

AN ARCHITECT CAN BE A DA'I

Kamal Uddin Sarker

Department of CSE, Northern University Bangladesh,
93, Kazi Nazrul Islam Avenue, Kawran Bazar, Dhaka
1215, Bangladesh
e-mail: ku-sarker@yahoo.com

Abstract

Islam is a religion with complete code of life where all functions of personal, social, national, and international are well defined with the holy *Quran, Sunnah, Ijma', Qiyas* and the lifestyle of Muhammad saw and his followers of that time. A Muslim can not but follow the rules and regulation of his life. Moreover, it is ever modern and modern so forth, only need to cautious in implementation the adaptability of invention of science. Architecture is a structure which has been carrying history century to century as well as creating links between generation to generation. In this paper I have tried to show how can architecture reflect Islamic life, and how can an architect became *da'i* by his creation or design.

Keywords: Islamic architecture, da'i, architect

Abstrak

Islam adalah agama dengan kode hidup yang lengkap di mana semua fungsi pribadi, sosial, nasional, dan internasional didefinisikan dengan baik melalui kitab suci al-Quran, Sunnah, Ijma', Qiyas dan cara hidup Muhammad saw dan para pengikutnya saat itu. Seorang Muslim tidak bisa tidak mengikuti tata cara dan aturan tersebut dalam hidupnya. Selain itu, semakin modern kehidupan dunia, seorang muslim hanya perlu berhati-hati dalam mengadaptasi berbagai penemuan ilmu pengetahuan. Arsitektur adalah struktur yang telah mengungkap sejarah dari abad ke abad serta menjembatani hubungan dari generasi ke generasi. Dalam tulisan ini penulis mencoba menunjukkan bagaimana arsitektur mencerminkan kehidupan Islam, dan bagaimana arsitek menjadi da'i melalui karya atau desainnya.

Kata kunci: Da'i, arsitek, arsitektur Islam

Introduction

Islamic architecture encompasses a wide range of both secular and religious styles from the foundation of Islam to the present day, influencing the design and construction of buildings and structures in Islamic culture. The principal Islamic architectural types are: mosque, tomb, palace and fort. From these four types, the vocabulary of Islamic architecture is derived and used for buildings of lesser importance such as public baths, fountains and domestic architecture. When Islam exploded across the Middle East and into India in the East and all the way to Spain and Morocco in the West, this vast empire began to assimilate (take in) architectural styles from many traditions¹.

The religious architecture was to become the most obvious symbol of Islam: the mosques and the holy shrines. Yet the mosques throughout the world do not look alike. They have used local materials and have built upon previous cultural styles. Yet they have similarities. Likewise, palaces, forts, and castles reflect the religion of Islam. They are symbols of power and the dangers their leaders faced. While the empire became a vast trading network, the buildings that housed the camel caravan traders (the

caravanserai) reflected their importance to the empire, as well. The wealth and power of the empire was often directed into buildings that are recognized for their beauty and innovation (new ideas). Behold the beauty that was created in the Islamic Empires of the middle Ages.

Lifestyle-Codes

It is a perfect life with code of believes dress code, communication code, behavior code, and so forth. And the superset of all code is the life style. Lifestyle more than 50% is reflected by religion of a person where believe is the base of religion. Historically, it is true that Islam is the latest modern religion has a rich architecture. Another part, architecture is art of lifestyle which expresses the thymes of the society. The architecture symbolizes the environmental, social, economical as well as mental believe (religion) of the locality. Starting from the Middle East it has been being spreading in Europe, Africa and Asian within a short time where Islamic Architecture plays an important rule, by inspiring. It is demand of time to develop a Muslim architecture code.

Created with

Philosophy and Development

Islamic architecture extended from the 7th to the 19th century. Muslims intelligently communicated with other cultures by maintaining rather than erasing them. They steered those cultures to serve Islam and cope with the mainstream in the Islamic world. For example, status and pictures were forbidden in the architecture of mosques, so Muslim engineers alternatively mastered columns, mosaic, foliage and engineering decorations. They also paid special attention to architectural and aesthetic designs which revolutionized Islamic architecture. Today, architecture is considered a reflection of civilization and an open book in which the history of a nation is recorded. Islamic architecture has innovated special ornamentations, colors and engineering units which can be adopted anywhere. The triangle, square, and circle for instance are facts because they comply with mental concepts. A new concept unity has merged in Islamic architecture². It calls for unity as a base for life cycle. These were reflected on intellectual aspects, art and architecture. Unity in Islamic architecture is not only determined by the engineering frequency pivot, but also by the vacuum at a particular point such as *kaaba* or the fountain in the mosque nave. Here the dynamic power unifies parts and maintains their sovereignty to incorporate with the whole.

Diversity of Islamic Architecture

Architectural difference is a common phenomenon based on environment and raw materials of the locality. A building should adopt with climate because it becomes a part of nature once it is constructed. This means that it is exposed to the effects of sun, rain and wind like other objects in nature. Climate balance was taken into account in most ancient architectural civilizations including the Islamic architecture. The construction side should be respected especially when it comes to digging, filling up, and uprooting trees. Building should harmonize with the surrounding nature, people's lifestyles and community's power. As a Muslim we need to add how we can perform prayer with maximum comfort. For Muslim the themes will be the same but shape may change if there is no religious contradiction. So the rules of Muslim Architecture follow *Islam-and-design-building* (think Islam before design). Goal of this paper is to encourage Muslims to practice Islam in life and the view of architecture is a motivator. As a Muslim we will follow *sunnah* in our life and a positive environment is essential for this kind of activity. Unfortunately, some people think Islamic architecture is only the structure of mosque with calligraphy. But I think it is not limited but has a broad existence in life. I believe the main goal of an Islamic architecture is to motivate or inspire the

Muslims to follow Islam as well as it will be the attractive creation for non-Muslim. That means it will carry separate messages for two kinds of people. The outlook, internal structure, geographical shape, calligraphy facilities deliver these messages separately.

My Observation

Bangladesh is one of the greatest Muslim countries in the world but not rich in Muslim architecture due to the lack of Islamic Modern education as well as the effect of Hinduism culture are the main thread. So it is not just a matter but also need to realize the cultural view in the field of architecture. The historical sign like moon and star in Islam acts a good combination with calligraphy. Some time special codes are moderated in the way of culture according to Islam. We believe repetition of a matter is the cause for long time effect in the human brain and architecture can magnify Muslim tradition by the activities of an architect. This kind of creativity helps to the development of religion strength of a person. In this view an architect may be the cause of religious revolution. It will be not true that every Muslim will be *muttaqui*, but we need to create an environment so that general people are motivated to practice as much as possible. Allah said in the holy Quran to establish (group perform) *salat* rather than self perform. That means a social revolution is always inspiring and a better Islamic architecture is one of the ways. An architecture can alive the history of a nation and Muslim architects can utilize historical symbolic architecture to the new architecture for new generation as his *dawa* in religious life.

My Political View

Politics is the key of development and establishment a theory or logic to the society and it is only possible to change the society when you will gain political power in the country. Especially for Islamic culture it is not possible in the modern world to easily establish but you have to fight against the so called intellectuals who are the agent of the Christianity society. They are always tried to ignore a modern activities which helps to set up Islamic concept. So, if the powerful people of the country engaged into this kind of invention it will be so much easy to develop Islamic culture or architecture. On the other side all well known architecture of huge amount cost only possible by government and the advisors of the government have a power to decide. Not only for architecture is it common phenomenon for all sectors in Islam. So the Islamic architecture needs to take a long term goal and first duty is publishing famous Muslim Art, Culture, Craft and Architecture so that people are attracted and try to

use Islamic architecture in their own houses. It will develop a positive environment. After all, every things need to deal with better quality.

Art and Craft in Islamic-Architecture

Islamic Art and Craft plays a vital role in the way of life called Islamic Architecture. Islam, extending from the Africa to Asia, creates a unique scope of artistic concepts. This diversity, however, is contained within a somewhat, restricted framework of techniques. Here I use the term 'restricted' very loosely, as each individual technique can be applied in such a way as to achieve an almost infinite number of transformations, for any given art and craft in Muslim architecture. The huge variety we find in Islamic Art and Craft, and the factors which unite this huge concept, I think it is important to clarify what this concept of 'Islamic Art and Craft'.

The term Islamic generally refers to purely religious expressions, such as calligraphy. Is it art created by Muslims? Or alternatively, is it art created by people residing in countries where the dominant religion is Islam? Or should it be confined to the literal meaning of the word 'Islamic'? The word 'Islamic' means, 'of Islam'. It is an expression used to describe the object in question, as being something which complies with the beliefs and values of the religion, Islam. As a result, all figural works of art will not be included in this study. The reason for this being evident in the following saying of the Prophet Muhammad saw in which he condemned artists who try to 'ape' the creation of God: in their afterlife they will be ordered to give life to their works and will suffer from their incapacity to do so. Muslim artists transformed everyday objects into artistic masterpieces. Islamic Art is therefore, inexhaustibly diverse, with an almost infinite number of art forms. Variety is plentiful as it is, but if we break down each art form and analyze the multiplicity we find within the realms of that particular artistic expression, we find the world of Islamic Art expanding even further. As I mentioned earlier, certain restrictions are present, creating a framework within which Islamic Art is applied. The elements used to achieve this include, arabesque, calligraphy and geometry. This may seem like a limited number of styles to work with, reducing the diversity which can be achieved, however, this restriction, far from impoverishing the expression of Islamic artists, resulted in the raising of abstract design into an art form, not only of enormous wealth. Looking at the fascinating field of calligraphy, we find that many different scripts have evolved in various regions of the Muslim world, over a vast expanse of time. These scripts range from Kufic, Naskhi, Thuluth and Diwani. It is clear from this that this particular element of Islamic Art is almost inex-

haustible, given the various types of Arabic script and the extension of the Islamic culture.

Geometrically, each pattern was being generated by a unique and complex system of numbers. The unique nature of the patterns produced implies the plurality present. No two patterns are the same, therefore, gaining a diverse attribute. One can delve deeper into the spirituality connected with Islamic Art by allowing one to contemplate a geometric pattern and allow the gaze to become soft and not attempt to fix it, the patterns endlessly mutate into different geometrical arrangements. The vastness we begin to encounter within Islamic Art becomes quite unimaginable, extending as far as one allows it to extend. One geometric expression, such as the ceiling of the Comates Hall in Alhambra, is quite different to another, such as the detail found on the *minbar* in the *Arslanbane Mosque* in Ankara³. Haven explored the extent to which this diversity reaches, it is important to try and understand the reasons behind this occurrence.

Both contributing factors are mentioned here; space and time. The various styles evolved over long periods of time, with each generation adding to the diversity in the environment. With the Islamic civilization gradually expanding to cover a large area of land, enveloping many cultures, a series of local styles were added to Islamic Art.

Islamic Civilization, Art, Culture & Architecture

Islam was destined to become a world religion and to create a civilization which stretched from one end of the globe to the other. Already during the early Muslim caliphates, first the Arabs, then the Persians, and later the Turks set about to create classical Islamic civilization. Later, in the 13th century, both Africa and India became great centers of Islamic civilization and soon thereafter Muslim kingdoms were established in the Malay-Indonesian world while Chinese Muslims flourished throughout China⁴. Islam is a religion for all people from whatever race or background they might be. That is why Islamic civilization is based on a unity which stands completely against any racial or ethnic discrimination. Such major racial and ethnic groups as the Arabs, Persians, Turks, Africans, Indians, Chinese, and Malays in addition to numerous smaller units embraced Islam and contributed to the building of Islamic civilization.

Moreover, Islam was not opposed to learning from the earlier civilizations and incorporating their science, learning, architecture, and culture into its own world view, as long as they did not oppose the principles of Islam. Each ethnic and racial group which embraced Islam made its contribution to the one Islamic civilization to which everyone belonged.

The sense of brotherhood and sisterhood was so much emphasized that it overcame all local attachments to a particular tribe, race, or language--all of which became subservient to the universal brotherhood and sisterhood of Islam.

The global civilization thus created by Islam permitted people of diverse ethnic backgrounds to work together in cultivating various arts and sciences. Although the civilization was profoundly Islamic, even non-Muslim "*people of the book*"⁵ participated in the intellectual activity whose fruits belonged to everyone. The scientific climate was reminiscent of the present situation in America where scientists and men and women of learning from all over the world are active in the advancement of knowledge which belongs to everyone.

The global civilization created by Islam also succeeded in activating the mind and thought of the people who entered its fold. As a result of Islam, the nomadic Arabs became torch-bearers of science and learning. The Persians who had created a great civilization before the rise of Islam nevertheless produced much more science and learning in the Islamic period than before. The same can be said of the Turks and other peoples who embraced Islam. The religion of Islam was itself responsible not only for the creation of a world civilization in which people of many different ethnic backgrounds participated, but it played a central role in developing intellectual and cultural life on a scale not seen before. For some eight hundred years Arabic remained the major intellectual and scientific language of the world. During the centuries following the rise of Islam, Muslim dynasties ruling in various parts of the Islamic world bore witness to the flowering of Islamic culture and thought; main culture which is still now exist is architecture. In fact this tradition of intellectual activity was eclipsed only at the beginning of modern times as a result of the weakening of faith among Muslims combined with external domination. And today this activity has begun a new in many parts of the Islamic world now that the Muslims have regained their political independence but not active with their architecture like previous one.

Some Model Architecture in Islam

1. Residence

A house will be the haven of the earth for Muslim and it is a place from where a newly borne baby can learn glory and culture of Islam. Architect must be aware to design a residence such a way that easily a baby can adapt with religion, Islamic culture, and important symbol in Islam. Internal structure of the room must be decorated in this way that *kibla* is always respected. The modern facilities

of fresh room have to be used such a way that members can easily be fit for prayer.

2. Conference Centre

A famous conference center is the media of advertisement where people from different races and believes gather for their occasion, when a person entered into a famous center try to know all facilities, structural views as well as distinguished feathers. So it is a great creation for an architect to design a convention center or public center like ports or station. An architect can be alive by his work; if it is a Muslim famous architecture then this will be a *sodkaye-jaria*, can enjoy ever and forever.

3. Public Wash Room

What is the way of a Muslim to be fresh? It is not an unknown question for a Muslim of aged 7 or more; unfortunately it is a common situation in Dhaka city that if you try to be fresh at Public Wash Room, you are not fit for prayed due to the architecture of the rooms though more than 85% people are Muslim in this country due to the lack or religious knowledge as well as spiritual activities like: talk, workshop or research work.

4. Commercial Building

Now-a-days people need to pass near about 12 hours per day at his/her office and regular prayer is essential to perform in the office, a Muslim designer need deliver facilities, if possible use a special architecture so that new comer or visitor pass their leisure time with Islamic history and sometimes it helps this person to motivate in Islam. May, be this is one kind of *dawa* for the architect.

5. Public Place

Shopping center, ports and stations where the people gather from different culture, can easily know about Islam and the Muslim can perform their prayer as well as pass free time by observing Islamic architecture.

Islamic Architecture Study

The study of Islamic architecture is almost non-existent in the universities around the world and even in Moslem World. This absence springs from the confused characteristics of the Islamic architecture found in university programs⁶; Islamic architecture starting from the distinction between architecture which is a pure science and the art of building which consists of creation and designing, going from simple architecture to specialized architectural studies at university⁶. It focuses on the characteristics of this art which is related to the Islamic teachings and thought, as it is clearly illustrated by public buildings - such as the mosque, the school, and even public baths and hospitals. This relationship is the first characteristic; then there is the human scale in the

Islamic architecture which is considered as the second characteristic. What is meant by this scale is that architecture should fulfill not only the housing function in the best conditions that provide security and comfort but also the aesthetic function which renders this public or the private building a marvelous “*Mihrab*” to which a person aspires to resort to because of its architectural shapes and ornamental forms.

The purpose of teaching the arts of the Islamic architecture is not to refresh the historical memory and speak about the past and its achievements; rather it is also a search for a futurist shaping of these arts that depend on modernization and conforming to the rapid development of life and its means. Here comes the idea of talking about authenticity and modernity which have been discussed a lot recently. The question of being part of the heritage and creativity is also raised in this context so as not only to show how to reconcile these two aspects under the conditions of a defiant modernity, but also to explore the attempts of the great Arab architects, such as *Hassan Fathi*⁷, and the work of the architects who won world prizes in the domain of achieving the reconciliation between authenticity and creativity. These examples enable us to explore the necessary conditions for the achievement of this reconciliatory goal, either in our university studies or in our assessment of the projects submitted for the winning of prizes. What is always important for us to grasp is how our university programs include these characteristics in order to get an Islamic architectural education capable of keeping pace with future innovations. It should be mentioned that these conditions are based on principles the first of which is that architecture is neither an art alone nor a science alone, it is both an art and a science; an art that depends on creation and a science that is built on mathematical rules.

The second principle is that the Islamic art of building is distinguished from all the other architecture in the world namely that it has a specific beauty stemming from the emancipated Islamic thought. A fact that can be illustrated by turning to our cultural references that have not been dealt with up to now, such as the aesthetic ideas of *Abi-Hayyan At-Tawhidi* which I have dwelt on in a separate book⁸. The first thing that educational programs aim at is the search for the Islamic architectural theory. In addition to the mathematical rules and engineering, there are symbolic characteristic connections between Islamic faith and architectural thought. These elements constitute a firm theory, and it is this theory which is applied in Islamic architectural design and helps unravel the affiliated creativity which consists of representative practical attempts. For teaching in this context is not only theoretical but practical as well.

If the firm theory of the Islamic architecture is the religious faith, what are the characteristics of this theory? What makes of Islam a civilization religion is monotheism. This means that the Great Creator of this Universe is One and Omnipotent. Such a belief lies in trying to discover the secrets which display the magnificence of the order prevalent in the universe and among all creatures.

The Muslim built his civilization, including science, art, and architecture, on the basis of this belief, hence the comprehensive representation embodied in Arab ornamentations and the architecture that is characterized by idealism and the aspiration for the absolute. All mosques have as their “*Qibla*” one point, namely the “*Ka’aba*” - the symbol of the belief in the Uniqueness of Allah. This consists in an architecture that has a common identity regardless of the difference in time and space. It also examines the role of creativity, for the freedom that Islam gives to thinking and working within the bounds of piety has always been at the root of diversity which has enriched the history of Islamic architecture with testimonies that are not copies of each other, as it was the case with Western classical arts. The standard for this creativity is moderation, namely that any architectural work should be well-balanced in accordance with the Holy Verse as follows:

“And produced therein from all kinds of things in due balance.”⁹

It is by relying on this firm theory¹⁰ that we can arrive at elaborating the concept of the Islamic architectural aesthetics. We can also point out the role of Islamic arts in expressing the Muslim’s values, history and civilization. In the age of dialogue among cultures, we are in greater need today of firm means to make known the Islamic values and civilization, especially if these means were artistic in a world language that is understood and approved of. A language that does not raise any racist or ideological barrier which leads to confrontation among people and the breaking of human ties. It is also crucial in the age of globalization to have an architectural or artistic mode that clearly reflects the glory of Allah. A mode that should be understood and to which people aspire, whether they be outsiders or former opponents.

Thus, I may say that my attempt in writing this paper -though its title evokes the educational aspect of the subject- is to construct a cultural discourse based on scientific, architectural foundations capable of making dialogue prevail in the world so that all nations could take the right human decisions for a better world. This book is first and foremost the answer I prepared to the generous call the ISESCO addressed to me, according to its wise program in laying the objective foundations for a futurist Islamic civilization.

Prevalent Theory in Islamic Architecture

At the end of 19th century and beginning of 20th century, several architectural schools appeared in the west. The focus of their curriculum was on the materialistic values of the industrial revolution. The schools called for an architectural reformation in which shapes are simplified to replace former decorations which were based on visual excitement. There is no doubt that dominant thought, significant events and beliefs of the community influence architecture. This can be observed by those who studied the history and theories of architecture. For example, Greek, Roman, Byzantine, Classical and Islamic architecture were somehow affected by the prevalent thought at that time. Post modernism architecture breached all previous architectural concepts and became more individual. For example, ornamentations and symmetry disappeared. Also it erased the architectural identity and constructive structure. Then, deconstruction architecture emerged. It opposes the principal of heritage resurrection. Its proponents learnt a lesson from the shortcomings of other architectural such as immobility. This can be exemplified by the architects.

Interior Design

A modern part of the architecture which specially applied by the sub part of the main architecture to attract inner part of the building but it was an earlier activity of Muslim culture and architecture which is fully distinguishable and attractive than others. We can't avoid Arabian culture with Islam because Islam start from the Arab and some cultured mixed with Islam; it is advantage that we accept all kind of culture or architecture except which contradictory to Islam. So our architect needs to think how we can apply latest technological interior design according to Islam. Actually it is possible only when anyone try to apply *Islamization* in his activities.

Linking between Previous and Future

Some one likes to proud with ex-activities, while others believe in future but we need a link between these; because our glorious historical architecture helps to inspire for bringing success in the future. It is time of innovation and economical age, as a Muslim I need to advance with the speed of age to set up my Islamic knowledge in all sectors though this paper on basis architecture. A Muslim architect's duty is to apply the latest technology with Islamic rules and regulation as well as by creativity to attract religious people.

Link Among Codes

We know the code of life of Islam and it a complete code with subsets of codes but sometimes it is possible publish one code by another codes. It is the age of fashion and it covers all sector of a life. It is acceptable the positive changes and fashion is always welcome because it is media of beauty. Architecture not out of this, it is art and science at a time. Architecture is always fashionable and modern. I would like to mention here that may be a fashionable dress with a historical Muslim architecture's picture deliver the glorious message of Islam likewise pottery, furniture, cloths, monument, etc.

New Invention

Islam is the latest and modern religion as well as it welcome every invention and creation which is useful for mankind so any one can develop his knowledge for the development of human being; an architecture can create new concept which is not contradictory with rules and regulation of Islam. Due to the aggression of western culture, new generations are motivated to the colorful culture as well as they are engaged with it. Architecture also effected with globalization, so no one can avoid it but Islamic culture and architecture can be desired with quality and previous glory. The modern architecture is not only comfortable or healthy but also plays to develop mental growth of a person and take a position to his mind.

Conclusion

He is Muslim who performs only worship for all mighty Allah swt according to Rasulullah Muhammad saw. All activities of a Muslim are *ibadat* if he performs according to Islam. So it is the duty to follow everywhere in lifestyle, the role of an architect to create an 'Islamic Architecture Code' by which everyone can enjoy Muslim architecture. It is essential to overcome that Islamic architecture bounded only on Mosque but need to realize it is time to establish new technological architecture by using themes and concept of formers; we proud for these next generation will proud for what? If we are failed to run with modern technology; we also lose our own power of creation as well as religious environment for our next generation. Counterpart, the spreading of subject's nature is a flexible and continuous process so we need to innovate Islamic architecture with a gorgeous and effective formula for all religious peoples.

References & Notes

- 1 <http://www.sfusd.k12.ca.us/schwww/sch618/Architecture/Architecture.html>
- 2 <http://www.hilalplaza.com/islamic-art>
- 3 <http://www.islamicity.com/mosque/IGC/civilization.htm>
- 4 <http://www.insipub.com/ajbas/153-156.pdf>
- 5 <http://www.muhababah.com/islamicblog/archives/veiled4allah/004963.php>
- 6 <http://www.isesco.org.ma/english/publications/Islarch/P1.php>
- 7 The Islamic architecture and its specificities in teaching curriculum by Dr. Afif Bahnassi, ISESCO 1424H/2003
- 8 Architects of the Scientific Thought in Islamic Civilization. Hallmarks from the Biographies of Muslim Scholars in Various Ages BY Halima El Ghrari isesco1424h/2003
- 9 http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/People_of_the_book
- 10 <http://www.scribd.com/doc/22741344/Theory-of-Islam-1>

Created with