



FORMING CONTINUITY AND STABILITY IN
CONTEMPORARY ISLAMIC ARCHITECTURE FROM
THE ARCHITECTURAL CONCEPTS OF THE ISLAMIC
WORLD

BY

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A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirement for the
degree of Doctor of Philosophy (Built Environment)

Kulliyyah of Architecture and Environmental Design
International Islamic University Malaysia

NOVEMBER 2014

ABSTRACT

Contemporary Islamic architecture is created from the process of interaction between the authenticity of Muslim heritage with technology, in addition to meeting the progress of the continuous humanitarian requirements in architecture. However, the dilemma of the contemporary architectural translation of this interaction resides in focusing on the mere formation of Islamic architecture and copying its traditional elements, without investigating its essence. In consequence, contemporary Islamic architecture is being driven to a state of rigidity, and it is being deprived from its spirit and vitality. Thus, in order to rid contemporary Islamic architecture of this situation, and to highlight the depth of Islamic architecture and its essence, this study presents a new process of forming the architectural correlation that depends on the relations between the continuity of technology and the stability of the essence of Islamic architecture, through its static valuable combination. The guidelines and the proposed process of forming in this study have been investigated in three stages, namely investigating the philosophical indications of continuity and stability, investigating their combined values in term of Islamization, and investigating it in term of moderation and in term of the common human product. Whereas, the second stage grasped five values of continuity and stability through analysing traditional and contemporary case studies (Value of Privacy, Spirituality, Coexistence with Nature, Transparency and the value of accumulation or motion). While the third stage represents the process of converting these values into architectural relations with their artistic and philosophical indications through architectural examples that can be considered sources of the proposed relations. This study presents philosophical guidelines of contemporary Islamic architecture. In addition, it redefines the relations of continuity and stability, the essence of Islamic architecture, and redefines the philosophical and architectural combined formation of continuity and stability.

خلاصة البحث

العمارة إنعكاس لثقافة المجتمع ووعيه وطموحه الفني وإرتقاء للروح الإنسانية فيه، فإذا صلحت إقترب المجتمع من الإبداع والرقي في تعزيز منظومته القيمية التي مصدرها الدين والفطرة وتجسدها العمارة. ولذا أتت الدراسة كبحت في تشكيل بنية العمارة الإسلامية المعاصرة كعملية إدراك وتكامل للمنظومة القيمية الكامنة في جوهر العمارة الإسلامية التقليدية ومظاهر النشاط التكنولوجي المعاصر في العمارة. وذلك لإيجاد تكوين معماري متكامل يشكل ترجمه لتلك القيم ضمن علاقات فراغية وشكلية وفلسفية، ونقل المحاكاة للعمارة الإسلامية التقليدية في صورها العصرية من نسخ للعناصر التقليدية التاريخيه إلى العلاقات الفراغية. الدراسة تمثل التكامل والتشكيل المعماري لفلسفتين. فلسفة الاستمرارية، وهي التطور والتقدم والتراكمية للإنتاج الإنساني الحضاري العام من خلال التحقيق في أهم منتجاته ذات الاتصال بالعمارة وهي الزجاج والفولاذ وجوهرهما الذي يعكس قيم الشفافية والتراكمية. في حين أن فلسفة الثبات تمثل عمق التجسيد لتكوين جوهر العمارة الإسلامية التقليدية من خلال ثلاث قيم. قيمة الخصوصية كتمثيل للعلاقات بين الناس ، وقيمة التعايش كتمثيل للعلاقة بين الإنسان والطبيعة، والقيم الروحانية كتمثيل للعلاقة بين العبد وربّه. لقد تم تمثيل تلك القيم من خلال علاقات معمارية تنتج تكوين معماري متكامل بين الفراغ الداخلي والخارجي في عملية تشكيل معماري تقوده الفلسفة لتعزيز تكوينه القيمي كثقافة مجتمعية وليس فقط انعكاس لصورها. الدراسة من خلال التحليل المعماري والفلسفي لمجموعة من الحالات الدراسية المعاصرة والتاريخية ذات التنوع الوظيفي والشكلي، قد أنتجت فكر معماري إسلامي معاصر يعكس عمق فلسفة العمارة الإسلامية ومرونتها وتفاعلها مع المحيط الثقافي والمادي للأمم الأخرى ضمن رؤية إسلامية. فقد حققت الدراسة إعادة لتشكيل صورة العمارة الإسلامية المعاصرة المبنية على العلاقات والقيم وليس على النقل والمحاكاة للعناصر التقليدية وتشكيلها ضمن فراغات خالية من الروح وجوهر التفاعل القيمي بين العمارة والبيئة والإنسان

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this thesis is the result of my own investigation, except where otherwise stated. I also declare that it has not been previously or concurrently submitted as a whole for any other degree at IIUM or other institutions.

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For my Mother and Father, who believed in the power of education, and enhanced my desire to be what I want as one of the contributors with an ambition of reviving the spirit of Islam through my specialization in architecture.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First, I would like to acknowledge and thank my Supervisor, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Ali Raza Soomro for his continuous support and advise. He has exemplified a sharp knowledge and keen interest in the field of Islamic architecture and its contemporary image.

My thanks to my beloved university, IIUM "Garden of Knowledge and Virtue" and my thanks to the Department of Architecture.

My thanks also go to my friends, who loved and supported me. Especially, those from Malaysia, and in my beloved country Palestine.

Finally, I thank my family for their unlimited support and motivation to achieve my aims in life.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND OF STUDY

This study endeavours to articulate new methods of reviving Islamic architecture, as well as reviving the spirit of Islam in architecture as an architectural orientation. The proposed method seeks to achieve an enhanced yet balanced adoption of technology in the design process of contemporary Islamic architecture. This underscores the importance of continuity and stability as reflections of technological progress in Islamic architecture, which are represented by its essence and its valuable systems.

Islamic architecture is one of the most significant civilizational products for humanity. It is a part of the physical and artistic embodiment of the Muslim vision of life, universe and human relations. Islamic architecture extends from the seventh to nineteenth century (Itewi, 2007). In its historical evolution, Islamic architecture has taken its impress from contextual features and varying senses of beauty while maintaining a concrete value system.

The art that excelled in Islam has different and varied visions. The differences were not just between but also within periods depending on social and cultural considerations. In general, before Islam there were many traditional architectural methods oscillating between the simple and the old methods of construction and formation. For instance, domes and arches have such sophisticated methods of construction, and have been a part of many different types of buildings including public buildings baths in addition to being implemented in the construction of roads. Sassanid, Christian, and Persian architecture all consist of various architectural methods and techniques (Shakhet, 1998). Their architectural aspects were often

reflected in religious and secular buildings. Before advent of Islam and its civilization, there was no specific character of architecture. It was a case of eclecticism that had many different elements and construction methods and philosophy that represented a grand architectural wealth, which was related to the artistic form and methods (Shakhet, 1998). This case of eclecticism is considered one of the factors that support the great achievements of Islamic architecture. It can be considered the wellspring of the artistic vision and the image of architecture. It is the result of the interaction of civilizations, which Islamic architecture subjected to its unique artistic and philosophical vision.

1.1.1 The Concept of Continuity

The concept of continuity represents the progression of the idea of architecture as a human product on an accumulated path shaped by many different concepts. It is the intertwining of many various ways of philosophical thinking and construction methods across the human accomplishment in architecture. In the context of Islamic architecture, the concept of continuity is reflected in the artistic accumulation constituted through sophisticated stages and many historical periods (Okasha, 1994). At the same time the interplay of the different architectural and artistic visions have never prevented the privacy and the characterization unique to each period. Despite the ability to categorise Islamic architecture according to specific periods, all stages share one architectural destination under one philosophical vision.

Continuity in contemporary Islamic architectural design reflects a process of design, philosophy, and analysis of the aspects of technology that play important roles in contemporary lifestyles that shape Muslim identify. In such a way, Islamic architecture expresses the impact of technology with the essence of tradition. It is the

concept of grasping the values of technology and its impact as a culture in the mind of people and architects that goes further than its physical manifestation.

1.1.2 The Concept of Stability

Stability is the concept of Islamic architectural values. It represents the static side of Islamic architecture which cannot be changed regardless when and where it is translated into architectural relations. These values reflect the essence of Islamic architecture. The concept of stability in Islamic architecture is represented by the sense and the translation of many values that describe the relation between people, and their relation with Allah. It is the process of the architectural thinking which the contemporary Islamic architectural product must be subjected to.

Stability is the process of grasping the essence of Islamic architecture and its static value system as well as the combination of values that shape the essence of Islamic architecture. Here, the term of value refers to ideals that are shared among people and reflects the aspects of their culture. It provides them with the criteria for determining good from bad. In philosophy, values are considered part of morality; being defined as a set of concepts which include worthy aims, whether these aims are demanded in of themselves itself or for purposes exceeding in value (Gerring, 1997). In addition, values exercise influence on patterns of behaviour and thinking towards society. In such a way, values are those tenets considered to be intrinsic to the successful enhancement of public virtue. Such is dependent on the society itself and its way of improving its social values.

In this study, stability in Islamic architecture is represented by three important values, namely the relations between people, as discussed under value of privacy. The second relation pertains to the human relation with Allah the Creator, as discussed

under spiritual value. The third relation is the value of coexistence with nature through the human relation with the built environment.

1.1.2.1 Privacy

Privacy is one of the most important human rights. It is the value of organizing human relations inside and outside built environments. Privacy means respecting freedom and thinking, as evidenced by the Qur'an, "Do not spy on one another" (Qur'an, *Hujurat*: 12), and "Do not enter any houses except your own homes unless you are sure of their occupants' consent" (Qur'an, *al-Nur*: 27). Such is the sanctity of privacy Islam grants to individuals.

As for the concept of privacy as an architectural translation in Islamic architecture, it is exemplified in many elements and relations, such as in the form and arrangement of functional spaces. An example of this is *mashrabiyya*, which allows the occupants to see through it without being seen. In addition, the courtyard constitutes an important space for interaction while preserving morality and privacy without interference with the movement of guests or the outside environment. Another example of privacy in Islamic architecture is the treatment of the main entrance of the house (*bashora*), which uses the concept of the refractor entrance whereby the entrance starts by opening towards the main road and then turns inward to the right angle to come out to the yard. To conclude, the concept of privacy has been translated in Islamic architecture in form and function through the design of the hollows in the elevations and the circulation and combination of spaces. In addition, the concept and role of privacy have been applied in architecture to determine and organize the relations between people inside and outside spaces.

1.1.2.2 Coexistence with Nature

The second permanent feature of stability that must be considered in the design process is the harmonious coexistence with nature by achieving the equilibrium and unity between building and nature. Coexistence with nature is a value that constitutes the relations between the building and the environment. Failure to consider the environment and the site aspects in the design process will lead to the architectural product being abstract void of spirit resulting in a rigid and frozen combination. This means that environmental components should be reflected into a harmonious and balanced relation. Allah Almighty commanded a respect for the environment by benefitting from it in a balanced manner.

Examples of Islamic architecture reflecting its respect of nature include courtyards designed to meet moral and environmental needs by bringing the environment inside the building. Another example is that complex buildings in Islamic architecture which have been shaped into a fragmentation of masses to allow nature to be part of the design and to blend nature with the masses.

1.1.2.3 The Value of Spirituality

The third value reflects the spiritual connection between people and their Creator (Allah). This value discusses the concept of light in Islamic architecture, which has been mentioned numerous times in the Qur'an, "Allah is the light of heaven and earth" (Qur'an, *al-Nur*: 35). The concept of light is the expression of faith in Allah. Due to this importance, careful attention has been given to light as a spiritual sign of the faith and the creation of the universe. Islamic architecture has reflected the spiritual connection with heaven through architectural ideas and elements by using light distributed creatively to the hollows and windows.

Accordingly, this study highlights the concept of light and investigates how Islamic architecture has translated the concept of light as an expression of the spiritual connection between people with their Creator. Architecturally, this concept is investigated in mosques during the Ottoman period, in addition to grasping this value through contemporary Islamic architecture.

1.2 RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

This research focuses on the forming of contemporary architectural design based on the values that reside in Islamic architecture, as well as grasping the aspects of modernity in architecture. As such, the hypotheses of this study are:

- i. The essence of Islamic architecture is a stable combination of values.
- ii. Technology is a set of values that reside behind they material manifestation of architecture.
- iii. Contemporary Islamic architecture is a philosophical and artistic combination of architectural relations that grasp technological values and the static essence of Islamic architecture.

1.3 PROBLEM STATEMENT

The study investigates the aspects of contemporary Islamic architecture and its combination as a process of design for a set of integrated values. Previous contemporary experiences of reviving Islamic architecture have been reflected in the case of eclecticism of traditional Islamic architecture. Its elements and relations through the process of copying includes superficial materialistic treatment by changing materials, without going deeply into their essence. This has led to the presentation of repeated historical patterns that reflect a given period void of an

analysis of the role of architecture in structuring contemporary human civilization.

The problem statement can be concluded in two points:

- i. The study will deal with technology in contemporary Islamic architecture as a set of values and cultural system, and not as a manifestation of materialistic products.
- ii. The combination of continuity and stability will be investigated through the diversity of case studies of residences, religious places, palaces, landscape and commercial buildings, offices, and specific elements. There are multifarious resources of the aspects of the contemporary Islamic architecture. It is not a specific case that has a specific characteristics and functions for one case study. Therefore, the process will be more difficult when all aspects of the case studies become one architectural and philosophical combination.

1.4 THE IMPORTANCE AND THE OBJECTIVES OF THIS STUDY

Islamic architecture is a wellspring of many concepts and ideas. It is the aesthetic translation of Islamic values into architectural form. Muslim-architects need to return to this architecture. It is a process of searching for the identity of Muslims and their civilization by preserving and enhancing the effectiveness of Islamic architecture in Islamic societies. This influence of Islamic architecture can occur by a new concept of the function and form which will reflect contemporary interaction with the new needs of those societies.

According to Hearn, “The architect is one of the prime contributors to the shaping of civilization” (Hearn, 2003: 25). This means that architecture is central to any civilization. In the Islamic civilization, architecture contributes to enhancing the