminar participants, the attempted reintegration of contemporary Fez, no less than the historic lessons of the madina, appeared as a matter of primary symbolic significance.
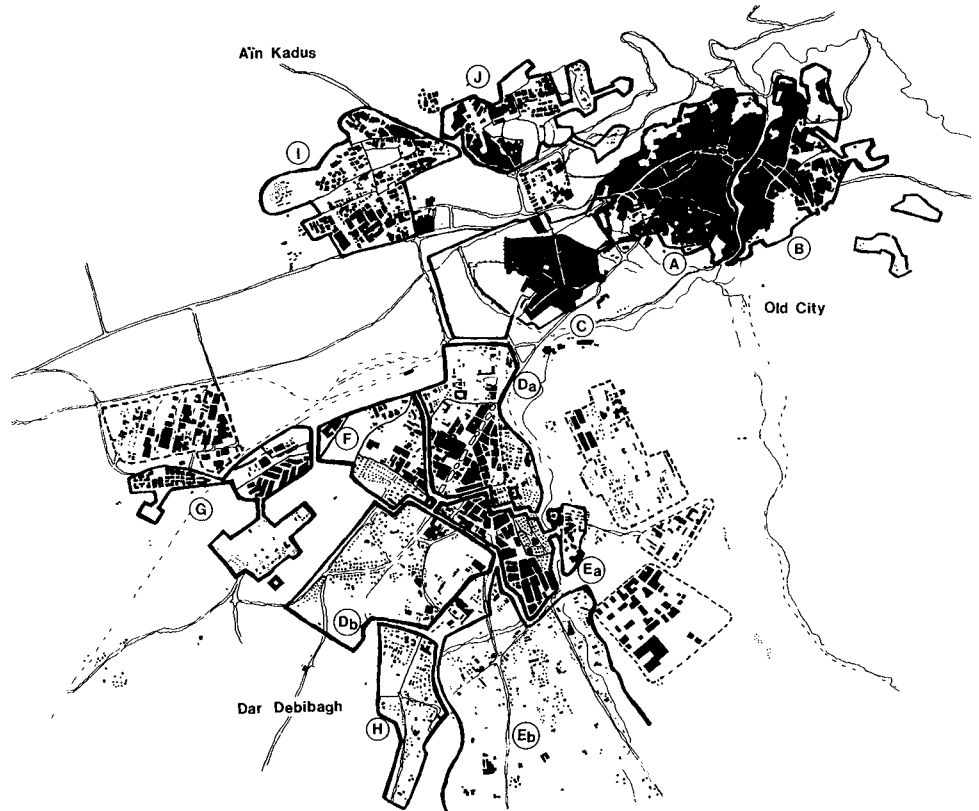
A	Madina/Left Bank	Eb	Imouzzer and Sefrou routes
B	Madina/Right Bank	F	Tanger–Fez
C	Fez Djedid	G	Dokkarat
Da	Dar Debibagh/Colonial Centre	H	Aïn Chkef route
Db	Dar Debibagh/Hippodrome	I	Aïn Kadus
Ea	Atlas	J	Dhar Khemis

Fez: major districts and quarters

Source: Master Plan of the City of Fez, 1978

Historic Form: The Madina

The physical evidence of Fez, as seen in the seminar's tour and as mapped by the 1978 Master Plan, is an especially clear record of highly articulated historical and cultural development.
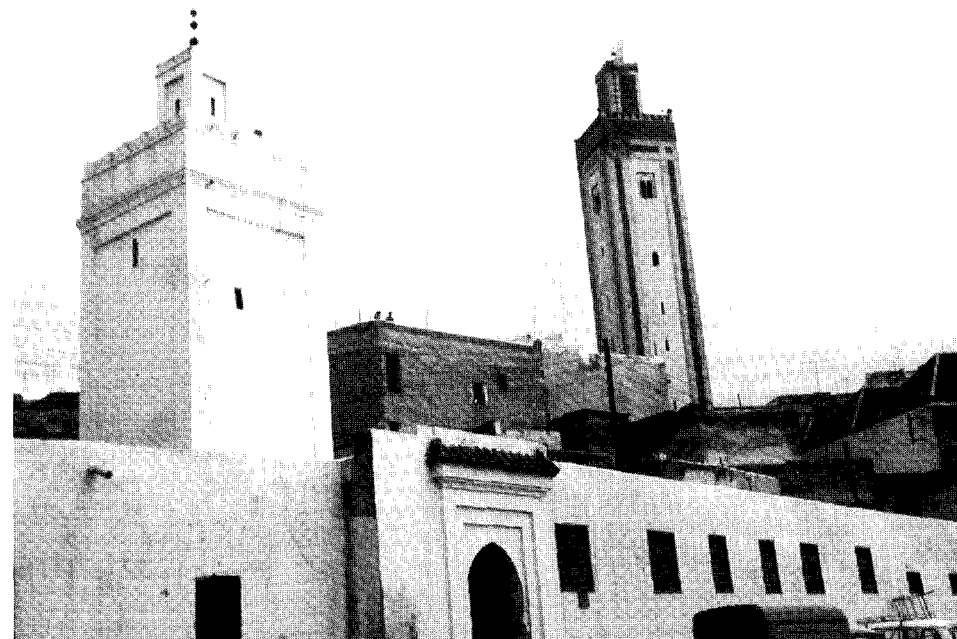
Fez was founded at the turn of the ninth century A.D. in a shallow valley chosen not only as a crossroads of existing trade routes, but more importantly as the fertile receptor of natural watercourses. These were soon developed into a sophisticated man-made complex of waterworks, fountains and waste water systems. From the beginning, the Bukhrareb wadi formed the boundary between two cellular centres, the Andalusian right bank and the Qayrawān left bank. The left bank, which includes the Qayrawiyyin mosque and its associated university and market, eventually de-

Fez madina viewed from the north with informal settlement in foreground

Photo H–U Khan/Aga Khan Awards

veloped as a centre for the city as a whole. The planning and building that defined the madina (primarily from the eleventh through the fourteenth centuries A.D.) occurred in a much more evenly distributed fashion with a unifying vocabulary of recurring elements.

In the madina, gates reinforce the sense of unity of the compact walled city and also serve as market centres. District centres include all the elements of the unified religious–social–commercial public realm: the mosque, the madrasa and the market. Commercial districts comprised of markets, workshops and *funduqs* (warehouses) revolve around particular products or crafts.

Houses, though differing in scale, are consistently built around multi–use courtyards with entrances secluded from main streets and squares. Streets, limited to pedestrian and animal traffic, never become formal or monumental.

Fez Djedid

The first of many semi–autonomous additions, Fez Djedid was originally a "royal city," a palace quarter surrounded by casbahs, gardens, simple housing and a *mella* (ghetto). Here the famed Fez waterworks and gardens reached their peak of complexity.

Dar Debibagh

The French colonial city of the early twentieth century was designed as a true satellite, in part to preserve the integrity of the madina. At the same time, however, its modern, developed facilities (hospitals and schools) began to sap the vitality of the old city.

A segment of the Fez madina wall and entrance

Photo: H–U Khan/Aga Khan Awards
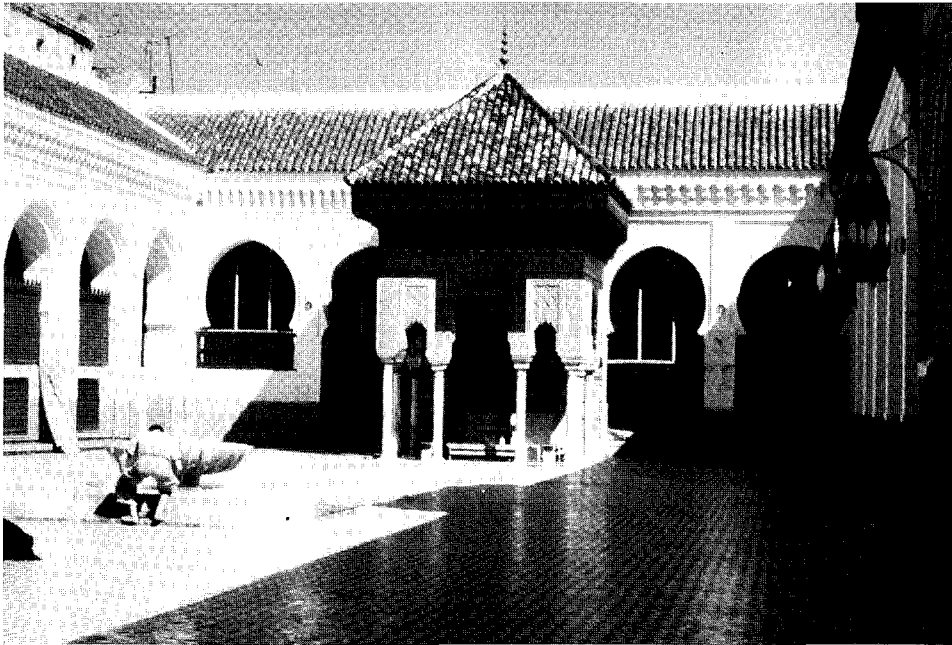
Qayrawiyyin mosque courtyard

Photo: H–U Khan/Aga Khan Awards

Side entrance to the Qayrawiyyin mosque

Photo· H–U Khan/Aga Khan Awards

Aïn Kadus

Designed by the French planner Michel Ecochard in 1950, Aïn Kadus was an attempt to combine orthodox modern ideas of density and circulation with neo–traditional forms; the result is a kind of bedroom suburb rather than a true extension of the madina. Aïn Kadus and nearby Fez Djedid have been particularly vulnerable to the pressures of speculative housing and informal settlements.

The Master Plan

An early UNESCO study (1972) by Titus Burckhardt led to the realization that, to preserve Fez's unique character and vitality, a comprehensive plan was needed which would allow both preservation and development. A multidisciplinary team with representatives from international and local organizations completed its study in 1978. Above all, the Master Plan is a physical plan with limited attention paid to legal, sociological and economic issues. The Fez Regional Delegation of the Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning is now developing these areas in more detail and refining specific architectural and planning proposals.

As described to the seminar by planner Najib Laraichi, the Master Plan represents an extensive physical and human survey:

> We set up three phases. The first, a phase of preliminary analysis, took inventory of all available data on the city of Fez and established an approach to the urban problems in the agglomeration. The second was an extensive diagnostic phase based on surveys: an artisanal survey, a housing survey, a multiple question survey of 5,000 households and an industrial survey. In the third phase we elaborated alternative plans for development of the city. Afterwards, the documentation was compiled.

> For each phase, reports and notes— including discussion of progress and preliminary conclusions—were presented to the municipal council. In the second phase, a document of consultation was discussed and sent to all the administrative and technical departments in Fez. We then had work sessions with these various departments. All of our work was based on surveys—that is, we had direct contact with the population.

Beyond mapping and surveys, which give a clear picture of Fez's continued growth and fragmentation, the Plan necessarily focuses on the somewhat contradictory needs of the madina:

—How to make it *less* a centre for population growth and exploitative development.

—How to make it *more* a cultural, economic and communications centre, thereby ensuring its vitality while giving the disparate parts of the metropolis focus and unity.

The major physical intervention proposed is a new quarter east of the madina, counterbalancing the city's historic drift toward the south and west and reestablishing the madina's geographic centrality. Other proposals seek a more even distribution of population in existing centres (this in turn depends on improved transportation), and a strengthening of the traditional institutions of the madina, in part to attract wealthier, preservation-minded residents to the old city. Where institutions have become too large or disruptive to fit within the old fabric (e.g., semi–mechanized industry), the Plan envisions relocating them immediately outside the madina's eastern gates. Ironically, the unity of disparate cellular parts—what emerges in the Fez madina as the essence of Islamic urbanism—now reappears as a highly problematic goal for Fez on the metropolitan scale.

Cloth bazaar in Fez madina

Photo: H–U Khan/Aga Khan Awards

Courtyard garden of house in Fez madina

Photo: H–U Khan/Aga Khan Awards

Comments

Ichter

We must avoid idealizing the conditions of life in the madina and projecting our dreams on a reality which is not always felicitous. Without denying the qualities of the traditional city, we must admit that in their totality they represent neither the ideal nor the lifestyle of future generations. Fundamental social transformations render exceedingly hypothetical any systematic revitalization of traditional housing in Fez. Housing here is linked to a type of society fast in the process of disappearing. Recent developments include a reduction in the size of the family unit, an increased need for individual privacy, the addition of women to the work force and the general need for transportation to workplaces. In actual fact, the population has never been asked to present its vision of the city of tomorrow.

Making generalizations about the precise experience of a city with 250,000 inhabitants and some 20,000 houses is a burdensome and time–consuming task for specialists. Instead, we should aim at the preservation of representative signs and symbols. These will otherwise disappear with the fabric that contains them if the latter is not rendered healthy—that is, restored to normal functions in harmony with the aspirations and resources of its inhabitants. Under present exigencies there has been talk of eliminating this housing legacy whereas it should be developed either through transformation or replacement.

The madina of Fez will either be a living city or it will cease to exist. In giving priority to "life," we must encourage transformations that preserve the essential structure of the city. This requires that the population be closely associated with the act of rehabilitation both through an awareness of its own values which are to be preserved and through daily material and political acts. This commitment is more important and more decisive than governmental or UNESCO subsidies.

To describe the city's future is a daring undertaking. In the face of imponderable factors, our means of intervention are slender. The rehabilitation of the madina is first and foremost a state of mind requiring faith in the possibility that the values of the traditional city can survive. This conception does not exclude action; it is, rather, an incentive. A concrete response to the problems of quantitative development—the "numbers" problem on which everything else depends—is required. Above all, the Master Plan must be a framework and a tool for action both within the context of the madina and on the scale of the entire agglomeration and region.

Kuban

Like all of you, I was very much impressed with the types of space in which we moved about and with the strong contrast between the outdoor spaces—asymmetrical, crooked, noisy, with animals and human beings moving about–and the courtyards. Medieval cities in Europe and elsewhere obviously share this pattern of contrasts. But what made it particularly Islamic to me, although it does not apply to the entire Islamic world, was the geometry, the contrast of the asymmetrical exterior as opposed to very symmetrical interiors. You cannot plan this kind of city. You plan individual spaces within it. The essential characteristic here lies in the courtyard spaces; the streets are what is left over.

Fathy

The extensions on either side will certainly affect the old city terribly. A more linear centre extending through but not limited to the old city would allow civic movement through the whole city, avoiding over-congestion and land–use changes at the centre and allowing for well–balanced growth.
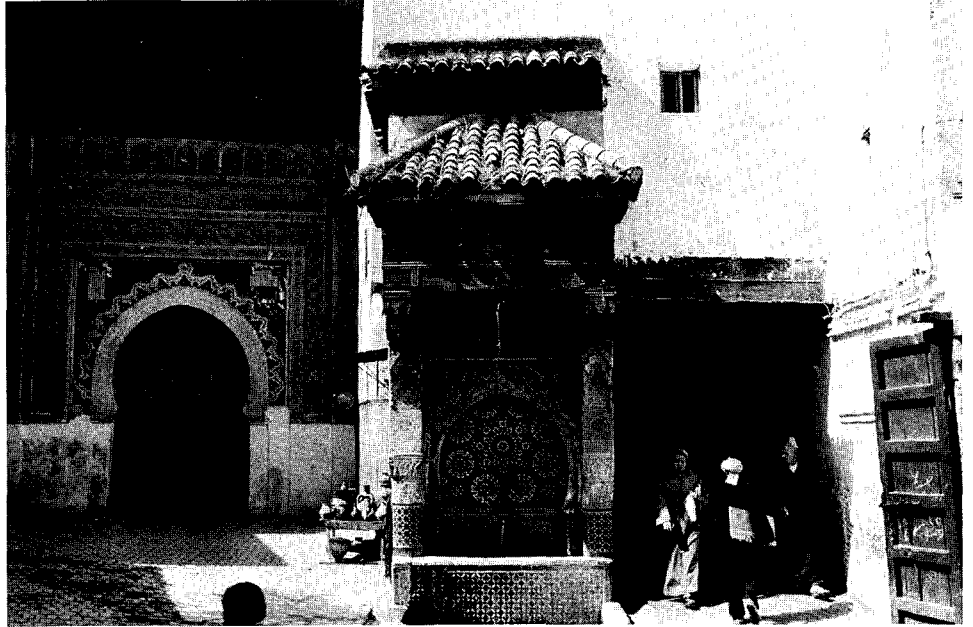
Najjārīn fountain in Fez madina

Photo: H–U Khan/Aga Khan Awards

Grabar

A linear structure already exists; in a way it is a matter really of strengthening it. The city of Fez has a certain number of physical constraints; slopes and the location of water make some areas rather difficult to develop. The Master Plan attempts to shift those centres which are common to the population of all parts of the city, old and new, toward a line that is somewhat closer to the urban centre of gravity.

Casson

I think we have seen evidence of the sensitivity of those who are in charge. Do they realize that Fez is a masterpiece? It seems to me that they feel deeply about it. What I am not clear about is what degree of say the inhabitants of the madina have in the affairs which are being discussed.

When is it the duty of the professional as an expert to interfere? I wonder how many of the experts in this seminar would agree with me in calling what we have seen a humiliating experience for architects. The madina, compared to professional solutions, is so much more successful that I feel ashamed at what I was up to.

Soedjatmoko

I feel a sense of humility of a different kind. It is a humility that is mixed with perplexity. In this country people have tried to deny their past, but they cannot prevent it from creeping back into their lives. As they modernize, their past will increasingly help shape the future. On the other hand, despite a devotion to the preservation of the past in Fez, it is escaping through their fingers. I really do not think there is any permanent viability for the madina.

Speaking now about Islam, can we bear the responsibility of assigning to the very people whose artisanship and whose lives are most closely bound to religion the kind of life that offers them the least opportunity for prosperity? The sense of humility I sense is in the limits of what we can do. Maybe the only solution can be to use the madina as a transitional point where the urbanizing rural population can develop some of the skills which will enable them to move on.

Correa

The city of Fez is much more than the madina. It is a polycentric system that is exceedingly mobile. We are not here really to solve the problems of Fez in particular, but to extract from it some sense of what is Islamic about it, what we would like to preserve from the past as it slips through our fingers. I would hope we could go on to generalize the essence of the madina as it concerns other Islamic countries with other climates and perhaps other problems. The issue here really is, what is the Islamic city?

Kuban

What we see here is a perfect example of a large city, well preserved, not yet violated by cars. And yet we learn that the economic life of the madina is being transformed. Instead of 100,000 there are now about 300,000 living there. Why concentrate on planning details and maps. What is the image of the future madina in the minds of its inhabitants?

I. Serageldin

What we should look for here is not a physical solution—a narrow street or a specific type of courtyard house. Even in the cities where courtyard houses prevail,

A square in the Fez madina

H–U Khan/Aga Khan Awards

there are other types. Much more so it appears to me that the reality of what we have seen is in a social interaction, a life-style that has certain values which in turn are invested in the built environment. These values include such things as neighbourliness, the balance between public and private spaces, the privacy of the home, the intermingling of only certain types of land uses and the articulation of space, especially the public space of the street.

Fathy

From the climatic point of view it is interesting to look at the narrow streets and the courtyard house. In the more modern city we have large, open streets which absorb more heat, and you have the pollution of the automobile. On such a street in Tunisia one project tried to respect the courtyard house, primarily as a style, to be consistent. However, if you

Commercial activity in a funduq *in Fez*

Photo: H–U Khan/Aga Khan Awards

measure for pollution, it turns out that even in this situation the courtyard house is better. But to my mind there is not a single instance of architects and planners trying to apply or adapt the old, traditional Islamic town plan.

Grabar

I think the key points that were mentioned include the definite notion of a quarter—a quarter limited to four to five thousand people of a specific character and incorporating a certain number of institutions along with the mosque to form a unit. The second feature is the existence of a main centre to which these various quarters are related in some fashion. The third feature is the separation of residential and commercial districts.

El Hajjami

Can we build better by understanding the madina? Can we learn from what is happening to the madina? In the madina there is an urban life that is truly a "way of life." It is a social relationship. Its essence is not in special kinds of houses built in a special way. Beyond economics the problem is one of a relation between people, and this is the aspect of urban life worth saving, a relation that we do not want to destroy by introducing another, very different urbanism. Yet we do not want to continue the problems of the madina. Industry that makes energy demands and creates pollution, for example, should be near but not at the centre. An urban identity is not only that of houses on a street—it is a changing social identity which our planning must express.

The madina was not made in a merely spontaneous way, but slowly, like a tree. Its builders considered everything. If we try, we can work out their reasoning. Our studies will suggest many directions for our work.
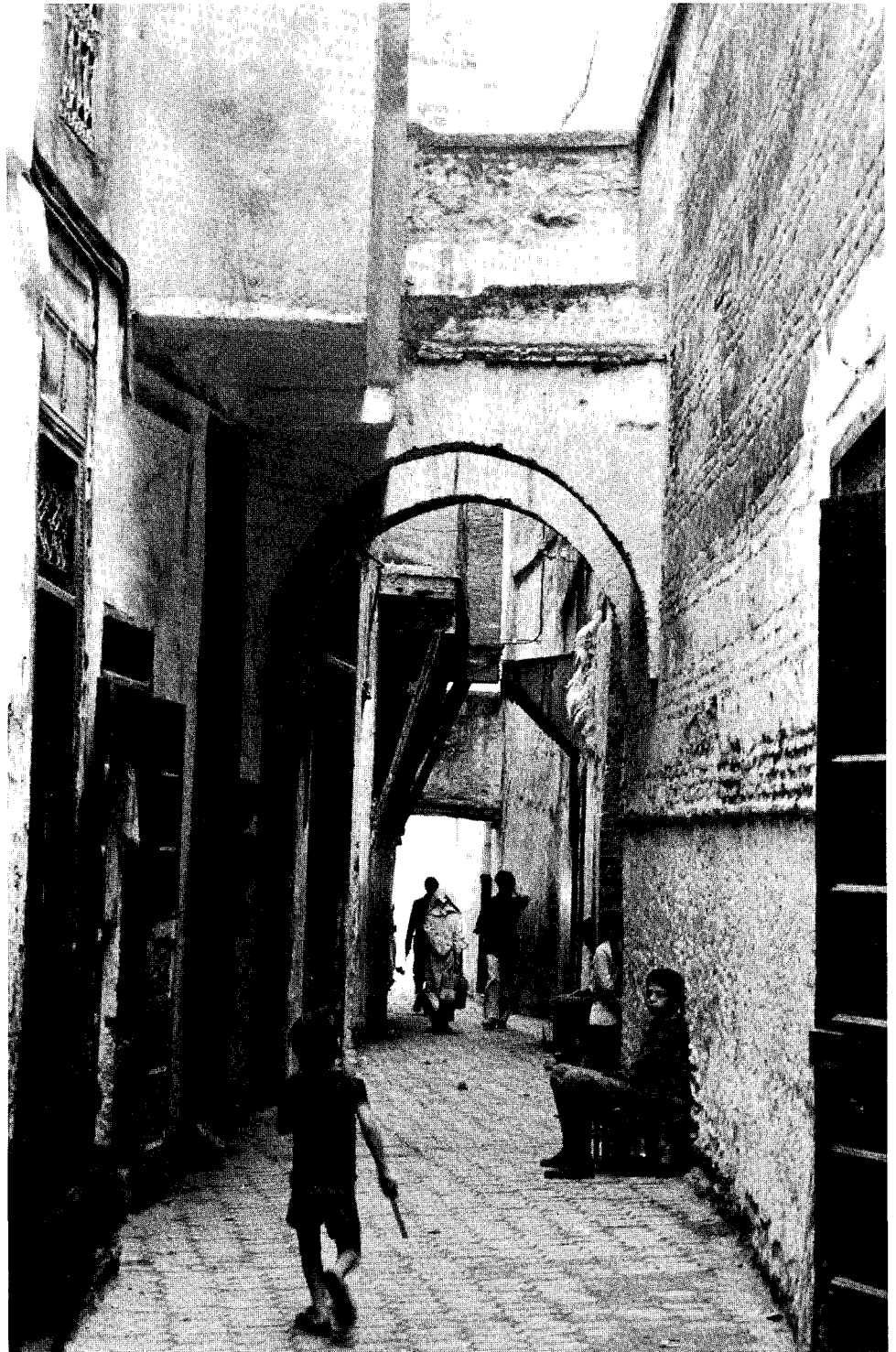
A narrow residential street in the Fez madina

Photo: H–U Khan/Aga Khan Awards

3

Fragmentation:
The Search for Identity

Comments

Kuban

I just wish to reiterate in a different form the main arguments of the discussion which was opened in our earlier seminars. First, there is no universal Islamic architectural form without some degree of ambiguity. Second, there are symbolically significant forms which possess certain suggestive potential and symbolic values in our quest for a culturally identifiable environment. Third, the religious content of human acts is not by its very nature apt to be clearly defined, but it does take shape in culturally defined circumstances within temporal and spatial limits. I always think of Islam as a religion that insists upon actions and leaves the form to take shape according to those circumstances. I speak of Islam as religion and not as a culture. A culture means for me a more differentiated complex development of society which has created the necessary societal material of life and its symbolism.

The fourth point is that in our everyday experience we are still sensitive to the traditional patterns of forms and space and that those familiar combinations are of basic importance in our search for symbolic values. However, their relevance is limited to cultural areas. Fifth, since there is no universal system of symbolic forms, the scope of our problem has to be reduced from universal to regional dimensions. Instead of seeking a universal mechanism from object to sign, from sign to symbol, I find it more practical to study the reactions of the members of a given society to their traditional environment. I do not doubt that the symbolic value exists, but it is the product of an evolved system of knowledge and beliefs. The symbol of the present is also the sign of the past. Therefore, symbolism in Muslim culture operates on a level below that of religious significance. The concepts of symbolism are not clear–cut.
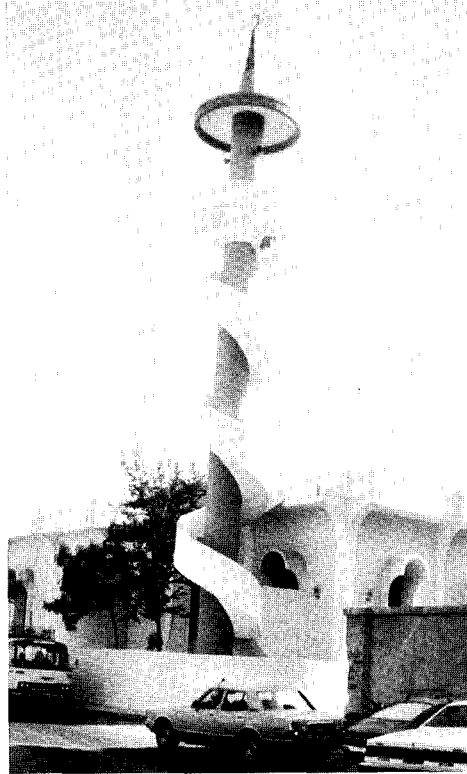
We should perform our search for the concrete definition of symbolic value on two levels: in the actual significance of the traditional forms for common people and in its reflection in the cultural continuity of our environment. For the first part I think that the symbolic value of the whole lies in its visual impact on common people. It is understandable only in a time dimension, not eternally.

Finally, the symbolic content of forms change; here I add the precaution that the rate of this change should be controlled. A cultural decision concerning the intent of continuity is implicit in my remarks. If we make this decision then we must face the dilemma of reconciling the Islamic content, culturally defined as a symbolic source, with the symbolism of modern technological forms. Perhaps there can be a synthesis in the long run. I caution that one should not emphasize the monumental because the monumental quality changes its attributes. Also, introducing forms without historic precedence has proven to be a rather futile exercise for the archi-

tecture of Muslim countries. We have techniques but lack a convenient idiom.

I conclude by repeating that continuity with the past occurs in culturally homogeneous areas. International architecture seminars can be viewed as an artificial language like Esperanto. They lack tradition and deep emotive content. Just as we stick to our languages, we have to stick to certain values in our traditional environment. This heritage is an asset. It can potentially challenge the creators of new forms and it is where we must look for solutions.

Our first step is to spread the knowledge of forms. Then comes the second phase, proving that traditional forms are relevant in our lives. This is not as easy as it is thought here. It is a fight against technological symbols because no symbol, when stripped of its functional content, is strong enough. In order to create a new standard for our environment, we must create tools to counter the symbolic power of technological forms. I do not say technology itself, but we do need to fight the antagonism of technology in every facet of our lives. Symbols are destroyed or replaced by other symbols. Forms derived from technology are replacing the old forms not necessarily by their efficiency or by economic necessity, but because of their symbolic value. This symbolic value is charged with Western images. Our inferiority complex makes us believe that we have to renounce the past. Hence we look to the West with bewilderment and fascination. Herein lies the real dilemma and also the drama of Islamic countries.

Fathy

I wish to discuss the pragmatic aspect of Islam for architecture. A symbol to my mind is a form that expresses for man natural phenomena. This was part of the way of revealing or observing nature and giving it names and so on to define being. In so doing some people would have deified the symbol, giving it a value which is not at all applicable to it. That is why

Jiddah, Saudi Arabia: the spiral minaret of a contemporary mosque

Photo: D Kuban/Aga Khan Awards

Islam has been against any formal representation of nature but has not opposed speculative consideration of the principles of creation.

The architect, for example, does not put his building in interstellar space where he is free to do whatever he likes, free to apply symbols or not. He is reacting. Architecture has to fit into two environments: the God–made environment and the man–made environment. If man does not respect the first, he has sinned. And if he does not respect the second, it would be a lack of civility—those who preceded him would have respected the environment of God.

When we consider the evolution of Islamic architecture from the Fatimid period up to the last century, we find that in this part

of the world, between 10° and 35° latitude, where the climate is uniform, men's building solutions have been similar.

Take the design concepts in Islamic architecture or in the architecture that developed in that part of the world where nature is hostile to man at ground level. All architecture in the Mediterranean is introverted. With the advent of the car and a change in attitude toward extroversion, we have removed an essential quality of Islamic architecture: its interiority.

Before we had universities, magazines and all this intrusion of foreign culture and alienation, the Islamic man, the man living in this part of the world, interacted directly with his environment. There was no problem with our Islamic architecture. It took care of itself. Now we are in trouble because of alienation. We go against the Islamic spirit, not in a Koranic sense, but because we go against veracity, truth. If the form is not true to its environment, it will be false. And Islam does not accept falsehood. I believe that with the cultural change which has taken place in this part of the world, we no longer have the continuous interaction between man and his environment. This was symbolized in the deep knowledge of the Sufi and the intelligence of the hands and the fingers of the craftsman both working together. We have changed this system to the architect–contractor system in which spirituality has been removed completely.

It is irrational to do anything that does not suit. In fact, we can measure falsehood with a thermometer. In Cairo we had a group of young students come from London University to evaluate Islamic architecture scientifically. The thermometer showed the difference, but unfortunately they had only two months to stay in Cairo and they came in April. This research needs to be conducted throughout the whole year and then compared with measurements from so–called modern buildings. We have false ideas about modernity and progress.

In the past the sacred architecture validated the secular. We have it both in

Europe and in the East. The same crafts-men who built the cathedrals built the castles of the nobles and the houses of the people. Now it is the secular architecture which is removing the sanctity from the religious architecture. The mosques are no longer religious; they are not, I mean to say, holy. The same applies to churches. Modern architects deal with sacred archi-tecture as if they were dealing with theatres or garages. This is the problem, and this is why the Aga Khan Award exists, to restore spirituality to our architecture.

We have seen that some symbols do not need to be crystalized. At the Ka'ba the pilgrims go around counterclockwise. This has a meaning because there are two movements which generate energy. You must take the cogwheel in terms of both sides; if they turn in the same direction, the mechanism will stop, the teeth of the wheels will break. The earth turns from left to right, and when we turn from right to left at the Ka'ba we have a similar kind of energy–generating movement. This is the idea behind it. It symbolizes something which is not a practical thing Why is that? We do not know. Nowadays we know about cosmic rays and radiation. Yet we have forgotten so many other things which were recognized in the sacred art of the past. We know that the cathedrals of France represent the constellation of the Virgin on earth. In our architecture we have to worship God in every building, not only in the mosque and not only in the church, but in the house and everything. Every stone that we put one on top of the other has to be in harmony.

A mountain in which erosion has taken place is beautiful. Only man produces ugli-ness in his environment. Now if we just try to vibrate in unison with the universe, we can solve all our problems. By this I mean to say—with aesthetics, with human scale, with architecture, town planning and so forth. All municipalities now prohibit Islamic architecture. In our time we have no Islamic architecture whatsoever, and it is the fault of the universities. In school we devoted only three pages to Islamic architecture because it was considered
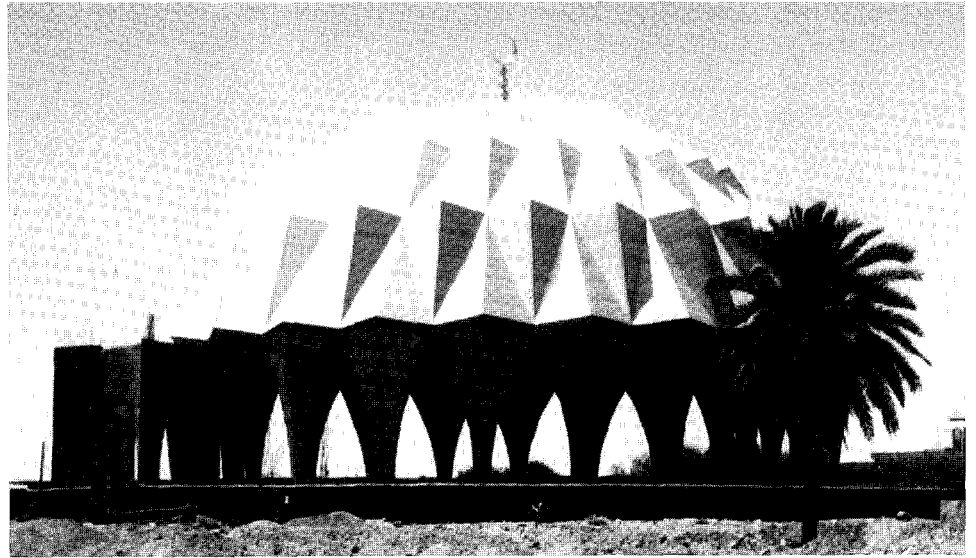
Omdurman, Sudan: the domed Niliem mosque Designed by Jamal Abdullah

Photo: H–U Khan/Aga Khan Awards

exotic. And in my country, I too am con-sidered exotic. The entire movement has been going against Islam.

Islam

Actually, I have no comments to offer as a solution to anything, but after listening to the speakers I have more questions in my mind than before. We are trying to find common symbols in all countries inhabited by Muslims. Our discussion has largely involved the mosque which is probably the most important building in all Muslim communities everywhere. But the question remains: other than the five or six items which we mentioned, what can be trans-ferred to a contemporary building in order to make it a mosque? And what can be transferred to secular structures? Are there symbols to make a hospital, a Muslim hospital, or a college, a Muslim college? We are trying to identify forms, decorations and other things that stand for Islam.

I would like to ask, "Why?" There are many Islamic communities all over the world. Almost all Muslim societies have undergone extreme change. At one stage they were conquerors and then they were conquered. Now they are free again, but it is only in recent times that we have started to feel free because of changes in the world situation.

Now it is obvious that among these communities even the forms of mosques vary. There are, of course, basic require-ments such as facing the Ka'ba and ablution places, but I have the feeling that we are emphasizing only one aspect of the whole thing. We are not looking at our societies in a comprehensive manner. I think we are proud of present develop-ments in other societies but there is no reason why we should give up or not look at what is happening in our own. As a matter of fact, some of us, and I include myself, know very little of our own things, not to mention Muslim things in other countries. This is simply because we were educated in a Western culture that was completely imposed upon us. I had no

opportunity to learn what was my own or what was beautiful or rich in our other Muslim societies. That is only one part. The other is that since we are functioning in the present age, looking backwards is not enough. Looking forward is much more important. If there are symbols which can make our buildings beautiful and even Islamic, that is fine. That is the best we can hope for. But understanding our culture is completely different from actually copying symbols or transferring certain things from one age to the present.

Before I finish I have one particular comment to make about Dr. Fathy's remark that introverted buildings are Islamic. He implied that this feature comes from the Mediterranean where Islam began and consequently they are Islamic. But in a different environment such as Indonesia, Malaysia or even South China, things are completely different. Will those houses be non–Islamic? Are there gradations in the quality of Islam in things? I do not believe so. If something is held commonly, there

is no reason why there should not be infinite variations within that thing. The common thing may not be a simple symbol. It may be a basic principle. Basic principles are what created places like Fatehpur Sikri.

Soedjatmoko

The one remark I want to make concerns development planning When we talk about replicas, we are talking about continuity. Does continuity still exist within the Islamic world? A similar question poses itself to the world of Christianity where the Caucasian is no longer dominant in terms of numbers. The shift of Christianity away from Europe to Africa and Asia brings with it a shift in symbolism. A similar process is now taking place within the world of Islam because the basic self–perception of Islam is in the process of changing in a very fundamental fashion.

We are in the midst of an Islamic revolution, the nature and direction of which is still uncertain. It remains to be seen, for instance, whether the revival of Islam will be realistic or whether it will be regressive and a cause for regret. Will the Islamic revival lead in the end to a different conception of man and consequently a different attempt at spatial and symbolic expression? Against this background the question of replicas is minor. What we are seeing here in many ways represents the loss of a sense of style and, curiously, the openness, the willingness, to let others who are not rooted in the particular civilization or religion dabble in the forms and the symbols of that civilization. There has been a loss of criteria, a loss of style, a loss of aesthetic integrity. But there are also elements that make sense only if we see them as the beginning of something very big which may take another hundred years to develop. Herein lies the importance of the Award because our inability to formulate criteria will stimulate research.
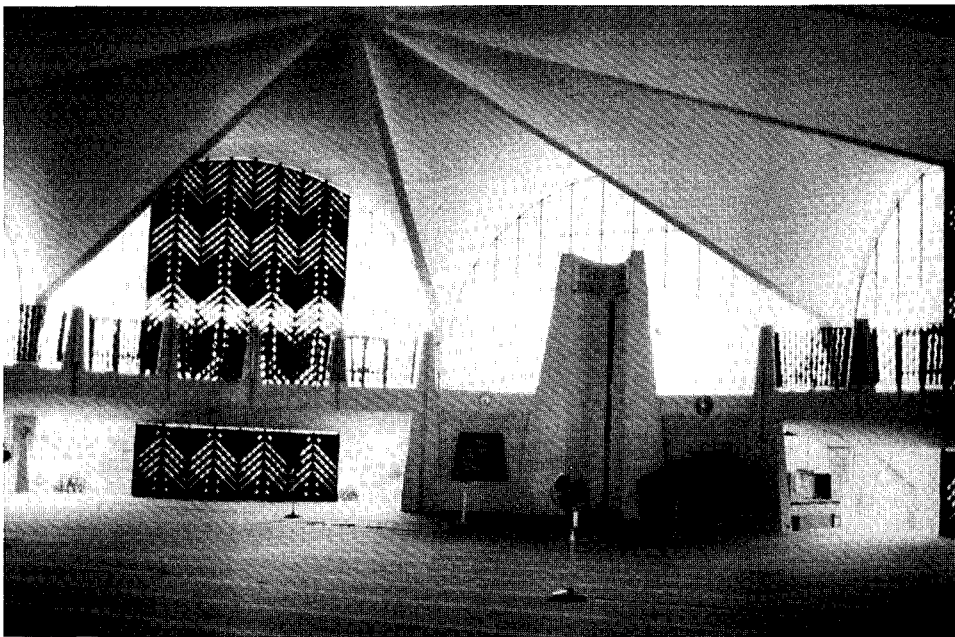
Seramban, Malaysia: interior of mosque designed by Team 3/Malay Design Group

Photo: H–U Khan/Aga Khan Awards

Bammate

I have a few remarks. First of all, we start with the statement by Mr. Soedjatmoko. At the moment the centres of Islam are shifting from the Arabic countries toward Asia and Africa. We must also consider in our architecture that most Muslims are under twenty–five years of age. So the emphasis should be put on Asia and, in terms of strength of faith, toward Africa, both North and black. With some exceptions from Malaysia and elsewhere, I notice that most of the vocabulary of Islamic building forms derives from the Middle East. What makes a building Muslim, I think, is the presence of a minaret, a cupola, or a form like a cupola, and arches. These are the three elements which in the majority of cases seem to make a mosque. But I do not want to make any judgment on these places. I just notice that the vocabulary is coming from the Middle East.

My second remark concerns the absence of calligraphy. Perhaps we have not seen as many interior as exterior views, but in classical architecture, whether it is the original open air mosque or the mosque with a dome, we see calligraphy everywhere as a mark of Islam. The world of God reverberates in architecture. Now I do not know whether it is the influence of the international style or what, but I think that there is now a unity of shapes and structural forms which breaks with tradition, especially in the absence of calligraphy.

My third remark concerns the function of the mosque. It is a question I ask myself all the time. Are people praying there? Obviously. But are they circulating within this space? Do they come there to congregate? Originally the mosque was not just a place for prayer but had a variety of communal uses. It was where the '*umma* was happy to meet—the convenience centre. In the old mosques you had all of these functions at the same time.

In addition to the grandiose mosques built by the authorities, there is also an architecture of the people. Many mosques are built by rural communities, built practically without money, spontaneously, and people congregate there whether they are praying or not because they feel comfortable there. In my own country of Afghanistan I know of two or three beautiful buildings which are rejected by the people not because they are in good or bad taste or are good or bad examples of architecture—I cannot answer those questions—but because the people do not recognize the authority which built that mosque. And so they pray outside the mosque. Literally.

Now my last remark is that in practically all instances, even though the mosque towers over the landscape, it remains an integral part of the city itself. Now, however, we are moving from a spatial notion within the environment to that of a separate, distinct building. Again I cannot say whether this is good or bad or whether it is simply a historical development. It is not a question of taste, but whether the

'*umma* recognizes itself in the mosque and whether they pray there and inhabit it.

Kuban

The question is whether we accept people following their own interpretations or whether we try to impose on them some criteria of modern Islamic architecture. I

Jakarta environs: the minaret of the Masjid Badan Kebehjataraan. Mosque built in 1977 by PERUMNAS, the Indonesian Urban Housing Development Corporation
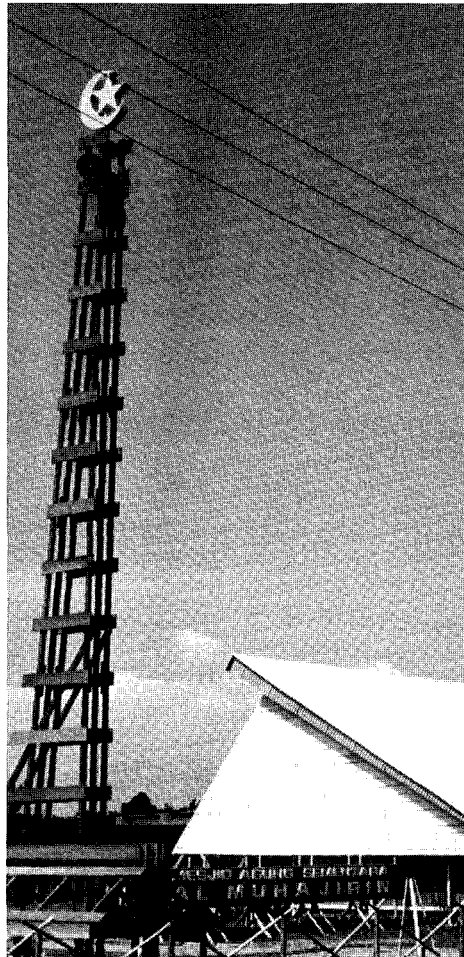
Photo: H–U Khan/Aga Khan Awards

think this is practically impossible and even contrary to Islam. I would let the poor follow their own ways of development. Then the problem is solely that of architectural criteria and the pursuit of quality. Now there is one danger, however, which is very important because the old tradition has been broken. Although we imitate, we certainly use modern techniques. Now the old tradition is broken and the new one is not yet assimilated by our own people. There is always a danger that non–Muslims can create better designs than Muslims. I do not say anything against this. It is possible that they will, for it will take time for Islamic society to assimilate the modern elements of technology and interpret them, even if this requires imitation.

Kuran

It seems to me that with the mosque there is also the issue of its setting. These issues should not be separated. What I mean is that there seem to be simultaneous and contradictory currents in the Islamic world. In Turkey people have accepted modern architecture. Since the 1920s we have had nothing but modern architecture. Yet when it comes to mosque architecture we are far behind other Islamic countries. Mosques there have remained the same since Sinan in the sixteenth century. If people aspire to a classical mosque, can they relate to a modern one? This seems to me to be the big contradiction to which we must address ourselves.

Geertz

There is an anecdote about Mexico which I think is relevant here. In a very small, very poor village about half of the men regularly go to the United States as migrant workers and bring back American dollars to spend on cars and so forth. When they decide to build a new church in their village, they choose an American

design—a modern suburban church with a lot of glass. Even though it is not much larger than their old church, no one goes to it. It feels too big. Still the people are all terribly proud of it because it shows how wealthy they are compared to the surrounding villages.

Now in some ways the new structure inhibits the villagers' religious practices, but is it a bad church?

Raymond

For various reasons the easiest position to take is to say that each mosque, even when it is awful, corresponds to the taste of a community. Then we do not have to pass judgment.

Arkoun

In a number of mosques which have been built in Algeria since independence, the decisions have been made by very restricted groups and exclude the taste and initiative of the community. This is *a* very important point.

Burckhardt

There is a pretension, an illness really, from which many contemporary mosques suffer. They pretend to be something unique, new or richer, but they lack the means to be that. This pretension is in strong contrast to the fact that in the past the Muslim architect traditionally disappeared behind his work. In the contemporary mosque the architect steps forward from the work.

New village mosque in the environs of Manila, the Philippines

Photo: H–U Khan/Aga Khan Awards

New mosque in a village between Kuala Lumpur and Malacca, Malaysia

Photo: H–U Khan/Aga Khan Awards

In Search of an Islam–Initiated Architectural Identity in Indonesia

Ahmad Sadali

One may easily recognize the difference in character between a mosque in Turkey and one in India or Spain, as each belongs to an architectural style brought into being by a people who had already achieved their own identity.[1] With the Islamic architecture of Indonesia this is not the case. Since Indonesia is an archipelago consisting of thousands of islands with seas and straits functioning as barriers to communication, it is no wonder that the inhabitants have differed in lifestyle, belief, tradition and language for many centuries.

Nevertheless, a strong undercurrent of similarity has existed from the outset. We can probably attribute this to a common native land, which many theories indicate to be the Yunan area of Southeast Asia. This explains, among other things, the smooth adoption of Bahasa Indonesian as a national language and the consciousness of belonging to one nation. It further explains the rapid and peaceful diffusion of Islam as a religion embraced by ninety–five percent of the people. Progress in communication and transportation certainly accounts for much of Indonesia's unity amid diversity, but the prime factor remains the advent of Islam in the seventh century A.D., long before modern navigational techniques were available.

Diversity is the outstanding feature of Indonesian architecture. As for identity, we must search for it in such varied regional styles as the Batak, the West Sumatran or Minangkabau, the Cirebonese, the Sundanese Middle, the East Javanese and the Balinese. In each region of Indonesia mosques were built in a style conditioned by local input and the environment. The same can be said for the architectural styles throughout the whole of the Islamic world. Unlike Buddhism or Hinduism with the *silpasastra*, Islam does not prescribe a distinct canonical rule for building edifices for worship or habitation.
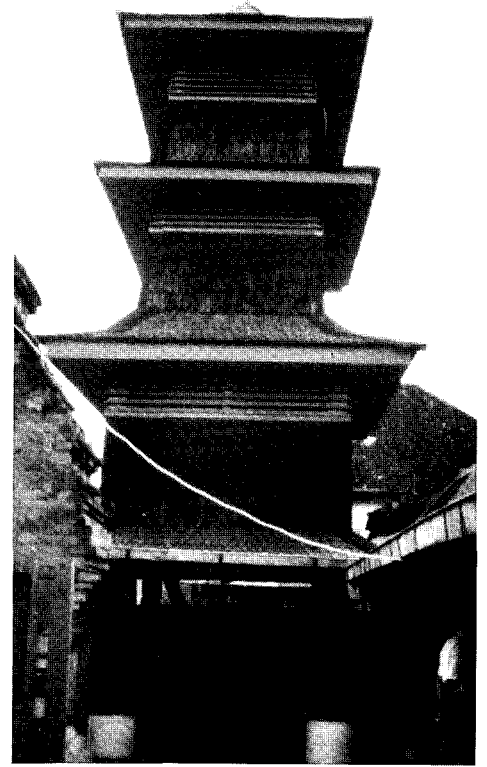
In studying the Islamic architecture of Indonesia two problems handicap the researcher. The first stems from the inadequacy of the existing literature. Few works on Islamic culture in Indonesia touch upon architecture, and most commentators discuss history or the activities conducted within the mosque rather than the actual art of building. Foreign writers on the Islamic heritage of Indonesia have concentrated primarily on historical and archeological aspects.

The second problem lies in the nature of the artifacts themselves. Structures that could be instrumental to the study of Indonesian architecture are not only rare, but their fragmented form makes it difficult to identify their origin. Moreover, many buildings are closed to investigation due to the existing superstition that the researcher's hand might diminish their magical power.

A further cause for disappointment is that structures from the first Islamic period in Indonesia have suffered many alterations. Regrettably, many old mosques have been "restored" without taking historical value into account An old temple may be better preserved than a mosque of a later date. The problem is not simply the use of nondurable materials, but a lack of appreciating and understanding historical worth. Keep in mind that in Indonesia no mosque is ever too old for use and that almost all are insufficient in terms of space. The aged Masjid Kasepuhan in Cirebon, which dates from the time of the *walīs* (saints) of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries A.D is a splendid example both in terms of its "rehabilitation" and the density of its use. The Masjid Lima Kaum of Batusangkar, West Sumatra, is another example. Although several hundred years old, its original form is recognizable only from photographs taken by the Dutch during the colonial period.

To evaluate Islamic fine art objectively we must accept the fact that throughout the Islamic world there is unity in diversity. Despite its manifold forms of externalization, the underlying belief of Islam is *tauḥīd*, that everything is from the One and will be returned to the One. With this reality in mind and the knowledge of the way in which Islam is externalized (in particular through *muʿāmala*, i.e., the realization of the Teachings in mondial cultural deeds or objects), we may properly

Cirebon, Indonesia: the Masjid Pangumuman, an example of stacked roof design

Photo H–U Khan/Aga Khan Awards

examine the Islamic art and architecture of Indonesia.

Causal Factors of Diversity

We must also recognize that Islam was not always received throughout Indonesia with one and the same understanding. Putting aside factors such as facility, skill, material and those of an environmental nature— factors generally used as the yardstick of artistic and cultural development—I would like to introduce three primary causal factors for this diversified character.

The first is that of the conveyor. History relates that Islam was brought to Indo-

nesia not only by the Arabs direct from Mecca, but also by others, possibly Indians or Persians, whose faith was most probably already syncretized in one way or another. That the religion suffered from the influence of other beliefs before it even set foot in Indonesia is conspicuously discernible and felt right up to the present day.

Another historical factor is that the recipients of Islam at its advent in Indonesia were converts from indigenous faiths such as Hinduism, Buddhism, animism and dynamism. Most were navigators, traders and peasants who inhabited the coastal areas of the islands. Only later did Islam enter the palaces of the inland rulers. As in other parts of the globe where Islam made inroads, cultural levels were reflected in the objects produced. It deserves our attention that Islam faithfully preserved the cultural levels which existed before its arrival. Excessively tolerant for fear of disturbing the existing order, the religion permitted an overdose of syncretism, the result of which can still be seen in the coastal town of Cirebon and elsewhere. The avoidance of abrupt change became an unwritten rule. Decorations of Hindu or Buddhist origin were extended to mosques and tombs, and to soften the change in belief, calligraphic inscriptions from the Koran were devised to conjure up *wayang* or puppet theatre figures.

The third factor is that of patronage. Without proper support the Alhambra, the Taj Mahal and the insurpassably beautiful mosques and mausoleums of the Middle East would never have been built. In many parts of the Muslim world the Maecenas was a ruler or a political leader in a position to administer the state treasury. In contrast, Islam's early supporters in Indonesia were found at the grass–roots level among the common people, whereas the rulers were initially hostile to the new religion. Later, Indonesian princes did begin to favour Muslims, but by then the Dutch colonials arrived with the sword in the right hand and the Bible in the left. Since that time the Muslims of Indonesia have never had the opportunity or the strength to build

their houses of worship according to their own architectural ideals. With the use of inferior materials and, most notably, the lack of free expression, little was achieved in the field of Islamic architecture. Hundreds of years lapsed with almost no creative expression. Only after independence did the situation change. Nevertheless, a long time span is required to consolidate a unified mosque style, and indeed, it may be preferable that the Indonesian Muslim remain faithful to the tradition of diversity.

Stylistic Sources

An examination of mosques, tombs and *kraton* (palaces) points to three stylistic sources of Indonesian mosque architecture. The first, based on pre–Islamic styles, is exemplified by a stacked roof design (e.g., the Banten Mosque) and by design derived from the traditional dwelling (e.g., Rao–rao Mosque).

A second style reflects sources outside of Indonesia in such features as the dome (e.g., Masjid Raya Aceh) and arched windows and doorways (e.g., Masjid Sultan Medan). Lastly, there is the contemporary style. The "Salman" mosque complex on the campus of the Institute of Technology, Bandung, is a prominent example.

We note that this categorization is not necessarily strict. Overlaps occur, for example, in mosques which combine the stacked roof with the dome. Moreover, there are mosques which are completely devoid of architectural ambition or design. In this classification we have excluded the mausoleum which is the most prominent aspect of the Islamic architectural heritage in Sumatra, Java, Madura, Kalimantan and Sulawesi.

As we can observe from Dutch photographic documentation and from several old mosques (e.g., Banten, Kudus), the stacked roof characterizes mosques from the transition period. Various types are
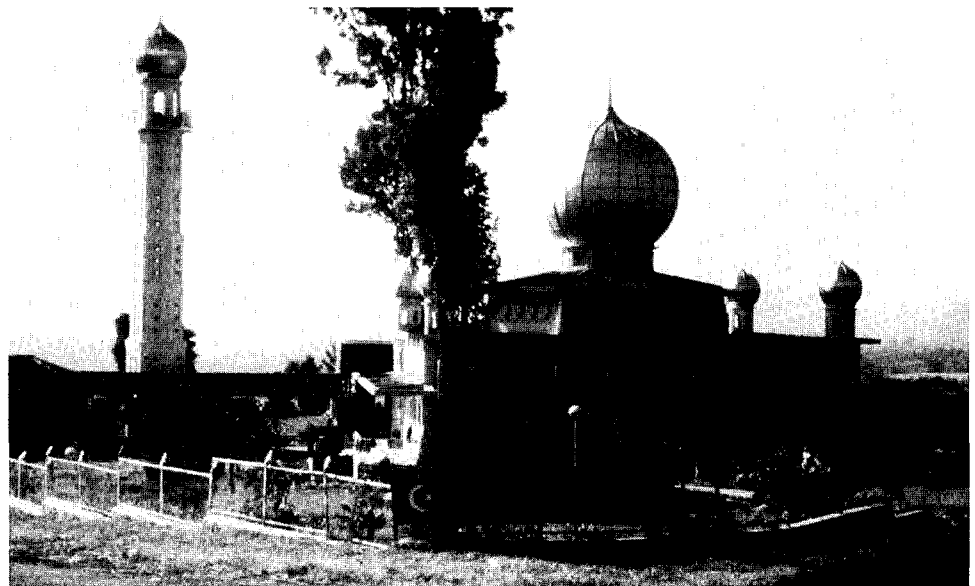
A domed mosque on the outskirts of Jakarta

Photo: H–U Khan/Aga Khan Awards

found not only in Java but throughout the archipelago including Sumatra, Sulawesi, Kalimantan and Ternate. Both Dutch and Indonesian historians have sought to explain its origin.

F. W. Stutterheim was of the opinion that Islam in its transition period turned to autochthonous forms such as the *wantilan* or cockfight arena still commonly seen in Bali. H. J. de Graaf rejected this view on three accounts. First, the cockfight arena as it exists in Bali is a place for gambling; it would be unlikely for Muslims to choose as a prototype a structure associated with practices contrary to their teachings. Second, existing cockfight arenas lack a stacked roof, and third, the cockfight arena is found mainly in Bali and only sporadically in Java. For his part de Graaf sought the prototype of the stacked roof in buildings outside of Indonesia. The Malabar area of India, for example, displays this type of construction.

The Indonesian scholar Soetjipto Wirjosoeparto holds that Javanese mosque architecture is adopted from the building traditions of pre–Islamic times. The "square" mosque plan recalls the *pendopo*, a building erected within the ruler's compound for meetings and cultural performances. The tomb complexes of Sunan Bonang and Sunan Dradjat feature examples of this type. Moreover, he maintains that the mosque roof is a perfection of the *joglo* roof as it appears in the *pendopo*. In the *joglo* roof construction the lower part is a sharply sloping truncated pyramid surmounted by another pyramid which may or may not be truncated.

G. F. Pijper and K. A. H. Hidding both maintain that Indonesian Hinduism is the primary source of Indonesian mosque architecture. But if one scrutinizes the reliefs in the Majapahit temple from the fourteenth century in which building forms with stacked roof (called *meru*) are depicted, one might also conclude that the origin is Buddhist.

In mosques of this type there may be two, three or five stacks. Some prominent examples of the stacked roof mosque
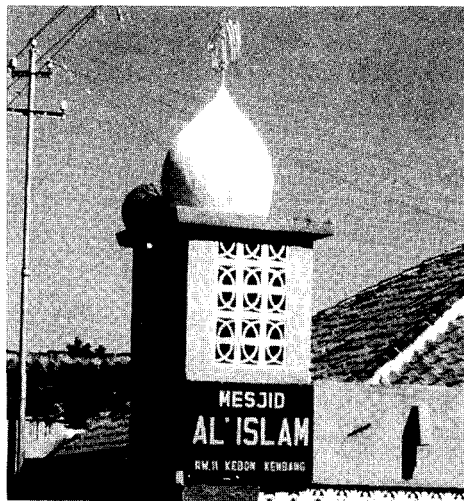
Bandung, Indonesia: the small domes of two neighbourhood mosques

Photo: A. Sadali

include Masjid Angke, Marunda, Jakarta (eighteenth century, two stacks), Masjid Demak and Masjid Banten (both sixteenth century, three stacks), and Masjid Lima Kaum in Batusangkar, West Sumatra (five stacks).

Apart from the square plan of the Indonesian mosque (a logical consequence of

the *saf*, the straight, uninterrupted parallel rows of worshipers as they perform the congregational *salāt)*, the uplifted floor and a ditch or pond located near the entrance or on one or both sides of the mosque are also characteristic features.

Both the dome and the minaret were unknown to mosque architecture in the early period following Islam's arrival in the archipelago. Originally the *azān* was called from the attic of the highest stack of the roof. The introduction of the dome represents the desire of Indonesian rulers and the *'ulamā'* to emulate what they had seen in their travels to other Islamic countries. Unfortunately, once mandated by the ruling authorities, the misconception that the dome was an inherent element of the mosque became increasingly rooted, and today a mosque lacking a dome is often considered unsatisfactory. In villages a bamboo mosque with a tile roof may have a crooked dome constructed from tin plate. A more tragic sight is the mosque with an earthenware jar placed upside down on a tile roof. Even in the capital cities of Jakarta and Medan there are mosques, designed by a Christian and a Dutch architect respectively, that possess domes. Foreign hands actively contributed to the structure of the Masjid Raya Aceh and other mosques. There are, however, mosques built by the Dutch which follow regional examples such as the Masjid Rao–rao. The Chinese also exerted considerable influence as seen in the Masjid Gresik, Sunan Giri and the tomb of Sumenep.

Contemporary architectural forms have left their mark on recent mosque design. Achmad Noe'man, the architect of the campus mosque of the Institute of Technology, Bandung, has remarked that:

To design a mosque is not just a blind following of architectural conceptual principles. It is more than that. One must listen and open his heart to the Call of Allah the Almighty and scrutinize the footsteps of His Messenger Muhammed.

Here we can observe how modern thoughts and sentiments are being amalga-
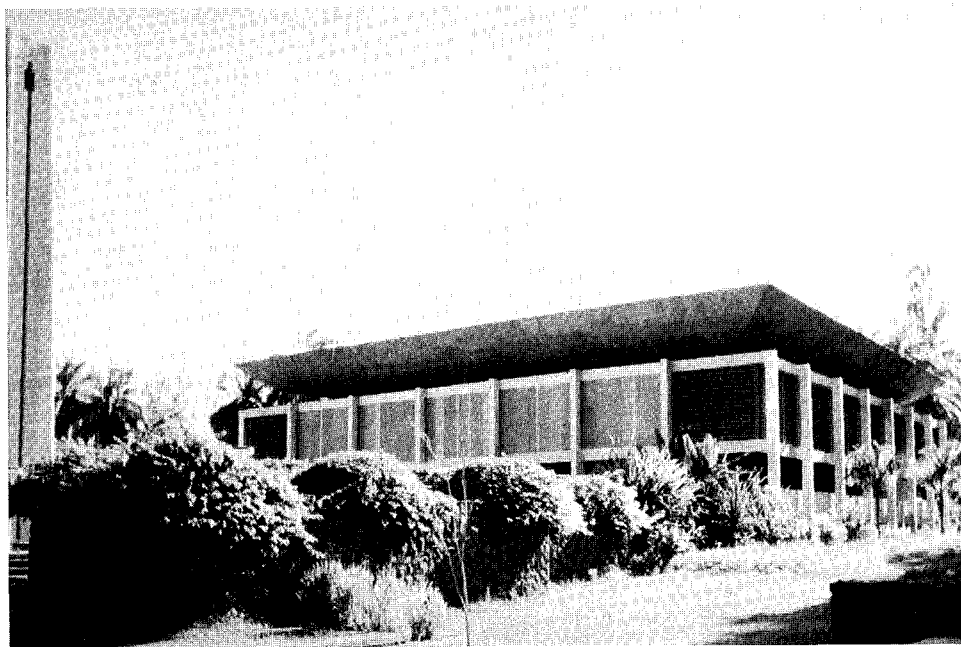
Bandung, Indonesia: The "Salman" mosque on the Institute of Technology campus. Designed by Achmad Noe'man

Photo: H–U Khan/Aga Khan Awards

whether this be a metropolis or a far–stretching dune. Most of all, they must be certain to keep the machine under their power. They ought to use technology and not be used by it. The growth of Islamic education has given birth to new interpretations of the universe. Architects and designers must keep pace with the future being prepared by today's Islam.

Notes

mated with Islamic concepts. However, even among "educated" architects divergent views exist. One side stresses solely a contemporary design outlook, while another seeks to preserve the traditional building philosophy.

Approaches for the Future

In an effort to determine an appropriate attitude for the Indonesian mosque builder, particularly in light of the search for identity, we have examined existing regional forms. From this survey, three alternative approaches emerge. First, we can start with local traditional architecture. Second, we can orient ourselves to Islamic building traditions outside Indonesia. And third, we can look for new ideas.

Those designing a contemporary mosque based on local traditional architecture derive support from the continuous interaction of the design and its environment. Accustomed features are more quickly acknowledged than an alien image. However, traditional architecture has been conditioned by rules valid for a specific time and place. Given these constraints it is impossible for the same rules to be applicable for all regions. Each region has its own environment and tradition.

Those choosing the second approach may be assisted by preexisting symbols such as the dome. This is already accepted throughout the world, and in Indonesia it finds admirers whether made of shining stainless steel or merely an upside down earthenware jar. But architects should be aware that materials and techniques have undergone considerable change.

Adherents of the third alternative may have to wait patiently before their work is accepted and appreciated. They must attune themselves to their surroundings

The Internal Dialogue of Islam in Southeast Asia

Abdurrahman Wahid

With adherents concentrated in Indonesia, Malaysia, southern Thailand, the southern Philippines and parts of Cambodia and Burma, Islam is one of the major religions of Southeast Asia. According to early historians, the religion first reached the region approximately one thousand years ago. Its real spread, however, did not occur earlier than the thirteenth century. The Islamic era in Southeast Asia's southern rim began with the establishment of Islamic kingdoms (of the type termed "agrarian paternalistic and bureaucratic" by Max Weber) in Terengganu, Malaysia, and in the northern part of Sumatra. Frequent warring undermined the long-term success of these petty kingdoms, but history has amply shown that the lively traditions and cultures nurtured by Islam in the region were not confined to political boundaries or palace walls. For every manifestation of Islamic palace culture there grew a popular counterculture. This popular movement was the real vehicle of Islam's spread during the dark age of political subjugation by subsequent European colonial administrations.

In the colonial periods the indigenous palace courts succumbed to political manipulation by European governors and governor-generals. At the same time a tradition of resistance developed among the Islamic peoples of the region. Led by religious leaders and joined by dissatisfied sectors of the nobility, resistance took the form of short-lived messianic and mille-narian rebellions as well as the more sub-lime form of passive resistance to succes-sive colonial "plans of enlightenment." At the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth, a new variety of passive resistance developed, i.e., an economic struggle to liberate local trades from the domination of foreign capitalism. Without an understanding of the real cause of the domination against which it fought, the struggle enjoyed only dismal prospects. But before its final failure it succeeded in developing an indigenous class of Muslim merchants and traders in Indonesia in the first half of this century. In the Philippines Muslims continued their resistance by strengthening their commu-nal pattern of land ownership.

The coming of nationalism in the region, which coincided with the spread of Pan-Islamism from the Middle East, gave a new outlet for Islamic resistance against colonial rule. Underestimated for decades, the aspirations of Pan-Islamism gained strength gradually. After independence theocratic ideologies and religious intran-sigence arose in Indonesia and Malaysia, and again later in the Philippines and parts of Thailand. To explain this increased militancy on the part of important sectors of Southeast Asian Muslims, concrete causes and grievances must be taken into account. These include the land policy of the governing circles and the systematic efforts to destroy Islam in various countries of the region in the name of "politicization" and "development." "Increasing religious intensity," as Soedjatmoko from Indonesia has labeled this militant tendency, presently emerges in many forms. These range from the armed struggle of the "Mindanao rebels" and the reemergence of religious politics in Indonesia and Malaysia to the obscure armed resistance of Thai Muslims against their government. This increased militancy shows similar features for the entire region, although aspects are manifested more clearly in some parts than in others. Most importantly, wide circles of vocal and organized Muslims feel that serious political setbacks have endangered their very political and cultural identities. More-over, they believe that they no longer enjoy an unsurpassed cultural ascendancy in the region.

This situation poses trouble for the region's national governments by hardening the existing relations between the Islamic movement and other groups. Dangerous misunderstandings already exist between Muslims and Christians in Indonesia and Malaysia. The threat of what Muslims call "Christianization" is felt acutely and serves as a pretext for an aggressive "defense" that militantly demands a curb on the religious activities of Christians in both countries. The rise of Islamic fundamentalism (more aptly called scripturalism) is the direct result of this development. The call for the purification of Islamic creeds from the corrupting influences of modernity and the secularization process reverberates in many mosques and prayer houses of the region. In Indonesia, Malaysia and parts of the Philippines, the "turning back of the clock" is an evident development among Islamic movements.

In the face of the "threat of Christianization" vociferous groups have intimidated other sectors of Muslim sociopolitical life. Should this chain reaction in the relations between Islamic and other groups continue, a basic misunderstanding with devastating effects on the stability of the region will certainly materialize.

The need presently exists for a better understanding of the real situation within the polity of the region's Islamic movements. The traditional sector within these movements possesses an adaptive capacity and can reach an accommodation with other sectors of society without losing its own identity. It must be encouraged to take a more assertive role in formulating and implementing positive programmes with genuine participation. This requires developing indigenous cultural resources and not simply superficial adherence to governmental "development plans." Such an approach will enable the traditional sector in the Islamic movements to develop its own strength vis-à-vis other groups in the society as a whole and place it in the mainstream of the region's cultural and socioeconomic life. In the long run the sense of belonging that arises from this kind of participation will obviate the need for intransigent postures on the part of the Islamic movement at large.

4

Formulation:
# A Discussion of Criteria

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Comments

Kuran

I would like to begin with the main theme of the seminar: symbolism. First, after touring Fez I feel that symbolism or its reflection in visual terms is not as relevant today as it may have been in the past. It has been mentioned that colonialism or Western industrial and technological influences or self–willed forces may have resulted in our losing a sense of our culture's relevance. Nevertheless, symbols were very precious even in the past. Calligraphy, as was pointed out earlier, had meaning for builders and architects, but we observe that most inscriptions are decorated with arabesques and all sorts of visual floral motifs. This shows that the symbol soon became part of the decorative pattern of the building.

Now I want to move to the continuity of forms and space. What impresses me about Fez is the very strong contrast between the noisy narrow streets, which have no geometry or symmetry, and the inner world of the houses and buildings. I feel very strongly that the geometry of these courtyards is different from that of a Roman courtyard. Although a medieval town in Europe may not differ in basic architectural structure from what we see in Fez, there exists a particular kind of geometry that is as relevant to Fez as it is to Iran and Turkey. Moreover, there is a sense of unity felt in Fez.

In Roman architecture there are certain set rules so that a Roman temple is a

Roman temple whether it is in Syria or in Turkey. But Islam inspired a search for order and harmony without prescribing set rules. Thus the architectural works produced by an Islamic people cannot be

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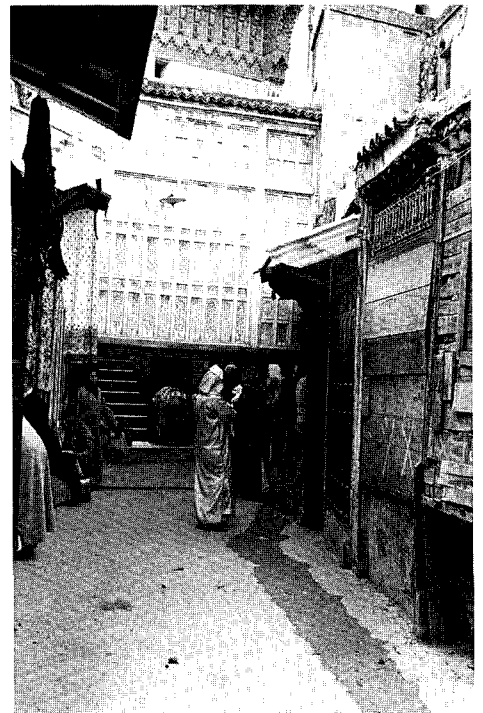
Fez, Morocco: a view in the madina

Photo: H–U Khan/Aga Khan Awards

viewed as part of a greater structure, but as total statements relevant to a particular region and culture and produced under an umbrella of Islamic thought. Now, this creative spirit is what produced the city of Fez in Islamic terms—that is, with its Islamic geometry and its continuity from one house to another. It is a continuous experience. Yet when we went up to Aïn Kadus, what I saw there was only the form of a mosque which had been transplanted. This form was meaningless to me, because it was only a part of the total unity of Fez transplanted somewhere else. It had no creative, dynamic force behind it. Some people may like it because its form will give them a sense of the past, but people living in that sort of environment will eventually become different people from those who are actually living in the madina.

Through architecture we are creating something that is obviously relevant to society. But in the process something is lost. Therefore, the main problem that faces us today is how to take Fez, for instance, and adapt it to our modern society without losing its inherent qualities. I am not suggesting imitation, but there is a system of adaptation which is perhaps something that the Award should seek.

Arkoun

In view of the scope of the Award and of the criteria to be determined, I would say this: it is imperative that the confrontation with the historian, the general historian, but even more importantly the historian of Islamic thought, be continued. The historian of Islamic thought is a new notion. I try to defend it against a Western tradition that favours the exercise of thought in specialized fields. In classical Islamic thought the act of thinking is reflected in urban space. There is continuity both in the theoretical thought and the various activities that man develops in order to organize the levels of his existence.

In the search for criteria we have to avoid

discussing empty, if characteristic, forms. Prof. Kuran has identified an opposition between interior symmetry and the absence of exterior symmetry. He has defined geometry, but this form, this geometry, only has reality if it is inhabited by men. I have also reacted against a definition of the symbol which limits it to the form that contains it. The symbol exists only for its user. Consequently, I would like to ask the architects to consider the exercise of thought as an act which is total, integrated and integrating, and I would like to ask them to take into account historicity, that is, the variable character of all acts of thought.

In classical Islamic culture thinking was subordinate to the authority of revealed texts. Only within an extremely rigid and dogmatic framework did Islamic thought acquire coherence. But today this is no longer valid. There is historicity in Islamic thought. Today thinking takes place outside the futile order of religiosity. As a result, the problem of the Fez madina and all extant madinas in the Islamic world cannot be apprehended in a valid way unless we take into account this historical rupture which deeply affects Muslim thinking. If architects do not adopt this historical perspective, I would say that the Award will not meet the needs of our present city. As I perceive it, a divorce occurred long ago between the architect and the practicing Muslim who attempts to integrate Islamic thought on the level of human existence.

Burckhardt

I will try to formulate what from our earlier discussions appear to be criteria of Islamic architecture. I am convinced that domestic architecture is as important as the sacred architecture of the mosque. What distinguishes Islamic architecture is first its interiority, and second its centrality. When you are in your house you are at the centre of the earth. The geometrical symmetry which has been observed is an expression of that centrality.

Third, I stress the independence of housing from the public domain. I think these guidelines are quite sufficient for domestic Islamic architecture in general.

Geertz

I have two points to make. I mentioned the first one earlier and can restate it quickly. One category of criteria for the Award has to deal with the consequences of architecture on the everyday life of ordinary people. Above all, Islam is concerned with the moral fabric of life. Criteria mentioned in previous discussions introduced notions of truth, love and vitality. These cover some varied and complex ideas of beauty. Everybody knows that the architect's concern is with form, but it is also with life. Honesty to materials, fidelity to the natural environment and care for human proportions were mentioned as aspects of truth. Further stressed under the notion of truth is the avoidance of pretentiousness and false symbolism.

We mentioned craftsmanship and concern for detail. There should also be an imaginative sympathy for people. After we visited the madina, everybody discussed vitality. What I think was really meant but not actually observed was the vitality of personal relationships among people who know one another well, the face–to–face relationships. Of course, this relates to what I was attempting to say in my own presentation. Towns are arrangements of people who enjoy personal relationships with one another. Either they know one another very well or they are strangers. This is important because the madina, or any town, is a place to which strangers come. Various kinds of architectural forms either allow strangers in or exclude them.

The second point I want to make also deals with a social issue. This is a future-oriented project, an attempt to change society in a new way or perhaps to resist change. Now the problem that occurs to me as an expert in the communication and dissemination of cultural knowledge is,

how exemplary is this process? What will happen next? Will a building by one architect imitate that of another? How is this process going to be perceived? Just as I mentioned that a town is perceived differently by different people, the five buildings or structures or plans premiated by the Award are going to be perceived differently by different imitators.

It will be extremely interesting to see what is picked up as exemplary after the Award is made. It has to be continually kept in mind that the people who make the buildings are members of an elite. They are the planners and the patrons. In addition, the people giving the Award are members of an elite cut off from the masses. We all experienced this in visiting Fez. Finally, the people who are going to be making the copies will also be members of an elite. They may be builders in small towns, but they will still be specialists. Now there is nothing moral or immoral

Fez, Morocco: a view in the madina

Photo: H–U Khan/Aga Khan Awards

about this kind of social differentiation. My point is simply that the elite must break through the barriers to find out what ordinary people think.

Islam

I would like to start with a few words about the Fez madina. All the architects, I suppose all of us, have had a very inspiring experience. Certain aspects of the city seem important to me, and I shall try to enumerate them. First, it is an old city. We were instantly transported into an old world, a beautiful world. But the city is a living city within a certain number of topographic and other difficulties. The evolution of the social fabric is still a viable one but needs more and more strength. All these are facts.

Why did the madina excite us? We are seeking certain principles or factors that may help us solve our problems in the present–day Muslim world. It seems to me that the people in Fez are trying to solve their problems in their own way. There exist problems of climate, social structure, the economic demands of society and various technological problems as far as the construction of the buildings and the city itself. All these are resolved within a certain cultural context. By that I mean that the people are operating within a cultural framework that includes various facets of life—religion, ritual, craftsmanship, maybe even a new standard of visual perception. The madina itself breaks down into units—houses, mosques, shops. None of this can be transferred to some other place. This seems to be the most important thing to me.

The individual building problems of Muslim societies require loving care and tremendous amounts of creative ability. Without this creative ability nothing is going to happen; we will produce bad things. At this time we need a certain amount of understanding of our own culture, our own background and a deeper understanding of the contemporary world. Given this context, if someone creatively

uses signs and symbols from the past, they should rest with him as beautiful things. Nevertheless, after three days of discussions I am not sure what Islamic signs and symbols cover all the lands from Morocco to China.

Raymond

I would like to make only two remarks. I was struck by two things during this colloquium. The first was the diversity of the participants. On this point, the contribution of our colleagues from Southeast Asia is impressive because it is a rejection of the kind of Arabocentrism in which we all threaten to sink. We should not forget that the centre of gravity of the Muslim world is found outside the limits of the Arab world.

Second, I think that it is necessary to study and confront concrete situations on the historical, social, anthropological and religious levels. It is from these studies that it will be possible to generalize and to eliminate a certain number of stereotypes which still obstruct many fields. I think that certain of Prof. Grabar's ideas on the Islamic house and those on the mosque are entirely justified.

In conclusion, it is difficult to define an Islamic architecture or an Islamic urbanism; there is a great diversity of historical and geographical situations. I think that it is vital to study what I would call the concrete Islamic world, the concrete Islamic man in his belief, his economic and social activities, his history and his works. Proportionally, this implies that greater interests be given to private architecture, and eventually to average or poor architecture, than to monumental architecture. I think that from such work a conception of architecture and urbanism intended for Muslims can be developed.

I. Serageldin

I would like to elaborate upon some of the themes that have already been mentioned. We have confronted again and again the question of what is contemporary Islamic society and what is relevant within this perspective. We cannot look exclusively at the past and ignore the vast and sweeping currents that are taking place in Islamic societies today. These currents impose upon us a more contemporary interpretation of Islam, and our contemporary identity will find its reflection in architectural and urban forms.

The demographic explosion taking place in Muslim countries means greater concern for youth, more rapid urbanization and a change of pace. Who are the people that we are dealing with today in contemporary Muslim societies? They are people who are subjected to industrialization of a new type on a massive scale. New towns, allied to huge industrial complexes, require a completely different urban expression from what we have seen in Fez. In terms of a movement from rural areas to the cities, urbanization is practically a universal trend and must be recognized as a starting point. We must deal with cities that are growing at a much faster pace than ever before. In general, there has been an internationalization of life activities as well as changes in individual perception.

I will discuss very briefly some of the implications in terms of Award criteria. Today the scale of economic activities has changed tremendously. It has destroyed traditional small manufacturing and hence a way of life. We cannot yearn for the past by creating little shops for little people and expect to compete with large–scale machine production. The scale of communication has to be addressed and given a contemporary solution. We cannot look exclusively for small and narrow streets and ignore the reality of machines that have already entered our societies on a large scale.

More important than these changes is what is happening to the minds of contemporary Muslims. Education is no longer imposed by the community but by a national entity. This has been a homogenizing force throughout society. We saw TV antennas everywhere in Fez. Communications have opened up the community to the outside world. Nor must we forget that political ideology, which Prof. Arkoun mentioned, is passed on to people on a day–to–day basis. This has resulted in a broader vocabulary. The people see more examples of architecture and urbanism in other countries. They have a heightened awareness of alternative lifestyles. Borrowed dress styles and music are gradually incorporated into their social preferences. This leads to the breakdown of local community allegiances. After all, national educational policy is a conscious effort to break down local allegiances and create an allegiance to a higher entity. This creates a split between the social praxis and the perception of Islam, which has insularized itself against these changes.

Fez, Morocco: an artisan at his workbench

Photo: H–U Khan/Aga Khan Awards

Changes in some of the traditionally accepted norms of Islamic thought on the level of practical ethics will lead us to a more contemporary interpretation of both architectural and urban form. For example, changes in the social roles affecting the status of women will most likely affect the structure of the house. Changes in property laws and the redefinition of the rights of the community and the individual are bound to lead to questions concerning the balance of public and private spaces. Changes in the scale of economic activity will by necessity force us to take cognizance of a scale of enterprise far different from that of the *sūq*. We are dealing with giant enterprises throughout the world. This I think is a challenge. We must keep in mind that these forces are the cutting edge of change in contemporary Islamic society. Perhaps we may not have specific criteria to interpret a good solution, but let us at least keep this in mind and look for people who have, perhaps intuitively, addressed these problems as best as they can be addressed.

M. Serageldin

I will confine my remarks to urban forms and try to express something about the way people have tried to solve their problems. Fez is a spirited and inspired example of medieval Muslim urban form. We have been told about the problems facing it and the plans to preserve it. It is difficult to be optimistic about this valiant endeavour.

The introduction of modern technology is eroding or bound to erode the physical structure by water integration, machine vibration, pollution and all the rest. Yet to deny an upgraded infrastructure in the hope of preserving the integrity of its medieval character is untenable. Furthermore, unrelenting demographic pressure and increasing social homogenization are further accelerating the deterioration of this environment. Mounting pressure on urban land gives little hope for finding relief.

Fez, Morocco: an informal settlement

Photo: H–U Khan/Aga Khan Awards

Does this mean that the traditional Islamic urban form does not belong to the contemporary age, and that we have to look to Western models for new urban development? The structure of informal settlements seems to invalidate such a position. Despite the often confusing visual aspect of an aggregational structure at various stages of completion and using an array of different materials, the informal settlements have retained and adapted the elements of the traditional urban form. It is a dynamic environment; irregular shapes characterize growth by accretion. Yet it struggles to incorporate access for the automobile. One invariably finds one or two access points or, where the automobile is more widely used, one or two straight, wide streets. There is a balance between density and human scale. There is the identification of close–knit social units. One can sense the importance of small streets, informal spaces and an overriding

concern with privacy. There is considerable colour and decoration. Commercial activities are often scant and public buildings nonexistent. However, there is always a religious building, a small mosque.

The magnitude of the phenomenon precludes that it easily be brushed aside. Municipalities cannot disregard these areas because they are in some way or another in violation with existing codes and regulations. Nor can planners and architects afford to overlook them simply because they lack quality. This is not to advocate the proliferation of informal settlements, but merely to suggest that neither a fascination with high technology nor an emotional attachment to functionally obsolete forms will produce urban environments that meet the needs of people in Islamic countries today. The informal settlements provide a clear signal of the perceptions and needs of a segment of the urban population that is growing at an accelerating

rate. Planners should look to these areas for inspiration on the adaptation of Muslim urban forms to new and emerging lifestyles.

Wahid

Prof. Arkoun has appealed to us to consider the quality of life, the grand theme of how we address lifestyle. Prof. Geertz called on us to dismantle the barrier between commoners and elite groups of planners. Hence I would like to give flesh to a workable framework. We should address ourselves to how Islamic communities try to solve the crises they face on a communal basis. We heard Ismail Serageldin talk about perception and the need to reformulate our answers. This can be made not only on a communal basis but on an individual basis. But what I want to stress is the communal basis. Whatever we decide as individuals will have no response from the masses.

There is a crisis of misunderstanding among the Islamic communities themselves. Although I am invited here by His Highness the Aga Khan, I am ashamed that I do not know anything about Ismailis. I only know the historical accounts. I think it is the same for everybody here. We look at our communities and prescribe what is perceived by that community as the general solution to the Islamic 'umma as a whole. In that sense the encouragement of visual understanding between Islamic communities is the underlying factor of having universal symbols or signs among Muslims everywhere. Otherwise it will mean an idealized symbol and an idealized sign.

Now we face the problem of interpreting the teachings of our religion. Each community attends to that problem in its own way. For example, the people of Tunisia try to solve overpopulation by allowing in their laws the possibility of a woman having an abortion with the consent of her husband. It differs from the Western idea of abortion, but an effort is made to preserve the unity of the family in that way.

The countless efforts by different communities to find a way to integrate their religion have to be given priority. I do not know how to concretize these notions into criteria for giving an Award. But if the Award is devoid of attention to those kinds of activities, I think it will be worthless.

Soedjatmoko

The discussions which we have had in the past three days were very rich, and I, and I am sure others too, have wracked our brains in order to define what we should charge the Award Jury to do. But maybe as Muslims we should have consulted not only our brains but also our souls. Then we would have been reminded that a building, either singly or together with others, not only makes a statement about its purposes and uses, but is also an "enabling structure" that makes it possible for the human being to be and to do what he is supposed to do naturally. A building or a set of buildings is in the spirit of Islam not by virtue of its form or the expressiveness of its symbols, but to the extent to which it enables men and women to live in the community of the 'umma by the values and the standards of Islam, and to realize the purposes for which God has created him or her.

Why did God create man? It says in the Koran that He created man so that man could worship Him with knowledge. Therefore man gathers the knowledge of nature and of other cultures that will make him a worthy viceroy to God. Man seeks to gather the means, the wherewithal, the health and the instrumentalities of the mind to live the righteous life in dignity, and to help him in the quest for a just society.

Certainly the seminars should charge the Jury to judge the buildings and settlements brought to its attention by the beauty they express, the beauty that is God's, and by the harmony of their geometric designs and the variety of criteria that have been mentioned here. But it should also judge those buildings and settlements by their capacity to enable men and women to realize the purposes for which God has created them and to realize the eminence of the sacred in human life. With this perspective the Jury will be free from the temporal and cultural bounds of so much of what goes under the name of Islamic structure, Islamic ritual and Islamic symbols. These are really transitory. They are products of the vagaries of history and are bound to change under the impact of modern technology and electronic communications. Change will affect what Prof. Grabar identified as an extremely important element in the Islamic life, its interiority. We will have to redefine in new terms the essence of that interiority as it is regained through the impact of modern communications.

In this way the Jury will also be freed from the transitory loss of style and the disorientation that we have seen in some buildings. The Jury will thus open itself to new forms which express Muslims' religious responses to new situations, new tasks and new challenges. Above all, Muslims must respond to the challenge of science and technology which have become almost autonomous engines of social change beyond the control of man. Muslims will have to learn to domesticate science and technology, not in their own terms, but in terms of the moral and social purposes that are connected with God's creation of man. Then the Award will become a modest but important means to stimulate creative use of space and form in this eternal quest inherent in the spirit of Islam.

Isfahan, Iran: detail of inscription in the Sheikh Lutfallāh mosque

Photo: R. Holod

Grabar

I think that we have talked about a very large number of things. One broad theme which seems to have emerged is, first of all, that visual forms, signs and symbols are part of a much more complicated set of values, symbols and signs. The auditory and the connective movements within the city were mentioned, but I think there are also many others. There are clothing, food and even smells. We are talking about a large range of visual perceptions connected with associations which form the fabric of an Islamic place. But we have concentrated on the visual because of the objectives of the Award.

The second theme which is definitely part of our concern is the endless variation that exists. There is a danger, perhaps, in seeing everything as being only of itself and having no value for anything else. But the importance of variation lies to my mind in something else. Variations of region, time and space are fairly obvious. But I think we should also take into consideration the internal variations within the community itself. There is a Sunni world and a Shi'ite. In fact, there are several Sunni worlds. Sometimes they are in different places; sometimes they are in the same place. One thing which is very clear is that there is a symbolic synthesis of the house, the quarter and the city. Perhaps it is more difficult to identify the physical form of that symbol. It may not even be in some physical shape that one recognizes, but in another aspect.

Lastly, we developed some general ideas which are associated with the symbolic systems at whatever level of complexity one chooses. There is the notion of interiority with its association of privacy. There is centrality. There is a rather more complicated phenomenon of geometry and, specifically, the geometry of the house in its relationship to the street. These are the symmetrical/asymmetrical relationships mentioned by Prof. Kuran. Finally, there is a relationship to the environment and a perception of space and the way in which one uses space as it exists.

Ardalan

I will begin with the first set of mandates that were clearly put before us. Prof. Arkoun has stated that a dialogue within the individual must exist, and that this is the fundamental way to deal with Islamic architecture and Islamic society. He also observed, however, that we are fragmented. A dilemma exists in that this fragmentation produces its own natural result in further fragmentation.

Prof. Grabar has presented ideas about the past. This is the role of the historian. The only way I can justify the arrogance of my making any comment today is that I happen to be an architect. My mandate is to deal with the future. I have to build, and when you build you have to be very specific. It's going to be that tile, that particular colour, and if you put any other colour next to it the effect will be jarring. The aesthetic appreciation of that wall will be reduced to something less than aesthetic; it will range from good to bad. So you are dealing from good to bad when you deal with the future.

In this building process there is the additional condition that Mr. Soedjatmoko gave us, the divine perspective which says that man is the viceroy of God on this earth. Therefore we are dealing with a very concrete notion of man as a preserver of the ecological balance of the world. At the same time there is the complement that he is the servant, so he is submissive. But I will only address at this time the dimension of vice-regency because man has to make active decisions about ecological conditions. We can take the concept of ecology and put it into three categories which Prof. Grabar has enunciated. These are idea, form and style. Ecological adaption to the environment is the simplest, perhaps lowest beginning of the world of ideas. At the opposite end this means style, which may help us to integrate our response to Fez or any of the communities that we come from. We walked through the little pathways of the *sūq* here and it was shaded. Now is this only a particular condition of Fez, or is there a general lesson? If one takes this small, winding

town and brings it into the world of form, one is really dealing with the fact that the need for shadow exists. It is an ecological tool that we can use in our design anywhere. It does not have to relate only to Fez.

I wish to add some thoughts to what Prof. Burckhardt has said about integration. How is the dependence of the part to the whole, or its independence, manifested in style? Courtyard houses display independence, but then the idea of integration is also shown by the fact that the courtyard house backs up next to other units. The idea of integration is an inherent element. What we seek to know is which ideas and forms are most resilient? Which ones representative of an Islamic place and culture can continue to survive? If it is possible for us to analyze carefully our self–perception, we may be able to get over the great hindering notion that we are only living in the past.

Arkoun

There is a dimension that has not been sufficiently treated in our discussions, but which I believe is very important—the political dimension. We talk "as if"—and this "as if" is very unwieldy—"as if" men in society can freely determine their tastes. I am not talking about their economic or social relations but about aesthetics. The aesthetic we deal with depends strictly upon the leading models of a controlling group.

If we analyze the Master Plan, we can get a clear idea of this political reality. I am not talking about the political regime; I am talking about concrete political mechanisms which determine the real behaviour of men. We were told that land speculation is a decisive factor with regard to the destiny of the madina of Fez. We talk "as if" this aspect did not exist, when it is, in fact, a decisive factor not only for Fez, but for all Muslim societies today.

In Muslim history ideological pressure has not always been obvious, but it has of course existed and continues to exist with

the same totality in Muslim societies today. I have previously mentioned the Mzab community in Algeria and the Berbers here in Morocco. Their power of creation has been more or less preserved because the ruling class has never been able to impose, in spite of its wish, its models on the entire country. A month ago I was in Tamanrasset in the Hoggar in the heart of the Sahara. The Tuaregs there are extremely fascinating. They have their own architecture and sense of aesthetics. A socialist village was created in the Hoggar which looks like others elsewhere in Algeria, and that causes great problems. Its construction is tied to a construction policy for the entire country.

Of course, what I have said for Algeria is applicable to the totality of societies. It comes into play as an absolutely decisive dimension because it creates constraints which are stronger than ecological constraints. Ecological constraints inspire creativity, while political constraints eliminate creativity.

As regards the collective memory mentioned by Prof. Grabar, this memory indeed has an architectural support as well as a support in urban space. However, an educational system determined by the central authority undermines it. Users of the madina, whether in Fez or Tehran, become marginalized, cut off from their historical self and their historical identity. You can put them in a magnificent palace, but this palace will deteriorate because the people will not adhere to certain constraints.

I. Serageldin

First of all I would like to consider what Prof. Arkoun has said, because he touches upon economic concerns that I expressed earlier—that currents of national development are undertaken by the willful intervention of decision makers on a large scale. There is, however, a lot of room for the intervention by what can be called pacemakers in society. When governments decide to build, the architects and engi-

neers practice their profession or trade with a great deal of insensitivity. They usually sit somewhere in the capital, and they draw a prototype which is then applied everywhere. There is not necessarily a conscious decision to alienate a specific village from its identity. I think it is simply an expedient decision. There is therefore the need for architects and the international collectivity of individuals of this type to call to the attention of the practitioners other ways of solving the problems that they face. Perhaps they can make them more aware of what is happening elsewhere.

I was struck by the fact that when Mr. Islam and I had a discussion yesterday evening, the common symbols to which we could most easily relate in terms of architecture were all examples of contemporary Western architecture. All we had to do was to mention the Seagram Building and we knew exactly what we were talking about. I doubt that we could have a similar conversation talking about contemporary architecture in the Muslim countries simply because we don't know enough about it. He probably knows a certain configuration of it, I know another, but there is no shared knowledge.

The dominance of Western motifs and models is also reflected in architects' work in the various bureaus that design for governments on a large scale. I am not denying the importance of what Prof. Arkoun says. I would just like to mention that even in accepting the reality of large-scale intervention to bring about change, there is room to introduce alternative models by which this change could be brought about.

Soedjatmoko

We have reached the point where the power of the technocrats, the power of the ideologists, has become bankrupt. The incapacity of the modern bureaucracies, powerful as they are, to resolve the problem of poverty, to reach the poorer communities they want to reach, forces

changes upon them in their modes of operation and development. In the end these changes will break up the structural coalition which has become associated with the process of development.

My concern is not with the continued duration of oppression. My concern is with the lack of preparedness of the creative minds of the world. It is here, I think, that this Award is so important. It should stimulate the experiments that are now going on in the world at the grass–roots level. I am talking about communities and urban renewal in the United States just as much as I am talking about efforts at rural development through the revitalization of religious awareness in various parts of Asia. The problem is that the thinkers, the intellectuals living in the urban settlements, are not in touch with what may be the most profoundly effective sources of social change. The urgency of poverty will force upon us new modes of industrialization which are not Western or Soviet or Japanese. How we will modernize, we do not know. But the search is on because there is no other way. Different solutions will use technology to resolve the local problems of poverty and to help break up the social structure that keeps people in exploitation and dependency. These will call not for the increased centralization of power, but for a decentralization and greater participation. These are the processes around the corner. My great fear is that we, the intellectuals, are too late and too slow in preparing ourselves for the answers by which history will judge us.

Mahdi

I shall probably be expressing not only my own feelings but those of most of us in saying that this seminar has been very hard on our hearts. We have been alternately depressed by the prognosis of decline and destruction and elated by the hopes of the future and by the memory of the past. I really do not know what we can do about either, or what to recommend that the whole group could take into account. For instance, can one tell the

people who will make the Award that you should think very seriously about the fact that, let us say, the five percent success of individual X in one country is greater than the ninety-five percent success of Y in another?

X may have had to deal with difficult political problems. I do not know if, in fact, that could be taken into account. The man who succeeded only five percent in a very difficult situation has the right to come back and say, "Listen, you don't know what I have to go through to produce this five percent." That is really a problem. I think that we are somehow hoping against hope. The possibilities present themselves that there is a new world being formed, but we are not really going to bring it into being.

Correa

I was going to remark that I thought the comments of Prof. Arkoun and Mr. Soedjatmoko, far from putting our discussions out of focus, gave a very necessary dimension to our understanding of the madina. It seems clear to me that the phenomenon of the city which we saw yesterday and its symbols and signs are not just the outcome of a religious system, but rather a sociopolitical system. It is impossible to talk about preserving old things or building in a prescribed manner. Ultimately, it is not an architect's decision but the whole social pattern that produces a certain kind of solution. We can offer some input into the situation. This is what I think they are saying, but it is also evident that the aspirations of Muslims throughout the world have changed. I suspect that the symbols upon which we all agree may be the accidental interaction of many factors. And I would not be so pessimistic. New symbols are already in the stage of formation.
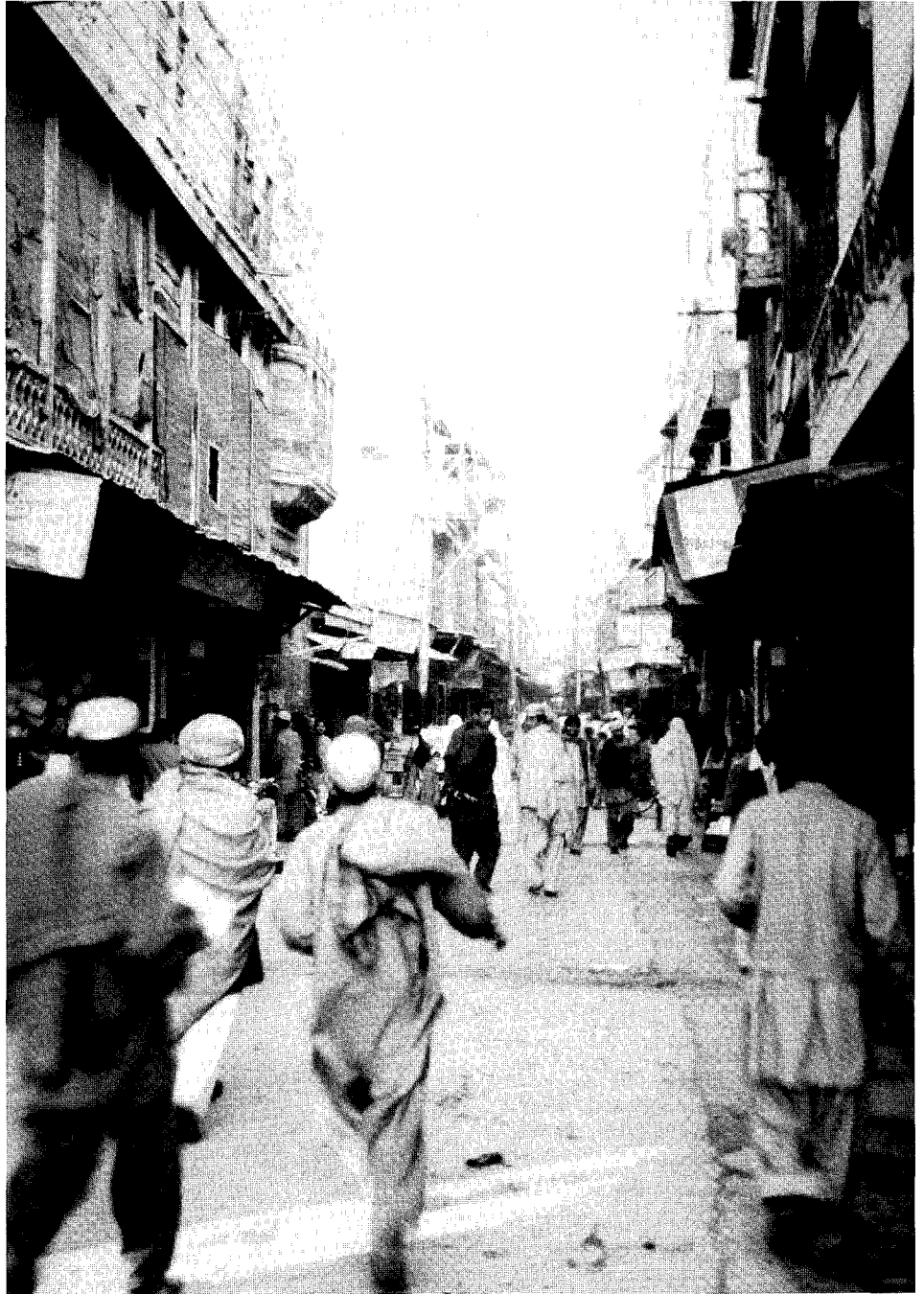
Peshawar, Pakistan: a street scene

Photo: H–U Khan/Aga Khan Awards

Concluding Remarks

His Highness the Aga Khan

I would like to begin by thanking all the guests of the seminar for their being here in Fez and contributing to the development of the Award procedures. When I walked through the madina yesterday, I sensed the presence of the aged and the very young. I saw neither the students nor the people a little older than students which I am accustomed to seeing in other densely populated Islamic cities. That is what I observed, and it may well be an incorrect observation. But I asked myself whether, in fact, the madina of Fez is squeezing this generation out of the city. As Prof. Grabar and others have pointed out, this generation is an absolutely critical force in the destiny of the Islamic world. The situation in Iran, I think, shows the power of this generation in shaping the destinies of Islamic countries.

This seminar has been extremely helpful in providing the Steering Committee and therefore me with an understanding of the symbols of the city. I am not sure any one of us has a full understanding of what will be the symbols and the signs of the future generations that will lead the Islamic world. Mr. Soedjatmoko spoke of an enabling environment; I think this is quite correct. We are living through a time of passive disabling and must now seek to reverse that trend. My suspicion is that that will be done by the generation to which I have just referred, which today comprises more than fifty percent of the world's Muslims.

I hope that the Jury, having obtained from this seminar information about past symbols and signs, will have the wisdom not to restrict the future environment to those symbols and signs. We have to accept that they will, and should, change. But our objective is to enable society to live within the context which we have been discussing.

I have studied history, but I am also involved in building for the future. Therefore, one part of me is on the historian's side, and the other on that of the architect. And somewhere between the two there should lie a solution which will enable us to develop an appropriate environment, not for understanding the past, but for aiding the generations which will live in these buildings of the future. Without any doubt whatsoever, they are different from previous generations. All one needs to consider is the interiority to which Prof. Burckhardt referred. The nature of the family unit is in the process of changing. I am not convinced that that is desired by the youth in the Islamic world today. Legislation in many countries will simply not permit us to build wall to wall. There is a very specific restriction against it.

I think we have all benefited from your views on symbols and signs. I certainly understand them infinitely better now than at the first seminar at Aiglemont. On the other hand, I think that a great deal still needs to be done to permit new symbols and signs in the architecture of the future. Let me conclude by saying how much I think your participation has helped us to find proper criteria for the Award.

Oleg Grabar set the tenor of the seminar by asking at the outset whether an Islamic system of visually perceptible symbols and signs exists. Presuming that it does, how universally Islamic is it, and what are its variants and sources? How are signs and symbols transmitted into building forms? Lastly, he inquired into the validity of experience and the memory of the past for the future.

Grabar labeled the existing literature on the subject of Islamic architectural symbolism inadequate. The few studies which deal formally with symbols and signs in Islamic culture neglect to treat architecture. Various authors have written upon the symbolism of Islamic and especially Iranian mysticism, but these works, in Grabar's opinion, lack scientific precision.

Grabar summed up three of R. Ettinghausen's working hypotheses on the subject in the following manner. First, certain "basic" religious or secular symbols which predate Islam have been retained in Islamic art. Second, calligraphy indicates how monuments with an otherwise low symbolic charge are to be interpreted. Third, the low symbolic charge of Islamic monuments has made it possible for the temples of other faiths to be converted into mosques. According to Grabar, Islam inherited many symbolically rich cultural traditions but could preserve only those symbols which were not religiously charged. In order to avoid the temptations of idolatry, it stifled the growth of its own visual system.

Grabar suggested three methodological approaches to the problem of Islamic symbolism. A theoretical approach, in applying recent advances in semiology, provides semantic distinctions between symbol, sign and image.

A second approach is to survey Islamic written sources (e.g., classical historiographic and geographic texts) and to analyze the symbolic passages contained in the Koran and the Hadith. He cautioned, however, that the written sources rarely give explicit mention to visual forms. Except for the Arabic alphabet, there is no consistent and reasonably pan-Islamic

acceptance of visually perceived symbols. Grabar ventured that traditional Islamic culture may, in fact, identify itself through means other than visual forms such as the sounds of the city. Although written sources are essentially synchronic, a diachronic analysis could be of great importance in identifying consistent cultural trends.

Lastly, Grabar suggested an examination of the monuments themselves and offered four propositions. First, the symbolic meaning intended for any of the great Islamic monuments at their creation may have been modified with time. Second, these meanings may be restricted by specific cultural and historical conditions. Third, there are few architectural forms which consistently indicate the presence of Islam. Fourth, decoration in its widest sense provides the means by which signs and symbols are to be properly understood.

In an afterword Grabar appended five pairs of juxtaposed concepts for consideration. These include the notion of synchronic versus diachronic semiotic systems, form and archetype, symbol and function, symbol and style, and the respective roles of visual and auditory modes of perception.

Addressing the issues raised by Grabar, Doğan Kuban in his paper questioned the existence of universally valid symbolic systems. Upon examining the function of the minaret, he concluded that "universal" Islamic architectural forms cannot exist without some degree of ambiquity. In so doing he attempted to differentiate between religious and cultural attitudes. Although religious traditions define acts, they do not define the forms and spaces in which these acts take place. The forms and spaces are themselves neutral.

In contrast to Grabar's concern for the validity of experience and the usefulness of past memories for the future, Kuban emphasized the role of contemporary usage. He suggested that formal symbolism in Muslim culture operates on a level below that of religious significance. Had Islamic architecture been heavily

invested with religious symbolism, the rapid submission to Western architectural forms would not have occurred.

Kuban further challenged Grabar's proposition that Islamic symbolism is found in decoration. He stressed that in Turkey the Latin script is employed, and elsewhere in the Islamic world Arabic script is used for secular purposes. Alluding to the popular acceptance of Western forms and the accompanying symbolism of technology, Kuban observed that rapid changes in the Islamic world will furnish new symbols. In light of changes in perception he labeled as obsolete a historical perspective that looks longingly to the great monuments of the past or excessively cherishes domes, arches and courtyards. He urged seminar participants to discuss symbolism in the context of appropriate spatial and temporal limits.

In a preface to his slide presentation Nader Ardalan stressed that the mandate of Islamic architecture, apart from fulfilling necessary functional requirements, is to exhibit a sense of beauty. He proceeded to describe Islamic architecture in terms of a visual language possessing both vocabulary and grammar. The vocabulary exists in certain persisting or generic forms while the grammar relates to various systems of organizing these parts in a coherent whole.

Before introducing an inventory of over one hundred prominent mosques throughout the Islamic world, Ardalan briefly surveyed the transformations which took place when pre-Islamic edifices were converted to mosques. His examples included the Haram al-Sharīf in Mecca, the Hagia Sophia in Istanbul, the Quṭb Minār in Delhi, the congregational mosque in Damascus and the Sasanian *chahār tāq* plan prevalent in Fars province, Iran. As an example of a reverse transformation from a Muslim to a non-Muslim building, he cited the Cordoba mosque.

The eight generic forms included in Ardalan's inventory are the minaret, the plinth, the gateway, the courtyard, the place of ablution, the portico, the *miḥrāb* and the dome or sacred place

within which the *miḥrāb* is located. The plan or typology of each of the mosques was also identified and the findings were summarized according to geographic zone. In his conclusion Ardalan recommended that all major Islamic monuments be systematically surveyed in order to acquire a more complete understanding of Islamic architectural forms.

In opposition to critics who stress the regional character of Islamic art, Titus Burckhardt reiterated the existence of certain essential, unifying principles. Chief among these is the rejection of anthropomorphic imagery in the liturgical realm. He discussed briefly the differences between Christian and Islamic liturgical art. The latter is nonfigurative and, in general, is comprised of an entire architectural environment. He stressed that Islamic symbolism always refers to the fundamental ideal of divine unity and that aniconism is one repercussion of the objective character of Islam. Among the symbols of unity, Burckhardt identified light as the most profound.

Burckhardt also stressed the interior complexity of a symbol in contrast to exteriorily attached meanings. He cautioned against an overly rationalistic definition of the symbol. Concerning the auditory aspect of Islamic symbolism, he suggested that the circle inscribed by the voice of the muezzin calling from the minaret constitutes the minimal Islamic community in an urban context.

André Raymond suggested that the *miḥrāb* is a more universally encountered Islamic form than the minaret. He maintained that a functionalist approach was the only means of overcoming theoretical difficulties.

Mohammed Arkoun suggested that Islamic attitudes toward symbolism divide along Sunni and Shi'ite lines. Muhsin Mahdi disagreed, pointing out that Sufism was originally the domain of Sunnism and that the dichotomy between rationalist and symbolic interpretations has existed within the Islamic community as a whole. Mahdi also questioned Grabar's definition of the symbolic function of Koranic inscriptions,

especially those which are not clearly visible or easily read. In reply, Grabar likened the role of the inscription to that of a vector which indicates the direction by which the monument should be understood.

Najm'oud–Dine Bammate related his pesonal reaction to recent changes in the Haram al–Sharīf in Mecca. He voiced agreement with Doğan Kuban that function rather than form confers symbolic meaning to an object or place.

According to Grabar, the essential question in the discussion of symbolism is one of identifying the internal vocabulary which the Muslim world uses to understand its own environment. He described his difficulty in understanding the role of the *miḥrāb*. Although the *miḥrāb* indicates direction, it is not closely identified with the act of prayer.

Grabar also stressed Mecca's uniqueness as an unreproducible symbol and therefore not a valid architectural model for other mosques. He noted a lessening of communal functions formerly associated with the mosque.

William Porter reiterated several questions which had been raised concerning the nature and function of symbolic forms. He expressed concern that an analysis of symbolism may in itself be alien to Islamic thought. Concerning Koranic inscriptions he suggested that they operate alternately as signs, forms and symbols, and that visual symbols exist on a diachronic as well as synchronic level. He concluded by introducing the notion of appropriateness. The architect's concern for form is dominated by questions concerning the manner in which the various elements effectively combine with one another.

Kuban criticized a recent reinterpretation of the Taj Mahal to which Porter had alluded. Emphasizing the relevance of a popular understanding of architectural symbolism, he averred that the symbolic significance of Koranic inscriptions had been exaggerated. Grabar disagreed on the grounds that literacy had been high in the Muslim world prior to the eighteenth century. Burckhardt suggested that

Koranic inscriptions, even if never read by the general populace, still retain a sacred quality.

In answer to a query by Ismail Serageldin concerning the symbolic function of structures other than the mosque, Nader Ardalan discussed the role played by inscriptions over gateways. Arkoun emphasized the role of the individual in bestowing symbolism on a sign. Burckhardt illustrated this concept with the example of a circle whose form can imply unity, totality and time.

Mahdi suggested that the concern for symbolism in Islamic art and architecture is a product of nineteenth–century European romanticism. He questioned the efficacy of a rational discussion of non-rational things and proposed that the legitimacy of an Islamic architectural symbol depends ultimately on whether or not the builder sought to express man's love for God.

In a paper delivered later in the seminar on the relationship between Islamic philosophy and the fine arts, Mahdi asserted the need to guard against ethnically and racially biased views. He labeled any attempt to look at Islamic culture through Christian eyes—even for the purpose of finding specific Islamic symbols by which to distinguish Islamic culture from other cultures—a dubious enterprise. Also problematic in nature is the attempt to distinguish between "fine arts" and "crafts" in an Islamic context. Although Islamic philosophy does not deal extensively with visual phenomena, its main concern is to account for harmony and order as they exist and to offer guidance for their restoration in man and the city. The approach of the Islamic philosopher in contemplating the whole–to–part relationship of God's creation thus shows an affinity to that of the artisan in conceiving his work.

After discussing the manner in which the philosophic conception of God as creator influences human creation, Mahdi raised questions concerning the impact of the work of art on the human soul. The arts which Islamic philosophy treats at some

length are the arts of language: poetry and rhetoric. These in turn tend to be judged according to their moral instructiveness. Accordingly, the aesthetic critical theory provided by Islamic philosophy can best be characterized as "pragmatic."

In his conclusion Mahdi averred that the search for specific symbolic functions of architectural forms is bound to reach an impasse. He suggested that a work of art be considered as something that performs a multiplicity of functions. Its success beyond the utilitarian level depends in part on the judgment and taste of the onlooker. Finally, limits to the understanding of the spirit of a great religious public building may arise if one does not participate in the faith of the builders.

Following Mahdi's remarks, Arkoun suggested that the architect acts as a mediator between philosophic ideas and their physical projection in the construction of the city. He suggested a parallel between the role of philosophy in Greek architecture and its role in Islamic architecture.

In reply, Mahdi labeled the Greek city a product of prephilosophic ideas which existed in Greek culture and not necessarily the product of Greek philosophy. He alluded to a historic tension between philosophers and the societies in which they live.

Ismail Serageldin observed that philosophy, defined broadly as contemporary thought, is what gives a society its sense of identity. Modernizing influences have led to a shaken sense of identity in Muslim countries. As a preliminary to the establishment of criteria for contemporary architecture, the concepts that govern society must be defined. Mahdi reiterated the need for open discussion and increased dissemination of Islamic thought.

In his presentation Arkoun defined urbanism and the physical built environment as the mediation between ideal and concrete manifestations of human existence. The Islamic faith operates in two realms: the metaphysical and the sociohistorical. As a concrete example Arkoun cited circumstances following Algerian independence. There the semiotic universe of the Al-

gerian was disrupted when he tried to occupy the physical space vacated by the European.

Arkoun emphasized a pragmatic approach to urbanization and housing. Such an approach would reflect current social needs and developments rather than seek to preserve a possibly false historical continuity. He appealed for a political philosophy that would take up the philosophic issues of the past—in particular, the relationship between the divine, transcendant authority of the Koran and the human powers which seek legitimacy by referring to that authority.

In conclusion, Arkoun related the distinction between sign and symbol as indicative of two directions continually manifested in Islamic life and in the relation of the Muslim to the Koran. The first direction considers the Koranic verse as a literal linguistic expression. In the second, the verse functions as a system of significations that materializes in the individual and collective experience of the Muslim community.

Raymond commented on the mediation of religious ideas in the organization of urban space. He suggested that the central role of mediator was performed by the *qāḍī* who made judicial decisions concerning daily life in Muslim cities. Arkoun responded by distinguishing between the transcendent role of the mosque and the political mediation of the law.

Wahid expressed the opinion that several kinds of mediation can occur within one building. He cited as an example the *pesantren*, an Indonesian Muslim institution which adapted certain symbols from the indigenous pre–Islamic culture.

Mahdi expressed qualms concerning Arkoun's distinction between social and transcendent realities. He suggested that Arkoun's description of the issues as problematic was in itself a presupposition. Arkoun replied that an analytic separation does not imply the existence of an opposition.

In his paper Raymond discussed the location and physical structure of the Cairo

rab‘ during the Ottoman period. He also examined the socioeconomic conditions of its inhabitants. The *rab‘* of the Ottoman period was a multistory structure with vertically arranged apartments located in areas of high commercial activity. A prominent feature of each apartment was the *riwāq*, a two–story reception room. Contemporary sources such as *waqf* records identify *rab‘* inhabitants as middle class merchants and artisans and their families. As *rab‘*s housed between five and ten percent of Cairo's population at the end of the eighteenth century, they played an important role in the urban organization of that city. The existence of the *rab‘* challenges a prevalent notion that the "traditional" Islamic house is exclusively an introverted courtyard house situated at the end of a cul–de–sac. In terms of various technical features, the *rab‘* offers solutions to several problems which plague contemporary low–income multistory housing. Among these problems Raymond cited the "diastrous uniformity" of interior spaces and volumes.

In the discussion which followed, Mona Serageldin observed that contemporary housing units in Cairo often duplicate the *rab‘* structure in terms of space. Grabar and Raymond discussed the issue of the *wakāla* as an investment and whether the inhabitants of a *rab‘* functioned as a cohesive social unit. Hassan Fathy elaborated upon the *qā‘a* or *riwāq* as a transposition of the introverted courtyard house.

In her paper Hildred Geertz offered an anthropological approach as a means of determining the way in which ordinary people impose or derive "meaningful statements" from their built environment. She alluded to a number of methodological obstacles. One is that the information sought by the researcher is often non–verbalizable and fragmented. Also, any object is open to a multiplicity of interpretations. In conducting interviews with research subjects Geertz recommended an indirect approach that allows the possibility of non–verbal expression. She elaborated with examples from her own field research in Sefrou, Morocco, in which she asked various people to draw

maps of the town. She also offered an interpretation of a song which specifically deals with the geography of Sefrou. Geertz concluded by suggesting techniques applicable to the premiation process of the Aga Khan Award.

Following Geertz's presentation, Wahid queried the anthropologist concerning the application of her approach to Javanese towns. Geertz explained the rectilinear Javanese town plan in terms of a microcosmic representation of the world at large.

Mahdi discussed the mediation between God and the Muslim as performed by the saint. In alluding to the importance of the shrine or saint's tomb in the Muslim world, he labeled historical memory "an integral part of being a Muslim." Geertz reiterated the crucial role which the shrine plays in the mental topography of ordinary people.

Grabar related the question of saints' tombs to a point expressed earlier by Arkoun concerning the depersonalization of new towns. In reality, a successful urban polity grows out of an existing place and is something not easily created.

Fathy spoke of the symbolic function of the church campanile and the mosque minaret as signifying an interstice between earth and sky. Recent social and political changes in the Muslim world may make it difficult to ascribe to forms the same symbolic significance which they might have had previously. He remarked that certain aspects of every culture are interchangeable and stressed that technology must be pertinent to the particular economy in which it is employed. He noted that although the Koran and the Hadith do not give technical advice, they do offer guidance as far as providing a human reference for town planning and architecture.

Charles Correa elaborated upon Fathy's remark that symbols are an architectural response to the environment. He discussed architectural pluralism as exemplified in such syntheses as Fatehpur Sikri and towns in Yemen. In his opinion the categorizing of Islamic architecture on the basis of

desert oasis architecture is an "act of colonialism". He reminded the seminar participants that most of the world's Muslims live in rural areas with a hot, moist climate.

Ismail Serageldin raised a variety of issues related to the widespread population movement from rural to urban areas. He asked to what extent formal intervention is required to give shape and direction to an urban built environment. He noted that Western experience has shown the difficulty of maintaining continuity and that Western architects consciously broke with the past in an attempt to create an environment more responsive to contemporary needs. He concluded by expressing his support for the anthropological method described by Geertz as one means of discovering how to make the built environment more adaptive to the needs of its inhabitants. Geertz responded by saying that from an anthropologist's pespective continuity is unavoidable.

On the third day of the seminar, a tour of Fez was conducted, and architects and planners affiliated with the Fez Master Plan made a presentation. Fez has frequently been regarded as a "model Islamic city." Founded in the ninth century, its madina or walled city includes all the elements of a unified religious–social– commercial public realm: the mosque, the madrasa and the market. In the private domain houses are consistently built around multi–use courtyards with entrances secluded from main streets.

Other areas of Fez include Fez Djedid, originally built as the palace quarter and the first of many semi–autonomous additions. Dar Debibagh is the French colonial city of the early twentieth century. Aïn Kadus, designed by French planner Michel Ecochard in 1950, represents an attempt to combine orthodox modern ideas of density and circulation with neo–traditional forms.

The Master Plan, completed in 1978, was described by Najib Laraichi of the Moroccan Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning as consisting of separate survey and planning phases. The major physical intervention proposed is a new quarter east of

the madina which will counterbalance the city's historic drift toward the south and west and reestablish the madina's geographic centrality. Problems in implementation of this proposal arise from speculative housing and informal settlements which have placed pressure on the areas of Aïn Kadus and Fez Djedid.

In the discussion which followed the tour, Jean–Paul Ichter, a co–author of the Fez Master Plan, described the restoration of the madina as primarily a question of mental attitude and the will to succeed. According to Kuban, the Islamic quality of the old city lies in its asymmetrical exterior and contrasting symmetrical interiors. Rather than extensions on either side as a solution to overcongestion and problems of land use, Fathy proposed a more linear centre extending through the entire city of Fez. Grabar felt that a linear centre already exists as dictated by the physical contraints of the geographic location. Labeling Fez a "masterpiece," Hugh Casson considered the organization of Fez more satisfactory than the professional solutions designed by architects and planners.

Soedjatmoko expressed pessimism concerning the permanent viability of the madina, while Correa, Kuban and Ismail Serageldin considered the lessons which Fez has to offer concerning human interactions. Fathy pointed to the courtyard house as an ecologically suitable design. Grabar discussed the character of the quarters and the separation of residential and commercial districts. Lastly, El Hajjami characterized the Fez madina as constituting a way of life. He expressed the need for planning to consider a changing social identity.

In the course of the seminar various participants remarked upon the regional character of Islamic symbolism. Kuban voiced this opinion by giving religious symbolism a narrow definition. In his view, universal Islamic forms, if they exist at all, are necessarily ambiguous in meaning. To maintain the continuity of traditional forms, the symbolic force of Western technological forms will

have to be countered, although Kuban distinguished this from a rejection of technology.

Fathy observed that pragmatic considerations of climate have played a key role in the development of Islamic architectural symbolism. He used as an example the inward orientation of the traditional Mediterranean house. Until the recent intrusion of foreign cultural elements, the Muslim interacted directly with his environment. Lastly, Fathy maintained that any architectural form which is not true to its environment runs counter to Islam. He noted that in the past sacred architecture validated the secular and he called for a return to an architecture based on the harmonious accommodation of the environment.

Islam reiterated the difficulty of identifying universal forms that make a building "Islamic." He suggested that the various Islamic communities of the world be looked at in a comprehensive manner and in their contemporary context. He rejected the notion that introversion is an inherent quality of Islamic architecture.

Soedjatmoko observed that the centre of gravity in the Muslim world is shifting toward Africa and the Far East. Within the context of changing self–perceptions, the question of replicating existing architectural forms is a relatively minor one. He cited the stylistic range of contemporary mosque architecture as evidence of the present state of fragmentation in the Muslim world.

Bammate noted that the majority of Muslims are presently under the age of twenty–five. He also observed that the lack of calligraphy in many recently built mosques constitutes a break with tradition. Moreover, the mosque has lost many of its earlier communal functions. He stressed that the mosque is an integral part of the urban environment. Recently, there has been a shift toward envisioning the mosque as a discrete structure.

Kuban averred that to impose criteria for modern Islamic architecture was contrary to Islam and ultimately impossible. In his opinion the only criteria to be considered is that of architectural quality.

Aptullah Kuran pointed to an apparent contradiction in Turkish architectural preferences. Since the 1920s architecture there has been largely modern. Only mosque design has remained constant since the sixteenth century.

Regarding popular preferences Geertz related an anecdote concerning an American style church built by Mexican villagers. Although the church inhibited religious practices, it was nevertheless a source of pride to its builders.

Raymond and Arkoun briefly discussed the question of popular taste versus the imposed taste of an elite. Burckhardt noted the pretentiousness of many examples of contemporary mosque architecture. This contrasts with the absence of the individual architect's presence in Muslim buildings of the past.

In a paper included in this *Proceedings* and delivered at the third Aga Khan Award seminar, Ahmad Sadali cited stylistic diversity as the key feature of Indonesian Islamic architecture. He labeled as obstacles to research the inadequacy of the existing literature and the fragmented state of preservation of the monuments themselves. Aside from factors of an environmental nature, Sadali listed three causes of architectural diversity in the Islamic buildings of Indonesia. First, Islam as transmitted to the Indonesian archipelago had already suffered the influence of other beliefs. Second, the cultural products of Indonesian converts to Islam continued to reflect the influence of indigenous cultures and faiths. Third, Islam was propagated at a grass–roots level and enjoyed relatively little official patronage. Indonesian architecture further suffered from a lack of creative expression owing to colonialism.

Sadali pointed to three stylistic sources of Indonesian mosque architecture. Pre–Islamic sources appear in such features as the stacked roof. Foreign Islamic sources make their mark in the now ubiquitous dome. The most recent influence is that of contemporary Western styles. Sadali dis-

cussed the implication of these sources for contemporary mosque architects in Indonesia.

In a brief essay Wahid discussed the rise of Pan–Islamism and Islamic militancy in various countries of Southeast Asia. He foresaw in this trend a dangerous hardening of relations between Muslim and other groups, in particular, Christian. He concluded by calling on the traditional segment of the Islamic community to take a more assertive role in encouraging Muslim participation in the mainstream of the region's cultural and socioeconomic life.

In the final session of the seminar participants were asked to make brief summary remarks and suggest criteria for the Aga Khan Award. Kuran opened the discussion with the opinion that symbolism or its reflection in visual terms may not be as relevant today as it once was in the past. He observed that Muslim cities possess a characteristic sense of geometry and symmetry. In contrast to Roman architecture, Islam inspired a search for order and harmony without prescribing set rules. The main task facing architects today is to adapt old forms to modern society without sacrificing inherent qualities.

Arkoun deemed it imperative that the confrontation with the historian of Islamic thought be continued. He described Islamic thought as an integrated multidisciplinary field and encouraged architects to adopt an historical perspective.

Burckhardt reiterated the main features of Islamic architecture as being its interiority and centrality. He emphasized domestic architecture and said that this should be independent of the public domain.

As criteria for Islamic architecture Geertz underscored several points including an imaginative sympathy for the lives of everyday people and fidelity to the natural environment. She expressed concern that the Aga Khan Award might engender imitation. She stressed that communication should exist between the architectural elite and ordinary people.

Islam alluded to a general feeling of excitement which seminar participants ex-

perienced in touring the Fez madina. He discussed the way in which the old city resolved various organizational problems within its specific cultural context. He expressed doubts, however, that Fez offers specific lessons that are applicable in other cultural contexts.

Raymond reiterated a point stated earlier by Soedjatmoko, Wahid, Correa and others that the centre of gravity of the Muslim world has shifted outside the Arab regions. He suggested that proportionally more attention be given to architecture for average and poor citizens than to monumental buildings. He stated that further study on the historical, social, anthropological and religious levels is required to eliminate a variety of obstructive stereotypes.

Ismail Serageldin outlined some of the recent demographic and sociological changes which have taken place in contemporary Islamic society. He cited an increased internationalization of life activities. Moreover, the traditional modes of manufacturing are being replaced by giant enterprises, thus undermining the economic foundation of the *sūq* and the madina. Without suggesting specific criteria, he recommended that the Award recognize persons who have attempted to address the problems which he defined.

Mona Serageldin expressed pessimism concerning attempts aimed at the preservation of the Fez madina. She maintained that it is untenable to deny madina inhabitants an upgraded infrastructure in an attempt to preserve the city's medieval character. She pointed to the informal settlements which have arisen in various cities and described them as dynamic environments giving priority to small streets and spaces. She concluded by saying that neither a fascination with high technology nor an emotional attachment to functionally obsolete forms will succeed in producing an urban environment that meets the needs of people in Islamic countries today.

After acknowledging earlier remarks by Arkoun and Geertz, Wahid added that attention should be paid to the manner in which various Islamic communities attempt

to solve their problems on a communal basis. He observed a tendency among Muslims to prescribe for the entire Islamic *'umma* solutions employed by their individual communities.

Soedjatmoko defined an Islamic building or built environment as one which enables a person to live within the Islamic community and to realize his or her fullest possibilities as a human being. He charged the Award Jury to maintain an open attitude. He cautioned that what is traditionally understood as Islamic will change under the impact of technology and communications.

Grabar reviewed several themes which arose in the course of the seminar. He noted that visual symbols are part of a broader semiotic system which forms the fabric of an Islamic place, and that endless variations occur on cultural, regional and temporal levels. He listed various general notions associated with an Islamic setting: interiority, privacy and the perception and use of space as characterized by a specific geometry in the relationship of the house to the street.

Ardalan described several "mandates" for the future. The first was that each individual carry on his own internal dialogue in an attempt to overcome the fragmentation experienced by the contemporary Muslim. Unlike the historian concerned with the past, Ardalan described the architect as deeply involved with the future. Lastly, he expanded Burckhardt's remarks concerning the balance between independent and integrated elements in the Islamic built environment.

Remarking that political questions were insufficiently covered in the course of the seminar, Arkoun observed that aesthetics depends upon models proposed by an elite group. In Fez and elsewhere land speculation plays an enormous role in the destiny of the traditional madina. He cited the Tuaregs of Algeria and the socialist settlements imposed by the national government. Moreover, the educational policies of central governments serve to undermine the collective memory of communities.

Ismail Serageldin concurred with Arkoun

that national development is undertaken by the willful intervention of decision makers on a large scale. He noted that architects and engineers could practice their professions more responsibly and display greater sensitivity than they presently do. He cited a lack of discussion in the Muslim world concerning recent architectural developments.

Soedjatmoko discussed social changes likely to occur as a consequence of widespread poverty. He pointed to a bankruptcy of power among the technocrats and the ideologists. He averred that the solutions to poverty will require an increased decentralization of authority and recommended that the Award stimulate work at the community level.

Mahdi characterized the seminar discussions as wavering between optimism and pessimism. He recommended that the political obstacles which stand in the way of a particular architect be taken into consideration. Correa praised Arkoun and Soedjatmoko for adding a political dimension to the seminar. Citing the Fez madina, he observed that signs and symbols are as much the products of a sociopolitical system as of a religious system.

His Highness the Aga Khan reminded seminar participants that the younger generation is an absolutely critical force in the destiny of the Islamic world. He reviewed changes in the Islamic world which are likely to result in the creation of new signs and symbols and thanked the participants for contributing criteria for the Award.