

ISLAM, ARCHITECTURE & URBAN PLANNING

SPAHC OMER

91767
ME



ARAH
PUBLICATIONS



PERDANA
LEADERSHIP
FOUNDATION
YAYASAN
KEPIMPINAN
PERDANA

ISLAM, ARCHITECTURE & URBAN PLANNING



With Compliments
from
Malaysian Institute of Planners

B-1-02, Jalan SS7/13B, Plaza Kelana Jaya,
47301 Petaling Jaya, Selangor, Malaysia.



PERDANA
LEADERSHIP
FOUNDATION
YAYASAN
KEPIMPINAN
PERDANA

TUN DR. MAHATHIR MOHAMAD

ISLAM, ARCHITECTURE & URBAN PLANNING

SPAHC OMER

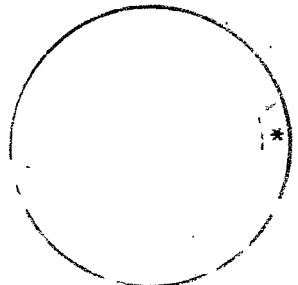
PUSTAKA PERDANA



1009525



**ARAH
PUBLICATIONS**



PERDANA
LEADERSHIP
FOUNDATION
YAYASAN
KEPIMPINAN
PERDANA

#177262

ARAH PENDIDIKAN SDN BHD (618680-H)

Level 3A, Block B, Peremba Square,

Saujana Resort, Section U2,

40150 Shah Alam,

Selangor Darul Ehsan

Tel: (603) 76529888

Fax: (603) 76229810

Email: enquiry@arahpendidikan.com.my

© Omer, Spahic 2009

Arah Publications is an imprint of Arah Pendidikan Sdn Bhd

All rights reserved.

No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise, without the prior written permission of the publisher.

First published 2009

Perpustakaan Negara Malaysia

Cataloguing-in-Publication Data

Omer, Spahic, 1968 -

Islam, architecture & urban planning / Spahic Omer.

Includes index

ISBN 978-967-323-109-6

I. Architecture, Islamic. I. Title.

720.91767

Islam, Architecture & Urban Planning

ISBN : 978-967-323-109-6

Text set in Palatino 11 pt.

Printed by Percetakan Polygraphic (M) Sdn. Bhd.

Balakong, Selangor Darul Ehsan.

• • • • •

720.91767
OMER



To my wife, children, parents, and parents-in-law



-TABLE OF CONTENTS-

ABOUT THE AUTHOR	ix
INTRODUCTION	v
CHAPTER 1 Islam on the Enterprise of Building	1
CHAPTER 2 The Relationship between Man and the Environment in Islam	17
CHAPTER 3 Towards an Understanding of Islamic Architecture	35
CHAPTER 4 An Introduction to the Character of Early Islamic Architecture (from 11 H / 632 CE to 36 H / 656 CE)	61
CHAPTER 5 Some Lessons of the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) in Urban Planning and Development	83
CHAPTER 6 Appreciating Beauty in Islam	101
CHAPTER 7 Integrating the Spiritual Paradigms from Nature into Islamic Architecture	121
CHAPTER 8 Some Observations on the Phenomenon of the Islamic House	131
CHAPTER 9 Integrating the Islamic Worldview into the Planning of Neighborhoods	147

CHAPTER 10	
Recreational Activities in Islamic Domestic Courtyards as an Avenue to the Psychological Well-being of the Family	167
CHAPTER 11	
The Houses of the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) and the First Muslims in Madinah	187
CHAPTER 12	
Conceptualizing the Phenomenon of the Islamic City	213
APPENDIX	241
INDEX	293



-ABOUT THE AUTHOR-



Dr. Spahic Omer is a Bosnian who lives and works in Malaysia. He studies in Bosnia, Egypt and Malaysia. Presently, he is an Associate Professor at the Faculty of Architecture and Environmental Design, International Islamic University Malaysia. His research interest covers Islamic civilization as well as the philosophy and character of the Islamic built environment.

- INTRODUCTION -

Works on Islamic built environment are far from being satisfactory. Most of such works have been produced by the authors, Muslims and non-Muslims alike, who fell short of perceiving, partly or completely, that the *tawhidic* (God's Oneness) spirit of Islam was the sole force which furnished Islamic built environment with both its essence and identity. Neither did those authors pay proper attention to the implications of the fact that the built environment, with its principal qualities and features, which originated with the advent and assertion of Islam on the world scene never existed before, even though the peoples that later became instrumental in molding and perpetuating its conspicuous identity lived where they were for centuries before embracing Islam and possessed the cultures and civilizations of their own.

Studying Islamic built environment by no means can be separated from the total framework of Islam: its genesis, history, ethos, worldview, doctrines, laws and practices. Any different approach is bound to result in failure distorting the real picture of the subject of Islamic built environment and with it the picture of Islam and its followers.

However, it must be asserted that there is no such thing as prescribed or fixed systems and styles as far as creating Islamic built environment is concerned. Predetermined Islamic architecture, or Islamic urban planning and development, or Islamic aesthetics, or Islamic landscape architecture, do not exist. This is true even in those aspects of built environment that are charged with the purest and strongest spiritual substance, like the mosque institution, for example.

It is the nature of Islam that provides humanity with basic rules of morality and guidelines of proper conduct in those spheres of life which are not related to prescribed ritual worship, such as the spheres of building, planning and general development, for example. Upon such general principles and guidelines people can establish systems, regulations, views and attitudes

in order to comprehend and regulate their worldly life in accordance with their time, region and needs. Since every age has its own problems and challenges, the solutions and perceptions deduced from the fundamental principles and permanent values of life have got to be to some extent different. Their substance, however, due to the uniformity and consistency of the divinely given foundation and sources from which they stem, will always be the same. Islam is based on essential human nature, which is constant and not subject to change according to time and space. It is the outward forms which change while the fundamental principles, the basic values and the essential human nature together with men's basic needs remain unchanged.

Concerning the question of built environment, the role of Islam and its divinely revealed message is to provide Muslims with an inspired outlook on life, in general, and on those issues that are pertinent to built environment, in particular, and with some broad rules of morality and guidelines of proper conduct which may or may not be directly related to built environment. Upon such a divine outlook and general principles and guidelines Muslims are invited to establish built environment theories, systems and styles that are consistent with both their religious preferences and the requirements of their diverse eras, geographic regions, cultures and other practical needs. Islamic built environment is a symbiosis between constancy, which is represented by the constant innate inclinations of essential human nature and the heavenly guidelines and rules meant for it, and inconstancy, which is necessitated and controlled by the time space factors. It is the latter that changes while the former is continual and remains firm.

Indeed, this is the thrust of the powerful identity of Islamic built environment. Due to it, Islamic built environment was able to rise above the precincts of the geographic and cultural contexts in which it was planted. Due to it, furthermore, Islamic built environment was able to transcend the restrictions of the historical moments during which it was fashioned outliving the generations of its engineers, craftsmen and users. Islamic built environment with the ideals that it personifies dominates its people and their thinking patterns. It is never the case that the people subjugate to their wishes and control the world of Islamic built environment. When that happens, that spells out a drastic degeneration of Islamic built environment which can lead to its end.



Islamic built environment declined struggling to retain its conspicuous identity only when its two defining aspects were traded, that is, when the sacred in Islamic built environment became compromised and was regarded as a transient and man-generated legacy, and when a building system, a style of an age or a geographic region became excessively venerated and was regarded as a sole inspiration and guidance, or when a complete detachment from the religion of Islam and its civilization occurred and an inspiration and guidance were sought from a foreign source. It follows that successfully reviving the real meaning and vigor of Islamic built environment depends on properly conceptualizing its basic notions and its ideological framework, which then must be followed by finding and actualizing appropriate strategies and methods for it.

This book titled “Islam, architecture & urban planning” is a compilation of studies on the relationship between spirituality and built environment in Islam. The book consists of twelve chapters representing twelve separate studies nine of which were presented in one national and eight international conferences and symposiums held in six different countries. In addition, the substance of several chapters is based partly or completely on the material already published in the form of either academic journal papers or chapters in another books produced by the same author.

The book covers a number of major aspects of Islamic built environment, such as: Islam on the enterprise of building, Islamic architecture, Islamic urban planning and development, environmental protection, Islam and housing, and Islamic aesthetics. The nature of the book’s studies is a conceptual or philosophical rather than an empirical one. The chief objective of the book is to increase the Muslim awareness as to the significance of integrating the elements of spirituality into the spheres of built environment. The book also aspires to serve as a starting point for such an integration.

There are very few scholarly studies conducted on the theme of integrating the Islamic spirituality into built environment. Thus, another objective of this book is to partly fill up a glaring academic gap and to spur the interest of both the Muslim professionals and Muslim scholars on such an important subject matter inviting them that they all contribute their respective expected shares. Certainly, there are many studies that treat the subject of Islamic built

environment with its many aspects but only from certain limited cultural, social or historical perspectives. It is not easy to find a comprehensive study that treats the matter from a broader spiritual perspective, integrating the same with and thus adding a new dimension to the rest of social, cultural and historical perspectives. This book is an attempt towards that direction.



- CHAPTER ONE -

ISLAM ON THE ENTERPRISE OF BUILDING¹

INTRODUCTION

Islam is a complete way of life. Islamic civilization, which is a natural outcome of Muslims' actualization of Islam as a code for living, is likewise a comprehensive one. Islamic civilization greatly contributed to every beneficial pursuit of men permanently leaving its notable mark on all of them. Regarding the sphere of built environment, the legacy of Islam had to be distinctive because built environment is both a framework and field for the realization of Islam as a lifestyle. Hence, even a casual observer cannot fail to be struck by the huge quantity and astounding quality of architectural masterpieces of various types that Muslims under the aegis of the Islamic outlook on life's realities have produced. This chapter attempts to explore the Islamic position on erecting buildings. Four themes are discussed in the chapter: 1) building as a basis of civilization, 2) building as an indispensable and creditable activity, 3) the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh)² and building, and 4) avoiding vices in building.

1 A paper presented in a national conference held in Penang, Malaysia, in January 2007. The conference was organized by Universiti Sains Malaysia. Its title was "National Conference on Environment and Community Development."

2 "pbuh" stands for "peace be upon him" which Muslims ought to utter whenever the Prophet Muhammad's name is mentioned.



BUILDING AS A BASIS OF CIVILIZATION

Based on his free will, awareness and imagination, man builds edifices in various shapes and sizes and with various function patterns in order to facilitate, nurture and motivate his copious life activities. In fact, such is of the fundamental things that distinguish man from other animate creatures that share this earth with him. The existence of man cannot be imagined without the existence of a built environment. The relationship between the two is causal, man always being the cause and built environment the effect. So therefore, no phase of man's presence on earth could be imagined to be devoid of building activities, irrespective of their scale and how simple and (un)sophisticated they may have been.

Ibn Khaldun rightly observed that building is a basis of civilization, and is of the most indispensable crafts which man ought to gain knowledge of: "This (architecture) is the first and oldest craft of sedentary civilization. It is the knowledge of how to go about using houses and mansions for cover and shelter. This is because man has the natural disposition to reflect upon the outcome of things. Thus, it is unavoidable that he must reflect upon how to avert the harm arising from heat and cold by using houses which have walls and roofs to intervene between him and those things on all sides. This natural disposition to think, which is the real meaning of humanity, exists among (men) in different degrees ..."³

Le Corbusier also remarked: "Architecture is one of the most urgent needs of man, for the house has always been the indispensable and first tool that he has forged for himself. Man's stock of tools marks out the stages of civilization, the stone age, the bronze age, the iron age. Tools are the result of successive improvement; the effort of all generations is embodied in them. The tool is the direct and immediate expression of progress; it gives man essential assistance and essential freedom also ..."⁴

The very first man on earth, Adam, was a builder, so to speak. He built the first House of worship on earth, i.e. the al-Masjid al-Haram or *Baytullah* (the House of God). Having descended on earth, Adam is said to have yearned

3 Ibn Khaldun, *The Muqaddimah*, translated from the Arabic by Franz Rosenthal, (London: Rotledge and Kegan Paul, 1987), vol. 2, p. 357.

4 Le Corbusier, *Towards a New Architecture*, translated from the thirteenth French edition with an introduction by Frederick Etchelles, (Oxford: Reed Educational and Professional Publishing Ltd, 1989), p. 13.

for the exaltation and praises of God by angels he had accustomed himself to in the Garden of Eden, and, thus, he desired to have a house which will resound with the prayers and praises of God on earth too. God fulfilled his wish and sent down the angel Jabra'il (Gabriel) to guide and help Adam in laying the foundations of the *al-Masjid al-Haram*.⁵ Allah says in the Qur'an: "The first House (of worship) appointed for man was that in Bakka: full of blessing and of guidance for all the worlds." (Alu 'Imran 96)

Some even assert that God did not send Adam to earth until it was set and fully equipped to accommodate him so that he and his family will be able to smoothly and responsibly carry out their duties as vicegerents (*khalifah*) on earth. Due to the nature of man, which is predisposed to worship, one of the essential requirements was the existence of a House of God for worship purposes. As a result, some angels were assigned to build the *al-Masjid al-Haram* for Adam.⁶

Exactly forty years following the completion of the *al-Masjid al-Haram*, either Adam himself or some of his offspring were instructed to proceed to a designated location (later Jerusalem or *Bayt al-Maqdis*) and build there the *al-Masjid al-Aqsa*, the second mosque on earth. According to a *hadith* (the Prophet's tradition) Abu Dharr is reported to have said: "I have asked the Prophet (pbuh): "Which mosque was built first on earth?" The Prophet (pbuh) answered: "The *al-Masjid al-Haram*." Then I asked: "And which one was built thereafter?" He said: "The *al-Masjid al-Aqsa*." Then I asked: "What was the interval separating the two?" The Prophet (pbuh) replied: "Forty years."⁷

It goes without saying that the craft of building, aimed at providing a framework and support for human conscious behavior, was by no means foreign to Adam and his progeny. The first generations of humans on earth needed no substantial timeframe to evolve a basic acquaintance as to the significance and purpose of building. Fundamental building skills and techniques must have been inherent in Adam, which he later passed on to his immediate offspring. Such was the case because in contradistinction to his children and the rest of humans, Adam was not born in a conventional biological way; nor was he subjected to the conventional processes of gradual

5 Al-Azraqi, *Akhbar Makkah*, (n.n.p.: n.pp., 1980) vol. 1, p. 3-17. Ibn Khaldun, *The Muqaddimah*, vol. 2, p. 250.

6 Al-Azraqi, *Akhbar Makkah*, vol. 1, p. 3-17. Ibn Khaldun, *The Muqaddimah*, vol. 2, p. 250.

7 Al-Bukhari, *Sahih al-Bukhari*, Kitab Ahadith al-Anbiya', Hadith No. 3172.

learning and attaining the state of maturity – as is the case with all humans. Rather, he was created instantly as an adult. Thus, following his creation at the hands of God, Adam had to undergo an intensive and unusual learning process in order that he becomes fully prepared to take on the demanding chore of vicegerency.

On this Allah says: “Behold, thy Lord said to the angels: “I will create a vicegerent on earth.” They said: “Wilt Thou place therein one who will make mischief therein and shed blood? – Whilst we do celebrate Thy praises and glorify Thy holy (name)?” He said: “I know what ye know not.” And He taught Adam the names of all things; then he placed them before the angels, and said: “Tell Me the names of these if ye are right.” They said: “Glory to Thee: of knowledge We have none, save what Thou hast taught us: in truth it is Thou who art perfect in knowledge and wisdom.” He said: “O Adam! tell them their names.” When he had told them their names, Allah said: “Did I not tell you that I know the secrets of heaven and earth, and I know what ye reveal, and what ye conceal?” (al-Baqarah 30–33)

By the words “He (God) taught Adam the names of all things” we understand that God had taught Adam the inner nature, functions and qualities of all things on earth. Because they are vital for both man’s survival and civilizational progression, matters related to building are believed to have been some of the things that Adam had been taught by God. They are seen as a means, an instrument, a carrier of the spiritual. Building as a craft fulfills an honorable mission, which is in line with the mission of man on earth, yet it is part of the latter.

Adam’s tenure on earth was too short to be spent on discovering those things one by one and at the hands of man alone. In the same vein, being a vicegerent on earth and father of humanity, Adam’s task was too big and too exigent that no time or energy could be afforded for things that could seriously distract him from concentrating on fulfilling the main purpose of his creation. It would be illogical if one were asked to accomplish a mission, only to be compelled to spend his entire lifetime trying to come to grasp with such things as means, methods, flair and other prerequisites needed for the task, without really succeeding even in doing that.

As a small digression, this means that Adam was a civilized and cultured being *par excellence*. He was God’s first prophet. Yet, he was one of God’s greatest prophets (*ulu al-’azm min al-rusul*, the prophets of firm resolution) As such, his outlook on reality, his approaches to and ways of doing thing

This book is a compilation of studies on the relationship between spirituality and built environment in Islam. The book consists of twelve chapters representing twelve separate studies; nine of which were presented in one national and eight international conferences and symposiums held in six different countries.

The book covers a number of major aspects of Islamic built environment, such as: Islam on the enterprise of building, Islamic architecture, Islamic urban planning and development, environmental protection, Islam and housing, and Islamic aesthetics. The nature of the book's studies is a conceptual or philosophical rather than an empirical one. The main objective of the book is to increase the Muslim awareness as to the significance of integrating the elements of spirituality into the spheres of built environment.



Spahic Omer, Ph.D, is an Associate Professor at Kulliyyah of Architecture and Environmental Design, International Islamic University, Malaysia. He received his B.A in Islamic Aqidah & Philosophy from Al-Azhar University, M.A in Islamic Revealed Knowledge & Heritage, International Islamic University Malaysia and Ph.D in Islamic History and Civilization, University Malaya, Malaysia. He has published several books on History and Character of Islamic Built Environment, Islamic Domestic Courtyards, Madinah Urbanisation and Funerary Architecture.

ISBN 978-967-323-109-6



ARAH PENDIDIKAN SDN BHD

www.arahpendidikan.com.my
www.arahpendidikanbooks.com
enquiry@arahpendidikan.com.my