Filling the Gaps: Understanding Architecture in Historical and Contemporary Islamic Communities

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Architecture of the Islamic West: North Africa and the Iberian Peninsula, 700-1800

NEW HAVEN: YALE UNIVERSITY PRESS, 2020. 320 PAGES.

JONATHAN M. BLOOM

Architecture in Global Socialism: Eastern Europe, West Africa, and The Middle East in the Cold War

PRINCETON: PRINCETON UNIVERSITY PRESS, 2020. 358 PAGES.

ŁUKASZ STANEK

Architecture of Coexistence: Building Pluralism

BERLIN: ARCHITANGLE GMBH, 2020. 288 PAGES.

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In the literature on architecture and Islam, the coverage of historical regions has systematically highlighted particular monuments but also particular narratives of how they came about. The three books in this review each fill gaps of scholarship not adequately covered before. The depth, density, and focus of each of these respective books reveals not only new information but insightful connections to existing scholarship on the subject.

Jonathan Bloom's forty-five year long career of publishing on architecture of the Islamic world is substantive. His new book, *Architecture of the Islamic West*, is the product of his consideration of the subject with both authority and focused reflection. He notes that in most surveys of architecture in the Islamic world, only a few buildings mentioned are from North Africa and the Iberian Peninsula (often only landmarks like the Córdoba mosque or the Alhambra). Here, Bloom looks at approximately one hundred buildings spanning nine centuries and the geographical area of the Western Mediterranean and North Africa. He also notes methodological difficulties in surveying these buildings, due to the inaccessible interiors of some of the mosque spaces. His easy to read narrative, divided into short, image-filled chapters, unfolds the intertwined histories of local sites and greater powers and architectures.

In *Architecture in Global Socialism*, Łukasz Stanek sheds light on important moments of transition in five societies with Islamic communities, between colonial rule and independence. Stanek systematically demonstrates that alliances with Eastern European socialist countries empowered these nations in architectural and urban design terms. Stanek argues that the socialist alliances, though distinct in each nation, allowed for another route of modernization separate from their colonial histories.

Architecture of Coexistence, edited by Azra Akšamija, is a critical reflection on the processes and post-occupancy of three projects that have won the Aga Khan Award for Architecture Awards (AKAA). With an introduction by the director of the AKAA and Akšamija, the book is divided into five sections investigating relevant themes emphasizing the struggles and potentials of building projects for Muslim communities in the contemporary world. The projects—a mosque, an urban plaza, and a cemetery—are all in European cities serving Muslim communities and share the complexities of design that transcend aesthetics. These sites are protagonists in efforts to resolve, reconcile, and bring together dissonant voices. The unique quality of this scholarship is the grounded and multivalent reflection on the impact of these projects after they have been constructed (from 1980–2012) on the immediate communities using the spaces. The essays in each section are written by a range of voices and each project is introduced with a photo essay and excerpts from interviews with users directly engaged with each project. Contemporary architecture for Islam is often celebrated only when first constructed, or near-afterward in award cycles. To gain insight into a significant project ten to forty years after construction is an important dimension to fully understanding the impact of design.

Architecture of the Islamic West

Ordered chronologically, each of the regionally thematic nine chapters of Bloom's book delves into the political, social, and geographic context of each specific period. The book is amply illustrated with hundreds of color photographs, most taken by the author, and architectural plans drawn by Nicholas Warner who also completed the architectural drawings for other substantive studies of architecture of the Islamic world (see my review essays in *AJISS* 29:2 and 34:3).

Chapter 1 ("Islamic Architecture in Umayyad al-Andalus and Aghlabid Ifriqia") summarizes the historical formations of Muslim presence and building in al-Andalus (southern Spain) and Ifriqia (Tunisia) in the eighth century. The arrival of Muslims in the Iberian Peninsula and the earliest structures constructed (no longer extant) are briefly outlined. The contextual forces that framed the earliest iteration of the Mosque of Córdoba are described with ample architectural drawings detailing the expansions and analysis of the form and reuse of existing materials. The chapter then offers a detailed history of the formation of Aghlabid Ifriqia with the foundation of Kairouan as the capital. In chronological order, Bloom describes a succession of sacred and secular buildings constructed in Sousse, Monastir, Sfax, and Tunis. The architectural drawings and colour photographs underscore the descriptions; however, some sort of graphic emphasis (such as bold or section headings) for each building would aid the reader searching for particular structures. The chapter is rounded out with discussion of a few mosques in western Maghrib (Algeria and Morocco) from this time period.

Bloom's second chapter ("Rival Caliphates in the West During the 10th Century") describes the rivalry between Ifriqia and al-Andalus due to the establishment of the Shi'i Fatimid dynasty, which challenged the Andalusian Umayyads' control of North-West Africa and trade routes in the region. The Fatimids established a new capital, Mahdia, and expanded Kairouan; in response to this growth, the Umayyads expanded the Cordoba mosque and constructed Madinat al-Zahra, among other projects. Bloom describes the rivalry playing out in Fez as each caliphate aspired to control it. The city passed between them, returning to the Fatimids in 961. The chapter discusses structures expanded and constructed in both caliphates, including those in Ashir (southern Algeria) and in Toledo, Spain.

Chapter 3 ("The Long 11th C: Dissolution of Empire") traces the Fatimid abandonment of Ifriqia (to local governors) for Egypt. The subsequent Zirids in Ifriqia and Hammadids in central Maghreb (both Berber dynasties) ruled their respective regions into the mid-twelfth century. The chapter outlines buildings constructed and renovated in Tunis, Kairouan, and in central Algeria. During this century the Umayyad caliphate in al-Andalus was succeeded by several small 'Taifa' kingdoms. Bloom outlines the rise from the ashes of this dissolution by the Almoravids, a Berber revolutionary reformist moment originating in Mauritania, who founded Marrakech as their capital and ended up controlling much of al-Andalus and Maghreb until the twelfth century and Sicily. The expansions at the Córdoba mosque, and the constructions in Malaga, Zaragoza, and Murcia, are described with images and drawings. The chapter closes with a history and study of Sicily, which was under Aghlabid and then Fatimid rule for two centuries, but was captured by the Normans at the end of the eleventh century. Bloom explains that little architecture of Muslim rule remains extant in Sicily but that the Norman architecture of the eleventh and twelfth centuries demonstrates strong Islamic/Arab influence in design, decoration, and spatial arrangement. He analyzes six significant buildings to underscore his argument, including several palaces and a cathedral.

In Chapter 4 (“The Almoravids and Almohads c. 1050-1250”) Bloom traces the changing political landscape of the region. Both the Almoravids and the Almohads were based in Marrakech and both had subsidiary capitals in al-Andalus. The austere mosques during this time were marked with whitewashed interiors and subtle ornamentation, an architectural response paralleling the critique both movements had of the ostentations of the Umayyads. Bloom outlines the rise of the Almoravids in the 1050s: they conquered Fez, founded Marrakech, conquered Tlemcen (Algeria), and annexed many of the Taifa kingdoms in al-Andalus. The Almoravids constructed numerous mosques: none are left in Spain, while parts of structures are left in Morocco and three full mosques are extant in western Algeria. The Almohads took power from the Almoravids in 1130 and ruled much of North Africa and al-Andalus until the mid-thirteenth century. They too were reformist puritans and further critiqued their predecessors. The Almohads took Tlemcen, Marrakech, al-Andalus (including Malaga and Granada), and the Central Maghreb, including Tunisia. They constructed several mosques and fortifications in Taha, Tinmal, Rabat, the well-known Kutbiya mosque and other mosques in Marrakech (1147), the new mosque and a palace in Seville (1171), and several structures in Toledo. Their rule disintegrated with a succession of nine weak rulers in the last half century of the empire, but its impact is still architecturally palpable.

Bloom's Chapter 5 ("The Nasrids in al-Andalus") describes the collapse of the Almohad empire after its defeat in the 1212 Battle of Las Navas de Tolosa, which led to four regional powers in the Maghreb. Cordoba and Seville fell to the Christians. The focus of the chapter is on Granada under the Nasrids (1232-1492), beginning with the construction of the palace city and the *al-Hamra*/Alhambra (the 'red') fortress by Banul-Ahmar. Other buildings (a madrasa, hostels, and bathhouses) in the city are briefly described, but the focus of the chapter is on the extraordinary architecture of the Alhambra complex. Bloom characterizes the decorative exuberance of the Nasrid constructions as a direct response to the austerity of the previous Almohads. The chapter concludes with a description of the three rival Berber dynasties in North Africa and the *Mudéjar* architecture of Christian and Jewish patrons who adopted 'Islamic' techniques and motifs in their buildings. The root of *Mudéjar* comes from the term '*Mudajjan*' ('permitted to remain') ascribed to Muslims who were permitted to remain in Spain, but the term was expanded to describe the works created for Christian or Jewish patrons in lands previously under Islamic rule. Bloom argues that *Mudéjar* architecture embodied '*convivencia*' (living in peace and harmony) and analyzes several prominent structures in Seville and Córdoba, including synagogues and Christian palaces.

In Chapter 6 ("The Heirs of the Almohads in North Africa c. 1250-1500") Bloom summarizes the North African impact of the defeat of Almohads in 1212 by the combined forces of Castile, Aragon, Navarre, and Portugal. Although the Almohads withdrew to North Africa, it was only four years later that their powers completely collapsed and two Berber tribal dynasties took control of North Africa: the Marinids in the Maghreb and the Hafsids in Ifriqia. The Banu Marin (also known as the Marinids) captured Meknes, Fez (making it their new capital), Sijilmasa, and Marrakech. Several new constructions towards the end of the thirteenth century (including a palace, administrative buildings, mosque, madrasa, barracks, and houses in Fez) signalled their presence. The Marinids constructed madrasas throughout the region and expanded many mosques in Agadir, Tlemcen, Taha, Mansura, Fez, and Salé. Marinid architecture was characterized by substantial surface decoration, of which there are many illustrated examples outlined in the chapter. The Hafsids of Ifriqia (1229-1574) ruled until the Ottomans and established Tunis as their capital, their rule extending to Libya, Algeria, and parts of Morocco. Not as prolific as the Marinids, the Hafsids were however very active with their building campaign and constructed and expanded many buildings in the region. Bloom argues that the design of madrasas and buildings by the Hafsids was influenced by contemporaneous architecture in Mamluk Egypt.

In Chapter 7 ("Between the Ottomans and Hapsburgs: Libya, Tunisia and Algeria c. 1500-1800"), Bloom describes the changed position of the region with respect to the rest of the world. By the fifteenth century, North Africa was divided into smaller principalities and was "ripe for meddling by outside forces" (215). As Europe was flourishing in the Renaissance, North African countries entered a "relative dark ages." The Ottomans conquered Constantinople in 1453, signalling the end of the Byzantine era, and the Portuguese and Europeans expanded into the Americas, with the New World "discovered" in 1492. Bloom notes that during this period, regional architecture varied in response to the European presence and Ottoman expansion, ranging from hybridity to the deliberate continuation of historical/traditional forms. Four mosques built during this period in Libya are described, mostly following in the Ottoman style. Bloom argues that the style in Tunisia was a hybrid of existing traditions and Ottoman influences. The hybridity of mosque design continued in Algeria, with several mosques and shrines from this period described.

Bloom's penultimate chapter ("The Sharifan Dynasties of Morocco c. 1500-1800") refers to the countries of the sixteenth-century names of Morocco, Algeria, and Tunisia (rather than the previous nomenclature of Maghreb and Ifriqia) that were the result of Ottoman contracts with Europeans. Two dynasties there claimed descent from the Prophet: the Sa'dians (1510-1659) and the 'Alawis (1631-current). The Sa'dians took the major cities of Marrakech and Fez in the fifteenth centuries and were prosperous as a result of extensive trade with Europe (sugar and saltpetre for blue wool and arms), which effectively integrated Morocco into the world economy. A number of mosques constructed in this period are here described, as well as caravansarais, bridges, madrasas, and fortresses. Bloom then turns to the rise of the 'Alawis, who captured Fez, Marrakesh, and Meknes (their capital); they constructed palaces, mosques, madrasas, souks, and other structures. Areas of Morocco became Spanish and French protectorates in the 1860s until 1956 with the independence of the country, still ruled by a descendant of the 'Alawi family. Bloom argues that the architecture of both of these periods relied heavily on traditions established in the Almohad and Marinid eras and that the growth in Sufism (mystical Islam) instigated the increased construction of *zawiya*s and *ribat*s (monasteries).

In the concluding chapter ("Epilogue: The Legacies of Maghribi Architecture"), Bloom states that the "end" of this story is signalled with the establishment of French and Spanish colonies in North Africa in the nineteenth century, but that these buildings continued to be used, repaired, and modified well after. Thus the book ends with how these traditions impacted later architecture in the region and in Europe and the Americas (much like chapter three notes how eleventh/twelfth century Sicily adopted an Islamic architectural language for Christian patrons). In Morocco, most builders still continue working with traditional styles. In Algeria, the French colonial rule ended all references to tradition and destroyed many buildings. In the Iberian Peninsula, elements of Islamic architecture were adapted into Christian and Jewish buildings in the *Mudéjar* style. Nineteenth- and twentieth-century publications on Islamic buildings in Spain popularized these motifs and influenced designs of buildings within Europe and as far as North America. Bloom makes brief mention of some contemporary mosques in

Spain. In Tunisia, which became a French protectorate in 1881, the older medinas and buildings were left alone and a new city constructed.

Overall, Bloom describes the histories and buildings in clear language interweaving information about structure, architecture, sources, history and so forth in a narrative manner accessible to the novice and insightful for the expert. Bloom is careful to focus on the built forms and contexts with a detached description of historical forces. Thus the reader is left to form their own critiques of the various political shifts in the region and their impact on the built environment.

Architecture in Global Socialism

Divided into an introduction, four chapters each on a specific region, and a concluding epilogue, this book is a dense piece of scholarship analyzing unpublished architectural drawings, newspaper articles, and various media. The author himself has spent considerable time in the various locations covered in the book and the photographs included are his own and historical images. In Chapter 1 ("Introduction: World Making with Architecture"), Stanek articulates the framework and the arc of the argument, namely, that African and Middle Eastern encounters with Eastern Europeans were part of the postcolonial movement of several nations into modernity and that spatial disruption and reorganization was "world making" as these nations crafted independence. During this time, the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) was formulated by the Presidents of Yugoslavia, India, Egypt, Ghana, and Indonesia. This group proposed a decolonized restructuring of the world economy to assist developing countries. All of the cities studied in this book (Accra, Lagos, Baghdad, Abu Dhabi, Kuwait City) are in countries that were members of NAM. The scholarly "blind spot" on this topic has resulted in a reductive understanding of the relationship between architecture and urbanization. Stanek argues that the unique collaboration of these nations with socialist countries was threefold: the exchanges offered favorable terms for exchange of goods and services, including barter; they often included training for local staff and use of local resources; and they challenged hierarchies of power and prestige inherited from the colonial period through the terms of agreement and through mobilizing the language of architecture. The focus of the book is on the labour of architects, planners, and those involved in the building industry.

In Chapter 2 ("A Global Development Path: Accra, 1957-1966"), Stanek focuses on this city in Ghana during the period of independence from the British. The primary project of the new government was the International Trade Fair grounds, commissioned and designed to convey the radical modernism empowering a newly independent country. The collaboration with socialist nations included at the levels of design (by Polish architects in collaboration with a Ghanaian architect) and construction (carried out by a Ghanaian national corporation trained by a variety of experts in the USSR). This project inaugurated the modern construction idiom of "looking to the future" and an expansion of the city and infrastructure beyond the port and the colonial nucleus. Stanek details full lists of buildings, architects, and Ghanaian partners with urban drawings, historical, and contemporary photographs. Books published in the mid-twentieth century by Russian experts analyzing town planning in hot climates with comparisons to vernacular architecture in Soviet Central Asia allowed for cross-cultural design approaches by socialist and Ghanaian designers. The projects completed in Ghana were published in Soviet architecture journals with drawings and images. The climate focus of the design process allowed for what Stanek called "world making" architecture. This process was not without its flaws, of course, as many of the designers also specified non-local and imported materials which the author notes was "problematic". Overall, however, such momentum and expression after independence was empowering for the nation.

In Chapter 3 ("Worlding Eastern Europe: Lagos, 1966-1979") Stanek focuses on the largest city in Nigeria and the projects designed and constructed after the end of the violent civil war. This period also coincided with the oil boom which funded the modernization of the city and region. Although the political class did not feel an affinity to socialism, as in Ghana, they joined NAM and collaborated with socialist countries for the construction of many large-scale projects, including the National Arts Theatre. The author argues that common threads lay in how both Eastern Europeans and West Africans inhabited the same world of dealing with underdevelopment; both had suffered forms of colonization; and both existed in the periphery and faced challenges of transforming their economics (101). Thus the "world making" at stake was based on recognizing commonalities with Eastern European architects, using tools they had formed because of their own precedents. For example, a Polish survey by Zbigniew Dmochowski published in three volumes (*Introduction to Traditional Nigerian Architecture*) became instrumental to decolonizing the understanding of architecture and institutions in Nigeria. This work included 1600 drawings of traditional Nigerian architecture with a section on Muslim religious architecture. The author previously wrote comparatively on the traditional architecture of Poland; later he became part of the design team for the construction of the museum of traditional Nigerian architecture and the Jos museum, which included Islamic architectural monuments. According to Stanek, this publication "explicitly targeted the systematic de-valorization of indigenous culture in Nigeria under colonial rule" (134). The chapter concludes with a detailed study of how this shift impacted the curriculum of national architecture schools, utilizing tradition as a starting point towards creating modern Nigerian architecture. The Eastern Europeans involved in this case study helped to decolonize architecture education in Nigeria at that time.

In Chapter 4 ("World Socialist System: Baghdad, 1958-90"), Stanek outlines the intense exchange between socialist countries and Iraq around several large construction commissions that started in the late 1950s, after the coup that overthrew the pro-western monarchy of King Faisal II. The Ba'ath party then proclaimed that Iraq was a United Arab state with Islam as the state religion and a socialist-based economy (with state ownership of natural resources and production with free education and healthcare). The author outlines the mobility of architectural design from socialist countries to Iraq between the coup in 1958 and the Gulf war in 1990. Prior to 1958, British architects and urban planners guided the urban development of Baghdad; after the coup, the political landscape shifted dramatically toward alliances with socialists. Eastern European and Soviet architects, planners, and engineers were involved in the large national building program; they taught in the first national schools of architecture that were founded during this period. The schools included studies in the history of Baghdad, in Islamic architecture, and approaches to design that integrated local history with modern architecture. The author concludes the chapter with the decline of socialist collaboration: after the 1973 oil embargo, Middle Eastern oil, Western money, and Eastern European goods and services became linked in a cycle.

In chapter 5 (“Socialism within Globalization: Abu Dhabi and Kuwait City, 1979-90”), Stanek describes collaborations between socialist countries and local firms in the UAE and Kuwait in the late 1970s. The UAE, independent since 1971 and a member of NAM, established diplomatic relations with Eastern European countries in the mid-1980s. Kuwait, independent since 1961 and a member of NAM, accepted Soviet military help after the British military left the region in 1971. However, Kuwait did found OPEC and conceived itself as an open market in the early 1980s (not admitting political considerations in tendering contracts). Both countries invested in significant urban development with their increased income from state-owned oil. Thus, Stanek argues, a new dimension developed: architects, planners, and contractors from socialist countries were integrated into Western-dominated and globalized markets of design and construction services, so demanding competition and collaboration. Stanek notes that most of the design briefs for work in this region required inclusion of ‘Arab’ or ‘Islamic’ culture in the design, resulting in hybrid architectural vocabularies.

The city planning competitions and design projects (governmental, institutional, housing, and religious buildings) resulted in novel forms of collaboration between Eastern European experts and Western and local architects. Stanek concludes the chapter with the 1990 Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, which resulted in an exodus of foreign professionals that coincided with the end of socialism in Eastern Europe. Although the role of Eastern European design experts had ended in the Middle East at this point, their experience in a competitive market which required collaboration was an important experience for when they returned to their homelands, setting them apart from their national counterparts. Stanek also notes that in the 2000s some returned to work in North Africa and the Middle East based on this previous experience.

In his epilogue, Stanek describes the process of conducting interviews with architects and contractors in their homes in Eastern Europe. He argues that from the vantage point of the "south", one can appreciate how the history of modernism in these regions was "fundamentally antagonistic and heterogenous" (303). Stanek maps out some collaborations between Eastern European, West African and Middle Eastern experts during this period and provides a detailed listing of his sources.

This book is an insightful and thorough study of the role Eastern European architects and experts played in the emergence of five key cities from West Africa and the Middle East. Filling important gaps in understanding the globalization of modern architecture, the information presented in the book benefits expert and novice alike. Its abundance of visual documentation, both historical and contemporary, as well as the detailed references make this a key contribution to knowledge on the subject.

Architecture of Coexistence: Building Pluralism

This in-depth study of the impact of three AKAA-winning projects offers a window onto larger themes of the complexity of contemporary Muslim buildings. The three projects analyzed include

Šerefudin's White Mosque in Visoko, Bosnia and Herzegovina (constructed in 1980, AKAA 1983); Superkilne in Copenhagen, Denmark (constructed in 2012, AKAA 2016); and the Islamic Cemetery in Altach, Austria (constructed 2011, AKAA 2013). The forward of the book, by AKAA Director Farrokh Derakshani, emphasizes the importance of the themes covered in the study and their impact within their communities. The introduction, by Azra Akšamija, outlines the importance of "how built forms can give shape to a more open, pluralistic society" and framed the social impact of these projects over time. The titular themes in the following chapters underscore the complex and interwoven qualities of these projects.

In Section I ("Building Pluralism"), three essays reflect on the ideas and programs—transculturality, community, and death—of the three projects analyzed. The first essay, "Beyond Homogeneity: On the Concept of Transculturality," by Wolfgang Welsch, a Germany-based philosophy professor, analyzes the complexity of defining and understanding the coexistence of several cultures in one place and time. He debunks terms such as "multicultural" and "intercultural" for their problematic and inherent base inference of a singular national culture. In response to new nationalisms and growing xenophobic trends, he argues for a "transculturality" (a term of his own making) which is characterized "to the core" by the mixing and permeability of many cultures. In architecture, this term allows for dual coding and mixing in invented forms, not patchwork, that can be read simultaneously in different ways, as in the three projects in this book.

The second essay, "Immigrant Communities and their Buildings," by architecture and art historian Mohammad al Assad, summarizes the importance and impact of mosques designed and constructed in western cities with a focus on the five main mosques of Paris (1926), Washington (1957), London (1977), Rome (1992) and New York (1991). Al Assad highlights that all are in a process of negotiating location, patronage, and programming.

The final essay in this chapter, "The Architecture of Death in Islam: A Brief Cross-Cultural History," by MIT Aga Khan Professor

Nasser Rabat, briefly outlines the changing forms of funeral architecture around the Islamic world since the seventh century. Specifically, he notes influences of pre-Islamic practices and forms on Islamic burial sites as the faith spread geographically, from shallow and minimal burials in the desert to large memorial structures in the city.

Section II ("Divergence") is dedicated to Šerefudin's White Mosque in Visoko, Bosnia and Herzegovina. Artist *Velibor Božović* opens this section with a beautiful photo essay and excerpts from interviews with local imams, members of the congregation, a film director, the architect, Zlatko Ugljen, and his daughter (who is also an architect). The images capture the life and aging of the mosque since its construction forty years ago. The interviews express succinctly the common, and current, feelings of pride and place in the modernist mosque but also the conflicting interpretations of how the mosque should/should not be gendered.

The second essay, "Headless, they March on: Cephalophores and Coexistence in Ottoman Bosnia" by York University professor Amila Buturović, looks at the dead as subjects/agents rather than objects/remains in the shrines and structures commemorating them throughout Ottoman Bosnia. By drawing on analysis of architectural form and historical and folkloric accounts of particular markers in the region, Buturović describes a rich landscape of coexistence between genders and between Muslims and Christians in their shared heritage and participation in these spaces. Direct correlation to Šerefudin's modernist White Mosque is not mentioned; however, the form of the minaret of this mosque closely parallels the typical form of a cephalophore and the mosque does have a small graveyard in the courtyard.

In the third essay of the section, "Bosnia and the Destruction of Coexistence," by Helen Walasek, a UK-based researcher and consulting expert, recounts the brutal and catastrophic events and effects of the 1992-1995 wars in Bosnia. The ethnic cleansing included over one hundred thousand systematically murdered (and over two million displaced) and the intentional destruction of religious and cultural properties (including 1000 of the 1144 mosques in the country as well as hundreds of churches and cultural institutions). After the war, the Dayton Peace agreement in 1995 allowed the displaced to return, but the difficulty of rebuilding home and places of worship amplified the trauma experienced by survivors. The essay concludes noting some of the reconstructions of mosques and the potential signs of hope.

The following chapter, "Mosque First: Coming to Terms with the Legacy of Abuse in Bosnia through Heritage Restoration," by Amra Hadžimuhamedović, Director of the Centre for Cultural Heritage, International Forum Bosnia, outlines life after the war. Hadžimuhamedović describes attempts to restore 'homescape' and recounts how the mosques were systematically destroyed and dumped in rivers, lakes, rubbish piles and horrifically buried in mass graves with the thousands of people murdered. In unearthing the remains of mosques, a concerted effort in the past decade seeks to restore mosques in small villages throughout the country. The author describes the work of the International Youth and Heritage Summer school in Stolac, which has helped bring together hundreds of youth to aid in this reconstruction project. Hadžimuhamedović underscores that these mosque restorations are an act of justice and are an important touchstone for other war-torn places.

The third section of the book ("Dissonance") covers the Superkilen urban project constructed in 2012 in Copenhagen, Denmark. It begins with a photo essay by Jesper Lambaek and notes and interviews conducted by Swedish and Danish based researcher Tina Gudrun Jensen. Jensen interviewed several nearby residents and those who use the spaces, including students, architects, a social activist, and urban specialists. There was a general consensus that the 750-meter-long three-part plaza, with its 'red' sports zone, 'green' park and 'black' market areas, was successful in an urban sense (of attracting people). The inclusion of 108 objects from around the globe invited marginalized newcomers (many of whom live in the area) to feel welcome and included in the area.

The second essay, "Rhetoric of Segregation, Everyday Forms of Coexistence: Diverging Visions of Diversity and Coexistence in

Denmark," also written by Tina Gudrun Jensen, further articulates the context of the project. Jensen describes the restrictive infrastructure of the policies in place as well as the public debates on immigration in Denmark, which effectively disadvantaged and marginalized migrants in the country. She notes that Denmark is one of the highest-ranking countries for racial and religious discrimination, including xenophobia, vandalism, and hate crimes targeting visibly 'other' spaces such as mosques. Various policies then attempt to 'integrate' migrants to the country. Jensen concludes the essay with further reflection on Superkilen and how it has become a "cross over place" of daily interactions, how it works as a "third space", and how it allows for new forms of "invisible coexistence".

In the next essay of this section, "A Border Concept: Scandinavian Public Space in Twenty-first Century," Jennifer Mack, a professor of architecture based in Stockholm, reflects on three projects in Denmark and Sweden which created a new type of Scandinavian public place. Mack notes that through urban participation, the private space of a living room, made public by asylum seekers in a northern Swedish city; the redesigned late modern squares in a Malmo suburb; and the Superkilen in Copenhagen all allowed for new ways of collaboration and participating in a public space which was inclusive of migrants.

In the final essay of the section, "Conflictual Constellations: On Superkilen," by Barbra Steiner, director of the Kunsthaus in Graz Austria, shares her thoughts on the heterogeneity of Superkilen. With a focus on the design process and the variety of the 108 objects and eleven trees (from 60 different places), Steiner debates the 'montage' quality of the design. She notes that the objects were purchased, reconstructed, and purposely fabricated in varied aesthetic forms (for example, not all are of the same quality and craft). Even so, she writes, the spaces allowed for various positions and identities to exist in a new heterogeneity.

The fourth section of the book, "Convergence," centers on the Altach cemetery. The opening photographic essay by Nikolai Walter captures the incredible beauty of the project, coupled with personal reflections by Rober Fabach, a professor of architectural history in Liechtenstein, and interviews with local residents and users, the mayor of Altach, and Bernardo Bader (the architect of the project). The conviviality of the collaboration between groups to envision and manifest this cemetery is evident. Residents and the mayor express their pride and connection to the spaces and the architect shares his conviction about making a difference with his deeply site-rooted and community-inspired design.

The second essay, "Cultivating Convergence: The Islamic Cemetery Altach, Austria", by Sarajevo-born Austrian Muslim artist and Harvard architectural historian Azra Akšamija, outlines her role in the design of the interior of the prayer space. Akšamija notes that the success of the project and its acceptance by the wider population was due to the manner the project was communicated to the public and the way it functioned as a form of intercultural connection. Akšamija shares her inspirations and intentions for the design of the mihrab wall and the prayer rugs with a very specific articulation of material craft relating to both the context and the people commissioned to fabricate them. It was important to Akšamija that the designs would allow for people to find common ground between different cultures (and different sects of Islam) without becoming the same.

The third essay in this section, "The Islamic Cemetery as an Expression of the Process of Muslim Belonging in Vorarlberg," is by Simon Burtscher-Matis, an independent sociologist from Austria. Burtscher-Matis summarizes the history of Muslim immigration to the Vorarlberg region over three generations, most coming from Turkey (1960s) and Bosnia (1990s). Burtscher-Matis concludes that successive generations demonstrated upward mobility through education and are still in the process of being established. The presence of the cemetery for these Muslims signals a recognition of their faith as a part of the society they live in.

In the final text of this section, "An Offer of Leadership," is a conversation between Azra Akšamija and Eva Grabherr, whose extensive work with okay.zusammen Lebanon led her to initiate the cemetery project. Akšamija's description of Grabherr's leadership as 'elastic' encapsulates the agility and ability of Grabherr to connect many different stakeholders and to guide complex social processes. Grabherr believes that this cemetery is a catalyst for families, for discussions, activities and opportunities, for contributing and belonging. Grabherr notes that the topic (death) touched many of the people involved so deeply that the "empathy flowed."

The final section of the book comprises an essay titled "Islam, Arts and Pedagogy" by Ali S. Asani. A professor at Harvard University, he notes the lack of public and academic understanding of lived Islam. Asani presents an open course he teaches called "Multisensory Religion: Rethinking Islam through the Arts" focussed on teaching and understanding Islamic culture and theology through artistic expression. The course empowers students to synthesize materials into a portfolio of creative works, ranging from poetry to painting to designing a mosque for an American city. His essay concludes with his deeply-felt inspiration from the students' creative works and insights. This is an unusual but very appropriate way to conclude the volume. Throughout the book, many voices and vantage points address the complexity and struggles of creating new spaces for Muslim communities in various states of 'otherness'. Like each of the three projects discussed, the book does not provide an all-encompassing solution, but rather a commitment to the processes that are engendered in and around the spaces. As such, concluding with an epilogue on pedagogy further frames the potentiality of engaging with ideas and materials in an open and continuous manner.

Conclusion

In the literature on the architecture of Islam there are many 'coffee table' books that simply reproduce or repackage existing knowledge on the subject, often with a focus on the visual appearance of very well-known buildings. In contrast, the original contributions of these three volumes fill distinct gaps in existing scholarship. Beyond visual demonstrations of Islamic aesthetics, these works delve into the complexities of cultural, political, social, and geographical factors contextualizing the spaces discussed. Bloom's expert voice traces the range of buildings constructed in North Africa and the Iberian Peninsula in a clear narrative populated with ample drawings and photographs. Stanek's depth of research crossing disciplines establishes a clear foundation of knowledge on a subject very rarely, if at all, addressed in the history of postcolonial Islamic societies. At times this text is very dense, and benefits from the visual materials included throughout. In Akšamija's past publication (see my review essay in *AJISS* 34:3), she was positioned as both author and as agent, with her design interventions serving as an entry point for her analysis. Similarly, here she provides direct insight into the project she was involved in designing, while in her role as editor she has curated a collection of voices reflecting on the use of three contemporary Muslim spaces. This type of scholarship on the lessons and impact of architectural design is sorely needed in academia and within broader communities.

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