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REVIEW ARTICLE

CONTEMPORARY ARCHITECTURAL TRENDS AND THEIR IMPACT ON THE SYMBOLIC AND SPIRITUAL FUNCTION OF THE MOSQUE

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ABSTRACT

Since the dawn of history, mosque architecture has witnessed changes and developments to meet the cultures and civilizations passing through; accordingly, modern contemporary architectural trends have presented bold innovative solutions that affect the stereotypes that have been attributed to mosques over time. At this point, a discussion was initiated on the feasibility of maintaining certain mosque elements that are considered to be essential for some in the process of going to the mosque, such as the minaret and the dome. However, some trends posed ideas that exceeded the spiritual function of a mosque, as well as the cause and essence of its existence; accordingly, the present research study was conducted to elucidate those various trends and to discuss and evaluate their conformity with the standards and principles in mosque architecture. The study begins with the definition of a mosque and its fundamental elements, determines the most significant mosque styles in the world while highlighting the relationship each has with the culture or civilization it produced, and subsequently addresses the function of the mosque and the requirements to be considered in compliance with the provisions of Sharia. Throughout this study, variations in the symbolism of a mosque between function and form are addressed, and then some of the recent trends that have caused considerable controversies are discussed. To conclude, there is no legitimate objection that mosque architecture should keep pace with modern developments in the field of architecture and technology, provided that this does not affect its spiritual function. Therefore, a mosque is not required to remain confined to a certain feature or restricted to elements that did not exist before in the mosques of the First Islamic Empire. However, it is required, rather than preferred, that a mosque belongs to and integrates with its surrounding. In a different sense, the mosque's architecture is to be inspired or mimic the architecture of its surroundings or the country in which it is built while remaining in conformity with the spirit of Islamic art and culture.

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INTRODUCTION

Architecture changes and varies with time with community development. Therefore, any changes that influence the culture of a people shall have an impact on architecture as well. Buildings, for example, differ between the outside and inside, depending on the development of techniques and building materials, and because they must conform with lifestyle changes and job complexities. This applies to all types of buildings, including housing, trade, administration, hospitalization, and mosque buildings. Since the first construction of a mosque in Medina in 622, and despite the fact that its main role is to serve as a site for prayer, the shape of the mosque has undergone changes to conform with surrounding cultures and civilizations. Currently, modern contemporary architectural trends pose innovative solutions that affect the stereotyped image that has long been attributed to mosques.

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Ultimately, a discussion was initiated on the feasibility of maintaining some mosque elements such as the minaret and the dome, which are considered essential in the process of going to the mosque. However, some trends have posed ideas that exceed the spiritual function of a mosque, as well as the cause and essence of its existence; accordingly, the present research was conducted to shed light on these various trends and to discuss and evaluate their conformity with standards and principles in mosque architecture to determine what should be accepted and what should be avoided and abandoned. The research begins with the definition of a mosque and its fundamental elements, determines the most significant mosque styles in the world while highlighting the relationship each has with the culture or civilization it produced, and then addresses the mosque functions and requirements to be considered in compliance with the provisions of Sharia. Throughout this study, we address the symbolism of the mosque, which varies between function and form, and then discuss some of the recent trends that have caused considerable controversies. We conclude by discussing the modern trends and evaluating the

extent to which they contribute to the implementation of the spiritual functionality required to fulfill certain recommendations.

What is the mosque?

A mosque (masjed) is the place where Muslims perform their prayer - a religious obligation imposed on every Muslim five times a day. Linguistically, the word "masjed" in Arabic is derived from the verb "sajad", which means performing worship, and refers to the act of prostrating on the ground "sojoud" carried out by Muslims during prayer. Usually, there is a difference between the "Great Mosque", which is a very large mosque where Friday prayers are held and is frequented by most of the city population, and the small mosque of a local neighborhood, compound or village where only the five daily prayers are performed. In the first Islamic community, a mosque was not just a place for worship. It had a number of different purposes. It was a center for learning and for the dissemination of the Islamic Dawa "Islamic Call", a judicial center, a meeting place of the Shura Council, a place to exchange views, a media platform for news broadcasting and reporting, and a house for hospitality and accommodating strangers (Abu Arrad, 2008). Furthermore, the mosque (masjed) was the demarcation of the origin in Islamic cities; it was the first to be defined when establishing a city. Therefore, it had to be located in the city center, where trading shops existed far from residential areas located in another circle. In other words, the mosque used to be the heart of the city and existed amidst its physical and social worlds.

The basic parts of the mosque

The basic parts of a mosque that contribute to the formation of its architectural mass and are required are the following: the prayer hall, the courtyard, arcades, the minaret, the dome, and the ablution rooms and toilets.

The Prayer Hall

Or the Temple Mount, is the most important section in a mosque; it is the place where ordinary and congregational (aj-jama'a) worship prayers are held. Such prayers are usually directed towards Qibla (direction) - towards the direction of Kaaba in Mecca (the direction that should be faced when a Muslim prays during salah "prayer") through one of its walls, called the Qibla Wall. Inside this wall there is usually a cavity "niche" that determines the direction of Qibla called "mihrab". Within this hall and to the right of "mihrab," there is a "minbar" (also known as a pulpit) - a raised platform mounted by the Imam or orator "khatib" to deliver his sermon; it is above the level of the hall ground with a number of steps, enough for the orator to be observed from across the room.

Within the Temple Mount, there is a space "maqsoura", an area enclosed by a fence often used as a place for worship "musalla" for women or for other purposes. The most common shape in the prayer hall is rectangular with the longest side in the direction of Qibla.

The Courtyard "Sahn"

A central, vast, open and unroofed area is usually used for prayer in summer, or when the prayer hall is jammed with worshippers. It is the source of light and air to the mosque arcades. The shape of the "sahn" is subject to the climatic conditions of the area in which the mosque is built - the colder or hotter the climate is, the smaller the area would be; the more moderate the climate is, the wider the area would be (Mou'nes, 1981).

Arcades

Usually, the mosque has a major arcade located in the direction of Mecca - often referred to as the porch of Mecca. As to the other three arcades that surround the "sahn", the mosque-side arcades are known as the "mujannabat". However, it is not requisite that every mosque has a "sahn" and arcades; Al Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem, for instance, is composed of the Temple Mount only.

The Minaret

It is often in the form of a high tower used by the Muezzin - the person responsible for the call to prayer or adhān (in Arabic "azan" means the Islamic call to prayer). During the days of the Prophet (peace be upon him), and for decades after his death, the minaret did not exist. It began to appear in mosques in the beginning of the eighth century during the Umayyad Era (the first mosque built with a Minaret was the Great Mosque in Damascus) and soon it turned into an essential feature of the mosque. In the beginning, its role was not to call to prayer but as a symbol for the existence of Islam and the solemnity of the place (Bloom, 2002). Calling to prayer, or adhān, used to be on an elevated place, taking into account not violating the surrounding home decency and morality (Al Harmouch, 2012). A long time ago, men used their voice to call to prayer, but later loudspeakers were used so that the voice of the muezzin could reach as far as possible. With time, the minaret developed a symbolic function: to visually indicate the presence of the mosque and to show faith (Kenna, 2009). Throughout time and space, the minaret has taken different forms, influenced by the coeval cultural and architectural heritage and the political system it followed. The most significant types of minarets that differed in accordance with the geographical in which they were constructed are as follows:

- The square-shaped minaret: It is the oldest. It first appeared in Syria, influenced by the Romanian minarets that were erected along the Mediterranean (Bloom, 2002) and then moved to the eastern Mediterranean, reaching Europe, particularly Spain. The square-shaped minaret consists of several floors with overlapping rooms decorated with windows. The "Koutoubieh" Mosque in Morocco from the twelfth century is considered the most important of all (Figure 1).
- The cylinder-shaped minaret: It first appeared in Iran and Turkistan, moving to India in the twelfth century by the Seljuk, and then flourished and reached its peak later in Anatolia by the Ottomans, where it became thin and high with a pen-shaped end. The minarets of the Blue Mosque

in Istanbul are considered some of the most important examples of this type of minaret (Figure 2).

- The spiral-shaped minaret: It is the form adopted in Mesopotamia. Al Malwiya Minaret at the Great Mosque of Samarra Mosque in Iraq is a good example of this type of minaret (Figure 3).
- The rib-shaped minaret: It is the dominant form in Mamluk architecture; it usually consists of eight ribs and is erected on a square base (Figure 4).
- Some other types of minarets emerged that adopted different mixed shapes - often squared at the base, cylindrical at the shaft and ribbed at the gallery. A good example of this type is the Mosque of Ibn Tulun in Cairo (Figure 5).

Until the eleventh century, the minaret was a separate structure from the mosque. After that, it became a fundamental part and symbol of a mosque, as well as a feature, monument and lighthouse to guide traveling convoys



Figure 1. Kutubiyya Mosque, Marrakesh, Morocco. Retrieved 23/9/2014 from <http://www.panoramico.com>



Figure 2. Blue Mosque, Istanbul, Turkey. Retrieved 23/9/2014 from <http://www.globalistdmc.com>



Figure 3. Mosque Samarra, Samarra, Iraq. Retrieved 23/9/2014 from <http://www.veins-web.net>



Figure 4. Mamluk Minaret of Ommayad Mosque, Damascus, Syria. Retrieved 24/9/2014 from <http://www.corbisimages.com>



Figure 5. Minaret of Ibn Tulun Mosque, Cairo, Egypt. Retrieved 24/9/2014 from <http://farm5.static.flickr.com>



Figure 6. Great Mosque of Djenné, Djenné Mali. Retrieved 24/9/2014 from <http://www.fas.usda.gov>

(Hattstein, Deluis, 2011). With the increasing height of buildings, the height of minarets also grew, being used as esthetic elements of gate and arch facades. This idea emerged in Iran and then spread quickly in Afghanistan, Anatolia and India. Later, beginning in the fourth century, we actually began

to see a couple of minarets surrounding the main gate in Iranian architecture. The number of minarets included in the mosque increased from one to four: two defining the main entrance, and another two at the main facade (Bloom, 2002).

As to the Ottoman Empire, which stretched from Anatolia to the north-west of Eastern Europe, it first adopted the Iranian type - the high cylindrical shape. To architects, the minaret was considered an element that contributes to the framing of the mosque Dome, whereas to owners or sultans, it is a powerful symbol of Islam and the superiority of the Ottoman power. With time, the Ottoman minaret became a familiar scene because the Ottoman Empire included the Mediterranean countries even Syria, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, North Africa, Greece, and the Balkans. The traditional square-shaped minaret remained dominant in Morocco (Hattstein, Delius, 2011) where the Ottoman never reigned. In contrast, beyond the traditional lands of Islam, in the Mediterranean and West Asia, minarets have a different history. For example, in West Africa, minarets were towers of mud slightly sloping on both sides. Along the coast of East Africa, the staircase minaret mostly prevailed. In China, the minaret was unfamiliar; however, in parts of China, the traditional types of gates and temples were adapted to be used as minarets (Bloom, 2000) (Figures 6 & 7).



Figure 7. Chinese Style Minaret, Great Mosque Xian, Xian, China. Retrieved 25/9/2014 from <http://commons.wikimedia.org>

The dome

The dome has been familiar to man since antiquity; it has been used in most of the religious buildings of different civilizations. It was familiar in pagan buildings as well as in religious buildings among the Jews, Christians and Muslims. It was adopted by Muslims in most of their religious buildings and, with time, became one of the basic features of Islamic religious architecture. As stated in the study of Dr. Mahmoud Aboud Al Harmouch (2002), there are many reasons domes were used; for example, "it represents the vast space and the wide sky with its splendor and majesty. For this reason, the religious people were keen to adopt in their temples for its spiritual meanings inspired by heavenly religions. Moreover, the dome, in its curved form, helps in collecting the sounds of believers when reciting the Koran or other hymns, and suggestively works on repeating the echo of these sounds, which adds to the splendor of prayer and reverence and emotions to the hearts of worshippers." In addition, "the dome helps to promote air and light through the many windows at its base, which reflect light and coolness to the mosque (Al Wali, 1988).

Domes were built during the Umayyad Era without prevention or prohibition by scholars. In actuality, they were essential for mosques because of the light they could provide through their windows and the heat they could prevent for worshippers. In addition, the height of these domes allows for the condensation of air in mosques. Some historians mentioned that the first dome in Islam was "Qubbat Al Sakhra" (The Dome of the Rock) in Jerusalem (Beit Al-makdess), built by Abdel Malak Ben Marwan in 72 Hegira, who was greatly influenced by church architecture in Jerusalem because of the glory and prestige it brings to Islam and the glorification it offers to the rituals of God (Al Harmouch, 2012).

Ablution rooms and toilets

Before prayer, a Muslim shall perform ablution - which means washing the face, hands, elbows and feet. Therefore, a mosque shall include facilities that make it possible to perform this task. Long ago, mosques used to include fountains for ablution that were available at the entrances and yards leading to the mosque. The mosque also includes toilets for worshippers that are usually available in a place far from the prayer hall to preserve the mosque's purity and cleanliness. Before, ablution rooms and toilets were available in separate buildings amid the yard. They have since become a part of the mosque premises, but far from the place of prayer.

There are other elements a mosque might contain. Mosques have recently been modernized to keep pace with the progress of the role of the mosque in each country. Such additions include a house for the Imam of the mosque and a library.

The architectural styles of the mosque

With the dissemination of Islamic Religion in various geographical territories, including countries and cities with distinctive cultures, mosque architecture has been influenced by regions' climates and local architectural features. Moreover,

due to the flexibility that characterizes Islam with respect to Mosque architecture, not imposing a specific style, and the one condition being to perform prayer under sharia, there has been an abundance of solutions and designs. Architectural heritage related to mosques in the world can be classified into five types (Encyclopedia of Religion, 2005):

The Arabic type

The hypostyle Mosque is the oldest and most popular in the Arab world, especially throughout the period between the seventh and the thirteenth century. It was used in building "The Prophet's Mosque" - the first mosque built in Islam. The mosque is composed of a large hall for prayer that is often rectangular, erected on pillars and covered by a flat roof. The prayer hall is entered through the wall facing the Qibla Wall, across a courtyard surrounded by arcades, which often include ablution rooms and toilets. The most important example of this type is the Umayyad Mosque in Damascus in 715 AD (Figure 8), the Great Mosque of Cordoba in Spain (786-990) (Figures 9&10) and the Mosque of Ibn Tulun (879) in Cairo (Figure 11).



Figure 8. Umayyad Mosque. Damascus, Syria. Retrieved 25/9/2014 from <http://reflectionseurope.com>



Figure 9. Interior of Great Mosque of Cordoba, Cordoba, Spain. Retrieved 25/9/2014 from <http://www.islamicstudies.harvard.edu>

The Persian type

This mosque has four “iwans”. It mainly exists in Iran, Central Asia and Afghanistan, and developed from the local architecture adopted in housing and schools in those areas (Encyclopedia of Religion, 2005). The structure of the mosque consists of four opposite iwans surrounding an outdoor courtyard. An “Iwan” is a rectangular room covered in most cases by a dome - open from one of its sides to the patio through a huge vaulted entrance. Usually the Qibla Iwan is the largest. The best examples of this type are the Jameh Mosque (Masjid Aj-jameh) in Isfahan (Figure 12) and the Shah Mosque in Isfahan.



Figure 12. The Four Iwans of Mosque Isfahan, Isfahan, Iran. Retrieved 25/9/2014 from <http://farflungistan.com>

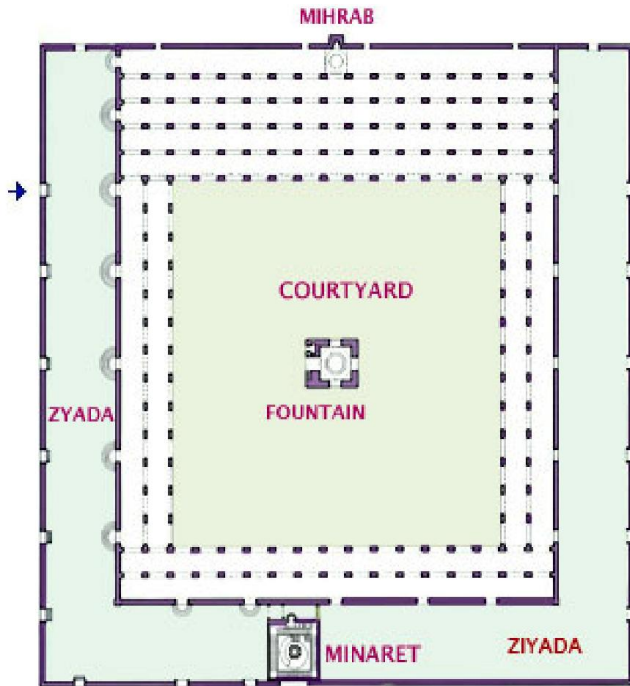


Figure 10. Plan of Ibn Tulun Mosque. Cairo, Egypt – Henri Stierlin, *Architecture de l'Islam*, 1979



Figure 11. Ibn Tulun Mosque, Cairo, Egypt. Retrieved 25/9/2014 from <http://www.trekearth.com>

The Indian type

Its appearance dates back to the reign of the Islamic Mughal Empire (1526-1828). The Mosque consists of a large rectangular hall often roofed by three domes, overlooking, from the opposite side of the Kaaba, a spacious courtyard, often with a pool in the middle for ablution, and surrounded by corridors with a huge entrance. Construction and decoration techniques are a mixture of Hindu and Persian traditions. The most important examples of this model are the Jama Masjid in Old Delhi (1658) (Figure 13) and the Great Badshahi Mosque in Lahore (1674).



Figure 13. Masjid Jamaa in Delhi. Delhi, India. Retrieved 25/9/2014 from <http://commons.wikimedia.org>

The Ottoman type - the Dome Mosque

The emergence of such mosques dates back to the Ottoman period. In its beginnings, it was influenced by Byzantine architecture represented by Hagia Sophia Church in Istanbul, later becoming the most significant type in the architecture of mosques. This model consists of a vast hall for prayer, with no columns, topped by a huge central dome; the entrance consists of five arched passageways usually covered by a series of small domes. The most distinguishing feature of this type is the minaret, which is described as "pen-shaped" because it looks

similar to a pencil. The most important example of this model is the Süleymaniye Mosque, which was built by architect Sinan in Edirne in 1557 (Figure 14).



Figure 14. Mosque of Süleymaniye, Edirne. Turkey. Retrieved 25/9/2014 from <http://www.qantara-med.org>

The Chinese type

Islam appeared in China in 907. The Chinese Mosque type was influenced by local traditional Chinese architecture, some of the elements of which were adapted and modulated to fulfill the function of the mosque. The mosque is composed of a large rectangular room for prayer, mounted on poles topped by upturned roof ends to conform to the traditional Chinese architecture. The rest of the mosque functions are distributed within separate independent blocks, including the gate and the minaret, which usually take the form of a square, and an octagon-shaped temple with several levels. This type also contains several successive squares on one axis, where pavilions and sections belonging to the mosque are distributed on both sides stretching to the prayer hall at the end of the axis. The mosque property is surrounded by high walls including Chinese Gardens where moving from one space to another takes place through traditional Chinese lunar gates. In fact, the shape of the Chinese mosque cannot be easily distinguished from other public Chinese premises. The most significant example of this type is the Great Mosque of Xi'an, which was built in the eighth century and restored in 1392 (Figure 7), and the Beijing Mosque in China (Figure 15).



Figure 15. Niujié Mosque, Beijing, China. Retrieved 25/9/2014 from <http://www.tour-beijing.com>

Legal provisions pertaining to prayer conditions and its impact on mosque design solutions

The qibla direction

In building a mosque, qibla direction must be considered because it plays a significant role in the design process.

Choosing the lot

The lot chosen for building a mosque must be examined for convenience in regards to form, dimension and location. The ideal position of the qibla direction is perpendicular to both lines of the lot interfaces or close to that. However, if this condition is unavailable, the lot area has to be vast enough for the mosque edge direction to be toward the qibla. For instance, for the premise designer of the Shah Mosque in Isfahan to verify the direction of the mosque qibla toward Mecca, he used a location inclined at 45 degrees from the field rectangle side facing the North side (Sultani, 2004) (Figure 16).



Figure 16. Mosque Shah, Isfahan, Iran. Retrieved 25/9/2014 from <http://www.turbosquid.com>

Abiding by qibla direction and its importance in designing a prayer hall

The prayer hall, an essential element of a mosque, must be directed toward qibla. During prayer, worshippers must stand upright in rows, in alignment with qibla, based on what is said by the Prophet (pbuh), "Keep your rows straight (during Salat in congregation), for keeping the rows straight is part of the perfection of Salat" (narrated by Al-Bukhari and Muslim) (Sabek, 1993, page 182), with the worshippers performing the same movements simultaneously. Therefore, the mosque ground must be plain and flat so the rows can be straight. Further, the first row is preferred in prayer. Allah's Apostle said, "If people came to know the blessing of calling Adhan and the standing in the first row, they could do nothing but draw lots to secure these privileges." He also stated, "The best of men's rows (in Salat) is the first row and the worst is the last" (Muslim) (Aba l'Khail, 1988). Consequently, some architectural shapes were preferred to others since they contributed to providing a first row longer than others. A rectangular shape whose longer side is parallel to the qibla is the best solution in this case. Furthermore, the square, the semi-oblique, and the semi-circle are the best shapes due to the

long first rows they provide. In contrast, shapes whose longest sides are in the center, such as a circle, hexagon, and octagonal, are avoided because their rows are diminished toward the qibla (Hassan, 1999).

Prohibition of cutting off rows and its relevance to defining the entrance

Overstepping necks during prayer is abominable, for the prophet (pbuh) says "If he who passes among worshippers during prayer knows the consequences, he will stand for forty (that is forty years)." He also says, "Fill (complete) the first row, then the one next to it; and if there is any deficiency (incompleteness), it should be in the last row" (by Anas) (Sabek 1993, page 183). Therefore, the entrance to the prayer hall must be from the back, coming from the wall parallel to the qibla wall (Hassan, 1999). This condition defined the rules of the construction centralization process as well as the prayer hall entrance, paving the way for innovative architectural solutions when many specifications did not offer such possibilities. For example, if the basic premise facade overlooking the street is perpendicular to the qibla direction, the only solution is an inclined entrance or other suggestions.

Prohibition of cutting off rows and its relevance to construction technique

Abiding by this requirement has also contributed, with time, to determination at finding the best space for the prayer hall so a unity of rows is fulfilled, without cut-offs, even by pillars. The prophet (pbuh) says, "Whoever completes a row, may Allah be generous to him, and whoever cuts a row, may Allah cut him off" (Sabek, page 183). Actually, the architect Sinan was able to fulfill this requirement in the mosques he designed in Turkey, particularly Sulaymaniye Mosque in Edrine.

Preserving the purity and cleanliness of the mosque

This condition is obligatory. It necessitates that the ablution rooms and toilets are far from the prayer hall.

Fulfilling piety and concentration during prayer

The Almighty said in his holy book when describing "Al Mou'minoon" (the believers) during pray, "Prosperous are the believers who pray humbly and who shun idle talk" (surat Al Mou'menoun 1-3). Prayer is not mere movements and words performed by the believer; rather, it is an obligation that must be performed with humbleness, thoughtfulness, and contemplation. In other words, one must be totally involved in prayer, far from worldly matters. Prayer is accepted only when performed with humbleness. The prophet (pbuh) says, "Prayer is accepted only when performed by a supplicant." It is true that burden falls off a person who performs prayer; however, prayer cannot be accepted unless performed with a discipline that befits His Majesty (Mohamad, 2007). The area design and appearance play a significant role in helping worshippers focus during prayer, avoiding distractions, to achieve humbleness; thus, many issues should be considered, namely the following:

- Communication between the interior and exterior area of the prayer hall should be avoided on the horizontal level. In other words, openings or windows should not be available at the level of worshippers, particularly, on the qibla wall, or lateral walls, so the worshipper is not distracted while praying or listening to the orator. Accordingly, communication with the outer space must be from the upper part and not the sides due to the positive influence it has at the spiritual level.
- Decorations, drawings and inscriptions must not be available, so the worshipper is not distracted while praying or listening to the orator.
- Colors used in a mosque should help the worshipper in concentration and humbleness, and inspire purity; some believe that white is the best.

The shape of a mosque with respect to symbolism and functionality

Throughout time, and despite the succession of eras of different cultural backgrounds that ruled the Islamic world, a new mosque style has become commonplace in all areas where Islam exists. The first image you visualize upon hearing the word mosque is a building with a minaret and a dome, knowing that the dome as a symbol is not as powerful as the minaret. The latter has throughout history had great symbolic value, standing for Islam and Islamic countries (Bloom, 2002) rather than for the mosque. However, currently - specifically after the events of September 11, 2001 - some voices have begun to call for the doing away of this element, the minaret, based on the fact that it did not exist during the first days of Islam and it does not constitute a basic mosque element (Hoteit, 2015; Khan, 2008); furthermore, the role of a minaret with regard to calling to prayer has somehow been negated and replaced by loudspeakers. In addition, town scenery has changed, becoming overwhelmed by towers and skyscrapers, which has minimized the importance of the impact of minarets in towns. Moreover, some parties consider the minaret as an element of "Islamic fanatic trends" and a symbol of power and invasion rather than religion, in particular according to the justification for the law of prohibition imposed by Switzerland on Nov. 29, 2009 on minaret architecture. By virtue of this prohibition, Muslims were not allowed to build mosques with minarets fearing the spread of Radical Islam (Bokhari, 2009).

Another opinion exceeding Islam, striving for a common style for mosques where different designs and trends in Mosque Architecture reflect modern trends of architecture, is starting to be noticed. The supporters of this trend justify their attitude by arguing that the Western World is prevailed by what is known as Islamophobia (Alraouf, 2011): the fear of Islam and its symbols - most significantly the mosque. Accordingly, the classical, ideal and typical image of the mosque must change to conform with modern trends in architect, minimizing the fear of these strange or obtrusive elements penetrating Western cultural, historic, and architectural scenery. The most significant ideas suggested by these followers are as follows:

- The mosque should change in its exterior form - particularly given the great progress witnessed by the world on scientific and technological levels. Thus, the dome and minaret can be dispensed.

- The mosque premises should become more transparent and coherent with its surrounding, and thus be far from deaf walls (Lebarre, 2010).
- The mosque should change to have different usages (Alraouf, 2011). Its role as a place for prayer should be limited only to different times. At other times, it can be used for activities, serving, e.g., as a courtyard or amphitheater ... in addition to other suggestions echoed worldwide.

In contrast, a different motive emphasizes the classical style of the mosque, particularly the minaret, considering that the minaret - regardless of whether it is based on a religious text - has become an Islamic traditional symbol, as a result of historical and social outcomes that lasted until the end of the eighth century A.D. Since then, minarets have become a fixed component in mosque architecture in most of the Islamic world, a sign and a distinctive feature that indicates its presence in the city sky (Kenna, 2009). Thus, it has come to have greatest importance, especially for the Muslim minority in the non-Islamic countries because it represents a symbol for revealing their doctrine and an evidence of being acknowledged formally and socially.

The following question presents itself: Is it true that the minaret is no longer important; could we actually do without it because its presence is no more justified? What do Muslims think of the minaret, and what does it actually stand for? The minaret is a religious architectural symbol that has nothing to do with authority or politics and carries no extreme fanatic trends as asserted in the Swiss law. In the very beginnings of Islam, the goal of its presence was limited to finding an artistic architectural expression that conforms with the significance of such a premise, the house of God, demonstrating Muslims' ability to be influenced by preceding cultures, as mentioned by some studies (Al Khozraji, 2013). In particular, the first minaret was built in Damascus, in a Christian city with many churches, and it was used for calling to prayer; with time, it became an indicator of the presence of Islam in a certain place. In other words, wherever a minaret exists, Islam and Muslims exist also (Bloom, 2002). However, with time, it has become a fundamental part of the mosque such that it would be difficult to reach and know a mosque without its presence.

Furthermore, the minaret element has gained significance and great symbolic value. It has also acquired a spiritual meaning according to worshippers. When a minaret stands up high alone in the sky, it not only represents the mosque but also announces the presence of one god and one spiritual doctrine - the fundamental doctrine in Islam. Consequently, we realize that the function of a minaret is not invalidated with the presence of loudspeakers and the development of ways of calling to prayer; its spiritual symbolic role, as well as its guiding role to the mosque, still exists and is required.

As to the mosque image, in general, and with respect to trends calling for changing some elements so that it conforms with modern architectural shapes, the following is relevant: It is true that mosque premises are similar to any other building, subject to changes in accordance with changes in lifestyle, architectural means and technology progress; however, what

distinguishes a mosque from other buildings is that its function and mode of performing are fixed and permanent, "What is Halal by Mohamad will always remain Halal to the Day of Judgement, and what is haram will always be haram till the Day of Judgment". Accordingly, what can be changed in a mosque is restricted, but any change or design suggested that does not violate the conditions and measurements of its functioning, as previously discussed, is not paradoxical. On the contrary, if such a change contributes to improving the performance of prayer conditions with more concentration and humbleness, it should be praised and encouraged. Therefore, any issue that might negatively influence prayer conditions or threaten the purity, sacredness and prestige of the place is not permitted.

Hereinafter, we will present and evaluate some mosque types that were designed and executed recently that are aimed at changing the typical image of the mosque to conform with the developments and modern trends in architecture - this is with respect to Islamic cities. As to the non-Islamic cities, particularly in European countries and the United States, in addition to what has been aforementioned, the mosque should represent a civilized, contemporary, open-minded, receptive, and peaceful image of its community and surrounding - within the spirituality of Islamic art and culture.

The mosque of "The Islamic Forum to emphasize dialogue and coexistence" in Penzberg – Germany

Designed and built in Europe, specifically in Bavaria of Germany, by Alen Jasarevic, the mosque reflected a theme of "transparency"; in other words, it created a visual consistency between the mosque interior and exterior, where passersby of different religious and doctrinal backgrounds can see what is happening inside a mosque, and become acquainted with the Muslims while performing the most sacred religious obligation, prayer. Accordingly, 60% of the mosque facades are transparent glass (Alraouf, 2011) (Figure 17). The main goal of "transparency" is to remove any negative ideas haunting Western communities, particularly Germany, regarding terrorism and what is going on in Islamic centers and mosques, particularly after the events of September 11.



Figure 17. The Penzenberg Mosque, Penzberg, Germany. Retrieved 25/9/2014 from [http:// www.darulkaustar.net](http://www.darulkaustar.net)

Examining mosque design, it is obvious that this mosque has failed in principle. Despite the good intention of its designer, "transparency" is not required or accepted in a mosque, particularly in the prayer hall, although it is beneficial with respect to improving the image of Muslims. Such transparency distracts worshippers at prayer and makes concentration more difficult; in particular, as passersby observe worshippers inside the mosque, the latter can be distracted by them and unable to concentrate on prayer or what is said by the Imam. Accordingly, this minimizes spirituality and the ability to enjoy concentration and humbleness during prayer. The mosque does not fulfill the requirements for best prayer.

As to the architectural style adopted in design, it reflects the contemporary spirit invested skillfully by the designer, who used mosque traditional terminology in a modern way that can comply with daily contemporary life. Although the designer was influenced by traditional Islamic culture, he did not reveal it as it is. Moreover, he excelled at using Islamic inscriptions, such as verses of the Quran, in decorating the Mosque facade and minaret. The facades turned into huge palettes where passersby could read Quran verses accompanied with translations into German and enjoy the beautiful Arabic calligraphy and the Islamic decoration arts. The minaret maintained mosque design despite its modernity. Although it was not allowed to play its traditional role, which was replaced by a number of digital screens that included the schedule of the five daily prayers and the dates of Islamic events, it remained, according to its designer, a live symbolic expression of the mosque (Alraouf, 2011). The mosque was inspired by the traditional geometrical types especially in Samarra Mosque in Iraq and Ibn Tulun Mosque in Egypt, yet was presented in an intelligent contemporary manner, where the minaret consists of three blocks that rise up to the sky in a circular manner, made of Perforated steel sheets decorated with Islamic calligraphy.

The Vanishing Mosque (Rux, 2010)

One of the contemporary trends called for changing the mosque into a public place and making it a part of public areas in town (Kenan, 2010), where it would become an open field for other activities of town, in other words, mixing the clamor of people's daily lives with the role of prayer. The project we are talking about is of the design of RUX Studio; it was designed to be executed in the Middle East - specifically Dubai. The concept was justified by saying that prayer in open air is more spiritual than indoors and that the prophet's (pbuh) mosque in its very beginnings was not covered, but was covered by a ceiling made of palm fronds. The designer sought to use roofing means and light-unfixed coating to protect from the climate and provide privacy conditions for women. The proposed analytic review of the mosque clarifies that a fundamental condition of prayer requirements, namely, concentration and humbleness during prayer, was neglected. This was one of the issues emphasized by sharia, regarding how a worshipper can concentrate while praying in a fully open area, where there are different sights: the surrounding commercial shop windows, the passersby on sidewalks, and many other elements that might distract the worshipper performing prayer (Figure 18). In addition, this design makes it possible to step into the mosque from anywhere without any

respect to rows or worshippers during prayer. There is another issue, namely, the purity and cleanliness of the place. How could one be a believer in an open area that changes to a public place in times other than prayer? The design shows that there is a difference in the mosque's ground level, which contradicts the concept of similarity available in mosques. Thus, we say that the mosque, despite its innovative ideas, which were met with benevolence and praise by some architects and researchers, neglected and ignored the functional and fundamental conditions of the mosque.



Figure 18. The Vanishing Mosque. Retrieved 25/9/2014 from <http://www.designboom.com>

King Abdullah Financial District Mosque - Saudi Arabia

This project and its designer have been exposed to severe criticism. One of the critics argued that the project embodies a suicide of Islamic Architect principles, for inconvenience to be called as a mosque; it is similar to a prayer corner in a shopping center (Bonat, 2010). Moreover, the critic accused the designer of being unable to understand and analyze the principles of designing with respect to Islamic and Arabic Architectural Heritage. According to him, this building and other contemporary public buildings in the Middle East could be replaced in Europe and United States. The main reason behind this negative criticism refers to the fact that the designing company, in trying to reconsider or update mosque architecture, adopted a new style in designing the mosque, far from the traditional architectural terminology of the mosque as the dome, the arches, and the classical minaret (Figure 19). The outside formation of the mosque is distinguished for its abstraction, which reflects positively on the area specified for prayer inside.



Figure 19. The design of the King Abdallah Mosque, Riyadh, KSA. Retrieved 25/9/2014 from <http://www.hok.com>

Grand Mosque of Copenhagen – Denmark

Another type of mosque is built in Copenhagen in Denmark. In this example, the designer Bjarke Ingels mixed the spiritual and functional conditions required in designing a mosque with the goal of having it in a non-Islamic community. The architect attempted and excelled at designing a mosque that is in harmony with its architectural surrounding (Labarre, 2010) with respect to the mass, traits and materials on one hand (Figure 20) and that provides a symbolic image of the mosque, and the spiritual and religious requirements to perform the prayer obligation on the other hand. We do observe that the interior vacancy complied with the required aforementioned specifications by avoiding any decorations or details that might distract the worshipper; thus, contact with external surroundings comes from above and in a progressive symbolic manner that ascertains oneness and the worshipper's relationship with the Almighty, the Creator (Figure 21).

Other contemporary trends prefer to abide by the classical, traditional character in mosque architecture to avoid any assaults, criticisms or even denials by the Islamic community, and, thus, disapproval of the premises because Muslims in some communities are extremely sensitive to the issues of heritage and traditions. This trend could be justified if premises are inspected within a local, heritage and traditional framework. However, the issue is unfamiliar and unacceptable if a mosque is not built within a contemporary, modern and architectural framework



Figure 20. Grand Mosque of Copenhagen, Copenhagen, Denmark. Retrieved 25/9/2014 from <http://arabianindustry.com>



Figure 21. The interior of the Grand Mosque of Copenhagen, Copenhagen, Denmark. Retrieved 25/9/2014 from <http://www.architecturenewsplus.com/project-images/3210>

Another trend beyond the issue of modernity is whether contemporaneity necessitates the adoption of strange sizes and forms that draw attention (Hoteit, 2015). This contradicts the goal of the mosque and the simplicity of Islamic Art, in addition to the fact that some of the forms and sizes do not respect the idea of long first rows discussed previously. Moreover, some forms create interior free spaces that do not help in focusing and solemnity, in addition to creating large problems in regard to sound and echoes. These forms suggest proposals and messages different from the mosque and thus lack the semiotic dimension of these premises.

Conclusion

Mosque architecture has developed and changed with changes in civilizations and cultures. Many of the existing elements of the mosque have been added for political and social, rather than religious, reasons. The mosque's role - prayer - is invariable and has not changed throughout time; for 1400 years, it has been and will always be used in a similar manner, abiding by the same rules. Consequently, there is no compromise in terms of performance conditions. The standard for approving or disapproving a design has to do with the extent of applying these conditions. There are no legal obstacles preventing mosque architecture from keeping pace with the modern developments taking place in the field of masonry and technology, provided that this change does not affect the spiritual role of the mosque. It is required that the mosque belongs to and integrates with its surrounding. In other words, its architecture is inspired by or at least mimics the surrounding architecture or country - certainly, in conformity with the spirituality of Islamic art and culture. Islam is a universal religion not limited to a sect, race, or gender; instead, it is for all. It is the religion of equality, openness and acceptance of all ethnicities and races. (There is no difference between Arabs and non-Arabs except with taqwa). Consequently, it is not mandatory that a mosque remain limited to a certain type or restricted to elements that did not exist in the mosques of first Islam. Islamophobia does not justify that some can restrain the mosque or negate it as an entity and a fundamental architectural element in society and as an urgent occupational need. The mosque is a peaceful religious building whose fundamental role is prayer and the dissemination of Islamic religion, far from any extremism or terrorism. It is the minaret of Muslims that must last to disseminate peace, love and acceptance among peoples.

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