

How to achieve a built environment for the contemporary needs of Muslim peoples and how to anticipate tomorrow's development needs in design and building while respecting the heritage of the past and the cultural traditions of communities facing the challenge of modernisation? This has been a pivotal question posed by the Aga Khan Award at its inception ten years ago when it embarked on a search for architecture appropriate to the twentieth century. In the course of its search the Award has identified exemplary buildings that combine culturally sensitive form with appropriately utilitarian design, buildings which meet contemporary demands for space and function while achieving an impressive cultural fit. But this search has also revealed how rare and few such new buildings are, and how widespread the lack of regard is for socio-cultural requirements and socio-economic conditions.

On the one hand the newly built environment suffers from uncritical and unimaginative copying of alien models, from associating prestige with "hi-tech" appearance regardless of whether such constructions are serviceable, from neglect of local materials, crafts and technology in favour of imported materials and techniques even if they are economically and climatically inappropriate, and not least from a lack of knowledge of history and culture which often results in confused and banal interpretations. (See for instance, the examples provided by Rifat Chadirji in his case study on Iraq.) On the other hand the heritage of the past is being rapidly destroyed due to population pressures on old urban centres, the lack of initiative and resources to implement schemes of adaptive re-use, reckless or unscientific intervention, and haphazard building practices both by developers and by the informal sector. (These issues were examined at length in the proceedings of the ninth Award Seminar: *The Expanding Metropolis: Coping with the Urban Growth of Cairo.*) This state of affairs points to the urgent need to stem the tide of destruction taking its toll on the cultural heritage and to take positive action toward setting a course for improving



the environment where people live and work.

It is with this sense of urgency that the Award has addressed the issue of education, because, in the words of His Highness the Aga Khan, "the education of architects is the key to the profession's competence; its attitude toward its role and responsibilities; and especially to its social, cultural and environmental sensibility." If architects are the primary agents who help to shape the built environment, then it is essential that they be prepared to take on their tasks with a heightened awareness of the vast array of the problems that the profession is facing and of issues that the profession should be addressing but has not yet done so.

Some of the crucial issues around which the *thematique* of this seminar was developed were as follows:

- Are the existing institutions of training capable of meeting the rising demand for architectural services in Islamic countries? Both the integration of the rapidly developing countries into the world economy and, particularly, the economic

resurgence in the wake of the oil boom have led to a sharply increased demand for building for a variety of new functions. This, in turn, has resulted in dependence on expatriate professional services, pointing to the inadequacy of existing institutions in many countries.

Do schools provide architecture students with the necessary background, tools and intellectual apparatus to relate design to the cultural system for which it is intended? Beginning with the post-colonial era and reinforced by the economic resurgence, there has been an intensified search for cultural identity throughout the Islamic world. This search, however, has been impeded by the disrupted traditions of building as well as confusion in categories of definition. As such, the architect has to take on the intellectual burden of differentiating between Islamic, national, regional and local identity in order to achieve proper expression.

- Does architecture education provide a sufficiently broad overview of the chal-

lenges that architects should be facing and the tasks that lie ahead? Architecture is not confined to design and architecture ought to get involved in all aspects of building. Yet, so far little attention has been given to problems of building in rural areas where the majority of Muslims are still living. Architects could also play essential roles as catalysts in self-help and community involvement schemes and help to transform what is called the informal housing sector into an asset.

Any attempt to tackle such fundamental issues ushers in a complex web of further questions concerning not only the profession itself but the interrelationships of architectural practice with the social and moral dimensions of human existence. As is evident from the foregoing essays, case studies, comments and Workshop recommendations, both the scope of this seminar and the range of issues addressed by the participants have implications far wider than simply improving the means of formal education for architecture students. Yet recalling some of the salient points raised by the contributors, we may begin to put together a composite picture of what the education of architects should ideally entail in order to prepare them to come to grips with today's needs and requirements in the Islamic world.

At the outset Spiro Kostof stressed the point that architecture education is not obtained exclusively in school and that the process of initiation begins long before a student enrolls in a professional programme, by which time he or she has developed a preconceived notion of what the role of the architect ought to be. Comparing good architectural practise to good citizenship, he posited that schools should not consider professional training as their only charge. It is not enough to realise, for example, the importance of history for architects, but a thorough consideration must be given to what kind of history need be taught in order to enable the architect to place the local, regional and indigenous within a continuum of architectural activity that has taken place over time and has been enriched by cross-cultural fertilisation.

The concern with teaching history properly was echoed by Oleg Grabar who identified several approaches and methodologies in the history of art and architecture, emphasising nevertheless the fact that interpretation of art is not free from culturally (and even politically) based value judgments. Renata Holod's strong recommendation to develop a theory of Islamic architecture based on original sources, if followed, could in fact serve as the best means to understand the inspiration and aesthetic values associated with the traditions of building and to interpret them with a vision less beclouded with received notions and biases.

The interrelated consideration of history, building tradition and aesthetics bring to mind the central issue of how to articulate the relationship between Islamic societies on the one hand and architectural thought and practice on the other. Many participants repeatedly returned to the question of "what is Islamic?" Christian Norberg-Schulz approached the issue by positing that an Islamic environment has a distinctive atmosphere that can be readily perceived as being different from, for instance, that of a Western European town, and then proceeded to enumerate common elements in the conception and composition of built forms throughout the Islamic world. The fact that his arguments were supported by examples drawn from historical buildings pointed once more to the crucial importance of defining Islam in the contemporary world, and articulating the relationship between Islam and modernity to gain a clearer picture of what could be meant by "Islamic architecture" in today's built environment.

These issues were taken up at the outset in a profound and thought-provoking essay by Mohammed Arkoun who centred his argument around the concept of "rupture", a notion that lends itself so readily to explain the relationship between religious beliefs and societal values yet one which is often misused in facile interpretations. The fundamental rupture in the history of Islam, as Arkoun points out, has occurred when interpretation was banned and autonomy of reason eliminated with the imposition of

rigid "orthodox" teaching in the eleventh century. The Islamic tradition has thus "mutilated itself" by replacing intellectual debate with ideological dogma and the constraints that have been imposed after this rupture have "dominated" cultural life in Muslim societies until today. Hence the issue is fundamentally not the seeming disparity between religion and modernity, or Islam and secularism, but one which stems from the ideological rigidity that does not allow meaningful consideration of contemporary values, requirements and needs. The fact that the rupture still obstructs the sight of reality can be demonstrated by the fact that what is commonly subscribed as Islamic thought remains highly ideological and dogmatic while societies are secularising and modernising. Thus, according to Arkoun, free and open intellectual debate is a prerequisite for discovering what is truly Islamic and that means have to be found to teach Islam in architectural schools in a modern way.

In addressing a different topic, that of technology, Gulzar Haider frankly assessed the "current state of malaise" in Muslim cultures and called for a re-invigoration of Islamic thought and culture. Again on the same topic of technology, form and culture William Porter pointed to the strong but subtle links among these three elements. In as much as technology is international and perhaps value-free, its utilisation for particular uses may not be, and haphazard adoption of inappropriate technologies may be damaging in several respects.

Treatments of the theme, architecture and society, brought the focus on current issues facing the profession. In presenting an overview of the harsh social and economic realities, Ismail Serageldin enumerated important areas of concern such as providing shelter for the poor, problems of illiteracy and maintenance of public health. He described the role of the client as being equally important to that of the architect in determining architectural taste, which ought to be a collective effort, and emphasised the intrinsic strength of architecture as a process that reflects the political, economic and cultural

choices of each society where it takes place. In terms of education, he proposed educational programmes for the allied professions, such as technicians, so as to provide trained support for the profession.

While taking into account political regimes and market forces as sources and determinants of architectural ideology, İlhan Tekeli singled out professional circles as primary agents effecting change. In this context he reminded the audience of the crucial role of educational institutions in the shaping and transmitting of ideology. He also pointed to the demand for different types of buildings by different social groups: upper-income groups seeking status symbols while the middle-income groups relying on the entrepreneur for determining the building type. The lower-income groups are usually left with squatter settlements in the building of which there is no architectural intervention. With regard to architectural practise, Tekeli defined the role of the architect according to the categories of organisations to which he or she belongs. Given that large, state-owned firms are controlled more by bureaucrats than by professional architects and that foreign firms are not much better since the architect is reduced to a minor functionary rather than being employed as a creative designer, the freedom to make a positive contribution is denied to the majority of professionals even while their services are desperately needed. It is only the self-employed architects and those working in small firms who are able to practise freely and imaginatively, but then how many of them can and do prestige projects or lucrative commissions for the sake of devoting themselves to social problems?

The case studies included in the second section of this volume provide a closer look at particular problems of architectural education and practise. Suha Ozkan's overview sums up the background of the current state of dependency on Western educational models with particular reference to Turkey and Egypt where first modern schools of architecture in the Islamic world were established. Saudi Arabia's more recent experience on the other hand illustrates how rapid

development also leads to foreign dependency in teaching materials and personnel. Pakistan's case provides a vivid picture of yet another widely shared experience, that of the search for identity — a national expression in architecture — beginning with the dawn of the post-colonial era.

Both the case studies on Pakistan and on Turkey shed light on an important point, that of the establishment of the profession in its own right as a result of a process of differentiation. The fact that architects have had to fight for recognition and still have to defend their rights in most countries of the Islamic world explains how little influence they could have had in resisting the forces of destruction that have played upon the environment. The protracted struggle of Pakistani architects against domination by engineers as well as the steps taken by Turkish architects to organise the profession and increase its influence provide a lesson for the future on how to inculcate a sense of public responsibility to the next generation of architects in countries where the profession has not yet achieved full recognition. On the other hand, the sad picture depicting the erosion of a national architectural tradition in the case study on Iraq must also be borne in mind. The sobering thought offered by Chadirji is that architects themselves can cause great harm if they are not intellectually well equipped.

The case studies on the Aga Khan Program and on CRATerre reported two different types of search for appropriate architecture for Islamic cultures and developing countries: the former having established curricula and methods for training architects for practise in the Islamic world and the latter providing a means for building cheaply but effectively using earth as the chief material. Collectively these case studies illustrate the enormous tasks that befall teachers and practising architects and demonstrate once more the urgency with which these tasks must be assumed in order to achieve a transformation of architectural attitudes.

In summing up what we have learned, it may be useful to consider the key issues of the seminar under three categories: theoretic

concepts, the role of the architect in society and methods related to architecture education. In the debate on theoretical and philosophical issues the need for a common understanding of such basic terms as "Islamic architecture" clearly pointed to the fact that basic research tools and definitions are still lacking. Research is mainly done in the West and is virtually non-existent in Islamic countries. Therefore, the problem remains as to how more research could be encouraged at institutions in the Islamic countries so as to achieve critical analysis without which there can be no architectural excellence.

Furthermore, the very concept of Islam in the context of traditional societies and of modernity ought to be a subject of continuing debate within academic institutions. Unfortunately, in many Muslim countries the subject of Islam has by default been appropriated by obscurantists and ideological mullahs, because the intellectuals have failed to do their homework. It is time that we began to address ourselves to the very basic questions in order to have a rational and clearer understanding of Islam itself, without which we will not be psychologically prepared to meet the challenges and problems arising from the confrontation of modernity with tradition.

This brings us to the question of the architect's role in society. Will we continue to see him as a prima donna, a mythmaker; or should we expand our view of the proper role of the architect as a professional whose responsibilities include all problems related to the environment?

With regard to methodologies and techniques of teaching architecture, the central issue to be resolved is the question of which models to use, Western or Islamic? It is generally agreed that a critical examination or re-examination of Western models is needed. But in order to do this, we still are in need of the fundamental tools that can be obtained only through basic research and documentation and which would enable us to work out alternative methods and techniques.

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It has been suggested many times at the international seminars of the Award that more interaction was needed between individual regions. With this purpose in mind, two regional seminars were organised at Dacca and Fathepur Sikri where architects and educators came together to share and exchange ideas and to discuss mutual problems and concerns. A significant outcome of these seminars was a greater awareness for the need to turn to traditional models in architectural programmes, such as reviving the master-and-apprentice technique, and thereby effecting a return to one's own roots and cultural heritage instead of adapting foreign models as is now generally the case. Also emphasised was the importance of learning by doing and of the multi-disciplinary approach in the training of architects so as to prepare them in the various skills demanded of the true professional.

This brings us back to an important point made at the outset by Spiro Kostof and elaborated on by Mohammed Arkoun and others: that Islamic architecture is a term which does not refer to a particular style but to a variety of traditions, styles and even forms that are rooted in the cultures of particular areas, nations and regions, and are informed by materials, crafts and technologies indigenous to each of these geographic areas. Certainly in the great imperial centres of yore the high culture of Islam found its own expression in monumental architecture as it did in the arts and thence exported these forms throughout imperial domains. But building by the people for the people remained by and large faithful to local custom throughout history until colonial enterprise was established and commerce and industry integrated the world economy. As the experience of the regional seminars has indicated, a return to indigenous means and methods does not imply a renewed search for an abstract notion of Islamic forms. And it prompts us once more to consider the distinction between the two equally important tasks that lie ahead: to interpret and take example from great achievements of Islamic architecture of the past, and to address the needs of Muslim peoples, taking into consideration the particular constraints of the region in which they live.