Islamic Architecture on the Move

Motion and Modernity

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Edited by Christiane Gruber

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Chapter 1

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The word 'building' is philanthropic in the domain of meaning. As a gerund or verbal noun, it connotes motion and process as internally generated or else incited by an external agent. At a more conceptual level, it also points to a constructive act that rejects finality to instead capture – even celebrate – an ongoing state of incompletion. Transcending stasis and fixity, many buildings indeed flourish in a zone of in-betweenness, straddling genesis and (a nominal) end, addition and manipulation, destruction and survival. In their visual and material manifestations, they showcase the state of contingency along with the seemingly endless creative possibilities it entails.

Unsurprisingly, buildings and architectural forms in the Islamic world display mobility of all sorts, in the process generating complex connectivities across time and space. Like built forms per se, the exact realms encompassed by the lands of Islam *(Dar al-Islam)* habitually eschew attempts at precise location and definition. Unmoored and trotting the globe all the way to China, Europe, America and Hawai'i, architectural knowledge, practices and motifs typically associated with Islamic lands attest to ongoing artistic interactions on a global scale. While such exchanges have certainly accelerated during the modern period thanks to travel, trade and new technologies, they are by no means a new phenomenon. On the contrary, buildings have always been on the move, both inside and outside territories traditionally associated with Islam.

Building upon older scholarship while breaking new ground, the contributors to this volume offer new insights into, as well as challenges and expansions of, the definition of 'Islamic' architecture through its panoply of manifestations, receptions and various trajectories from the eighteenth century to the present day. Collectively, the essays explore the many ways in which architectural practices and built forms can be deracinated from their 'original' contexts and locales, migrate to other milieus, and appear in new and unexpected contexts. Through movement, exchange, transfer, assemblage, replication, response and revival, a variety of novel configurations both generate and echo historically and culturally significant discourses. Without a doubt, such processes of interaction challenge the intertwined concepts of tradition and authenticity, both notional constructs that frequently rely on the sanction of precedent in order to fashion what is perceived as 'modern'.[1]

Beyond stylistic and taxonomical questions, there are many ways in which Islamic architecture 'on the move' can be studied, regardless of methodological approach and theoretical conceptualization. Not restricting themselves to a single scholarly method or intellectual model within the humanities and social sciences, the contributors to

this volume embrace a plurality of perspectives and paradigms. Some authors, such as Ashley Dimmig, examine the notion of the threshold as a liminal place for the visual and material performance of both self and polity at moments of increasing cultural and artistic exchange, especially as manifest in tentage traditions of the late Ottoman Empire.[2] Inspired by James Clifford's work on culture and travel, Marwa el-Ashmouni explores the various 'roots' and 'routes' of architectural expression along with its function as a 'contact zone'[3] in the Khedival palace architecture of Cairo. Still others, including Moya Carey and Olga Bush, highlight practices of relocation and translation in British museum and American domestic contexts,[4] in which an Islamicate Orient is both 'imagined' via the collecting of architectural drawings and materials as well as 'imaginary' through an array of conspicuous absences.[5] Last but not least, Katharine Bartsch, Elise Kamleh, David Simonowitz and Sam Bowker explore how architecture can be 'on the move' through the transfer of architectural typologies, designs and models – whether through the Shi'i shrines and architectural floats of Lucknow, the Ottoman mosque-wagon that made its way down the Hijaz Railway, or contemporary tent traditions in Cairo.

Springing from one place to the next, and engaging in peregrination and transposition, architectural variability persistently thwarts attempts at uniformity and cohesion in scholarly methods. On the contrary, changes of forms and practices invite an unshackling from received models, including those that seek out a perceived unity in variety. In order to harmonize with the material evidence, which so evidently impugns constancy and homogeneity, scholarly approaches that highlight imbrications and entanglements are perhaps best suited for the task at hand, however untidy these may appear.[6] Consequently, this volume embraces the generative potential of instability by exploring the dynamics of architectural expression through a plurality of scholarly methods, all of which aim to explore the mechanics and outcomes of architectural mobility within a modern interconnected world.

The question of mobility – of humans, ideas, things and even places – has preoccupied researchers as of late. Building upon the 'cultural' and 'pictorial' turn of the second half of the twentieth century, a critical mass of scholarship that has gathered momentum over the past decade aims to investigate the so-called 'mobility turn' of the contemporary period. Proponents of the newly emergent mobilities paradigm include Michael Guggenheim, Ola Söderström, Mimi Sheller and John Urry.[7] Collectively, these scholars (and others) prefer to stress networks, flows, interlinks and diffusions, in the process arguing against insularity and fixedness. They do not entirely shed sedentarist paradigms, however. Instead, they view sedentary and nomadic cultures as simultaneous, much as scholars of globalization consider cultural change and fixity as mutually constitutive.[8] Like people and media, architectural knowledge and traditions likewise fluctuate within circulatory systems, in which they are imbricated in and contribute to regimes of value.[9] Such systems and regimes are so elastic that recently scholars have formulated the notion of

'liquid' modernity, in which any attempt at differentiating the self from the other, the here from the there, at times appears a rather entropic exercise.[10]

Along with the new mobilities paradigm, increasing scholarly attention to movement, and the pendant notion of a liquid modernity, emerges our collective question: what can another body of evidence comprised of built forms and practices associated with Islamic lands and cultures contribute to the ways in which mutability in the modern world is conceptualized and studied? In other words, rather than simply applying relatively novel theoretical models to another corpus of (typically neglected) materials, how does Islamic architecture help expand and reframe broader questions about material, artistic and cultural mobility in the modern world?

While the contributors to this volume offer a variety of approaches to these questions, this essay aims to explore further conceptual models that may prove fruitful in the study of architectural mobilities within and beyond Islamic lands from the eighteenth century to present day. Among these models are textile metaphors, micro-architecture, flows and hubs, tentage traditions and urban 'slumming' to articulate discourses on politics and identity. These types of movement between media, spaces and places highlight the fact that architectural practices are never wholly distinct or dichotomous; that mobility and fixity are very often mutually serviceable; that the past is frequently 'moved' – both conceptually and emotionally – into the present; and that manipulations of urban space can serve as highly visible stages for the enunciation and performance of ideological conflict today.

Textile Metaphors: A Ka'ba-in-Motion

The relationship between Islamic architecture and textile arts has been a subject of scholarly interest for some time now. As Lisa Golombek argued in her seminal study (1988), the world of Islam appears somewhat of a 'draped universe' displaying a distinct textile aesthetic – even a textile 'mentality' or 'reflex' – in which all media tend to look like carpets.[11] Golombek rightly points to the terms *tiraz* (epigraphic band) and *hazarbaf* (thousand-weave) as having migrated from embroidered and woven goods to buildings bearing honorific inscriptions and decorative brickwork. However, arguing for the primacy of fabric art as particular to Islamic traditions is problematic since it assumes that practices and motifs only move in one direction – namely, from fabric arts to built forms – and not the other way around. Such an argument in favour of a one-way trajectory, with textiles seen as invariably at the genesis of all architectural creativity, unfortunately precludes the possibility of exploring artistic interchange across the arts through multimedia and multilateral engagements.

Material evidence and modern practices argue against a unilinear line of causation, revealing instead a dynamic interplay between textile and stone, mobility and fixity. For

instance, as attested by archaeological and ethnographic evidence, ephemeral fabric architecture may be erected on long-lasting stone foundations, thereby combining both nomadic and sedentarist building traditions.[12] Additionally, brick tombs and pavilions may mimic fabric canopies,[13] while some tents emulate more permanent building types, including mosques and palaces.[14] Sometimes encampments also function as fully articulated tent cities, set in gardens and complete with latrines, thus recreating urban conditions and structures via moveable analogues used for a number of special occasions such as weddings and circumcisions.[15] In these and other examples, the circulation of architecture in both its 'solid' and 'fluid' forms proves unconstrained, free-flowing and responsive to both place and circumstance.

Architectural mobility has thrived from the beginning of Islam until today. Material and visual forms of movement without a doubt hold a significant place within political and pious practices, including those linked to the Ka'ba in Mecca. As the symbolic navel of the universe, the Ka'ba's holiness is articulated in a number of ways, including through its inscribed fabric covering or *kiswa*. Literally meaning 'robe', the *kiswa* essentially acts as the black cube's clothing or protective garb. On the one hand, the *kiswa* sanctifies the holy site by making it *ihram* – a term meaning religiously pure and removed from mundanity. Beyond establishing a 'taboo' or set-apart zone typically associated with sacred sites, the covered Ka'ba is also likened to a 'veiled bride', whose inner beauty is beyond, and forbidden to, the onlooker's gaze.[16] Thus, Islam's most revered – and durable – site is enshrouded with cloth during the *hajj* season, itself the holiest moment of the Islamic ritual calendar.

While intimately associated with the Ka'ba, the *kiswa* both moves to and away from the black cubic structure at the heart of Mecca's sacred precinct. Indeed, its presence in the holy city is but an occasional interlude between its yearly genesis and dissolution, the latter marked by the fabric's parcelling and disbursement as a contact relic to various corners of the Islamic world. Traditionally manufactured in Egypt, the *kiswa* was ceremonially 'launched' into motion along with gifts and a palanquin (*mahmal*) sent from Cairo to Mecca. Accompanied by fanfare and festivity, the *mahmal* tradition lasted from the thirteenth century until 1952, at which time parades were staged in Cairo for ceremonial purposes alone.[17]

While some *mahmals* were described and shaped as tents,[18] others seem to pay homage to the Ka'ba's cubic structure and inscribed fabric cover [Figure 1]. These Ka'ba-like litters approximate the visual and material qualities of the sacred site, thereby distancing the palanquins from their original function as carriers of goods and persons. Instead, such *mahmals* appear as if processed models, bringing the faraway Ka'ba to a more local environment via its diminutive and portable likeness. As a mobile replica, the Ka'ba becomes metaphorically uprooted from its territorial locus, in the process becoming a migrant entity susceptible to global ownership claims. Its movement and multiplication increase its symbolic capital for members of the faith community, in a manner not unlike other built forms that circulate across borders.[19] The diffusion of

Figure 1: The *mahmal* in Cairo, photograph from the series 'Cairo Snaps', by Rudolf Franz Lehnert and Ernst Heinrich Landrock, c.1920. Visual Resources Center, Department of the History of Art, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, digital file 14d000009.

Ka'ba simulacra reshape various religio-visual landscapes while simultaneously enabling an individual's certitude of the holy building's absence to transform into a perception of its allegorical presence.

Beyond its replication and locomotion in *mahmal* processional parades, images of the Ka'ba have spread across the continents as well. Representations of the holy site appear as wall paintings and posters in Egypt, Syria and India,[20] while three-dimensional models today can be found within Islamic schools and mosques in the United States, including in the metro-Detroit area [Figure 2]. In these new Muslim-American, religious-academic settings, maquettes of Islam's holiest site enable the learning and practising of pilgrimage traditions by young students while also providing adults the opportunity to embark on a *hajj* by proxy, itself not a new phenomenon.[21] In this performative context, the devotees' uttering of pious prayers, declarations of being present in the realm of God, and circumambulation all serve to 'enliven' the model's spiritual being and power. This form of micro-architecture also distributes the sacred by deterritorializing it and reconstituting its recognizable parts, all the while animating its environs through dynamic physical and oral interactions.

Figure 2: Fifth-graders, dressed in *ihram*, perform a makeshift *hajj* around a model of the Ka'ba while issuing prayers in honour of the Prophet Muhammad, yearly Dhu'l-Hijja performance in an Islamic school in the metro-Detroit area, USA, November 2011. Photograph courtesy of Nama Khalil.

The Ka'ba continuously undergoes acts of transference, in which the holy site and its attendant meanings are decidedly 'repackaged' within different milieus and practices. In some instances, the cubic structure functions as an aptly shaped box-binding to contain copies of the Qur'an. These sacred tomes are offered for sale alongside other devotional paraphernalia in stores located in the vicinity of popular pilgrimage sites, such as the mosque and tomb of the Sufi *shaykh* Hacı Bayram (d. 1430) located in Ankara, Turkey [Figure 3]. As it enters the commodity situation, the Ka'ba transforms into an object that can be purchased, owned and even 'consumed', especially during seasons of high demand. Moreover, if purchased as presents to be given away, these objects gain further value through the mediation of material. As Gregory Starrett notes in this regard, it is indeed 'their permanence, a material quality, rather than solely their spiritual content, that makes them desirable as gifts'.[22] Such constancy of presence, however, remains underwritten by the original building's capacity to undergo symbolic dissolution, speciation and reconstitution at the hands of cultural entrepreneurs and pious consumers.

The Ka'ba's mobility is oftentimes achieved through the metaphor of the *kiswa*, itself a visible synecdoche of the unseen holy structure secreted below. While the inscribed

Figure 3: Ka'ba-like Qur'ans and other religious commodities on display in the vitrine of a store of devotional paraphernalia at Hacı Bayram mosque complex, Ankara, Turkey, 2013. Christiane Gruber.

cloth is cut up and distributed as a contact relic, it is also emulated in mass-produced textile panels. Such panels can be purchased in stores of religious goods, after which their meanings are expanded or enclaved by contextual placement and use.

For instance, in the Islamic House of Wisdom in Dearborn, Michigan, a mass-produced *kiswa* panel drapes the backside of the mosque's *mihrab,* its lower midsection left slightly ajar in order to reveal what appear to be gleaming silver doors beneath [Figure 4]. This fabric metaphor certainly aids members of the congregation in directing prayer towards the *qibla* wall, and thus Mecca and the Ka'ba proper. Just as significantly, it also invites the viewer to cast a furtive glance upon the holy site, which is both absent and present as well as passing and permanent. Objectifying an apparent geographical and temporal paradox, this intimated Ka'ba forces its beholders to labour to interpret and solve an optical challenge caused by visual hint and allegation.

The Ka'ba's metaphorical presence elsewhere is not solely restricted to the presence of the *kiswa.* At times, a mosque may include a fragmentary black stone lodged in its façade or *qibla* wall, where it serves as the building's august foundation stone.

Figure 4: Textile panel emulating the *kiswa* and Ka'ba door, placed in the *mihrab* of the Islamic House of Wisdom, Dearborn, Michigan, USA, 2013. Christiane Gruber.

At other times, contemporary images of Islam's holy site blur the line between lived and virtual reality, as can be seen in a large-scale digital projection of the shrine on the *qibla* wall in the women's section of the Hacı Bayram Mosque [Figure 5]. Evidently, those responsible for recent renovations of the mosque deemed it appropriate to sink the women's prayer section into a crypt-like basement, thereby precluding female access to the historical mosque on the ground floor. The men's prayer hall above includes a *mihrab*, a metaphor of direction that necessitates abstract thought. Conversely, the women's section glows in a light analogon, in some sense thwarting more complex, non-literal visuo-cognitive experiences of the Ka'ba. Except for perhaps the *qibla* wall-screen, which acts as a fabric threshold into a sacred realm freed from the contingency of time and place, simile and synecdoche have been entirely cast aside. Instead, a beaming avatar transforms 'the'
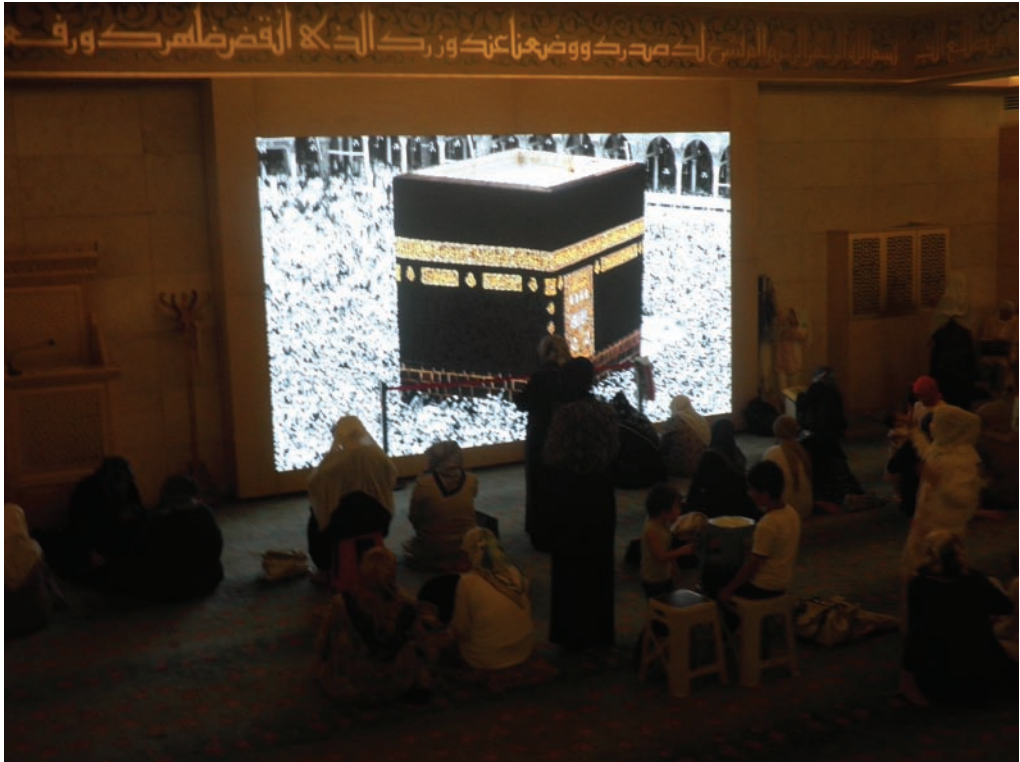
Figure 5: Women praying towards a digital projection of the Ka'ba, basement of the Hacı Bayram Mosque, Ankara, Turkey, 2013. Christiane Gruber.

specific Ka'ba into many 'a' Ka'ba, which traverse the globe from Mecca to Cairo, Ankara, Detroit and beyond.

Contentions in Miniature

Other built forms associated with the lands of Dar al-Islam punctuate various geographical areas, where they contribute to both ephemeral and enduring visual landscapes. Entire buildings are sometimes emulated and erected at smaller scale elsewhere. Within their new cultural contexts, these multiplied mobile structures are deployed by actors who wish to make claims to political authority and religious ascendancy by means of architectural expression.

   Like the Ka'ba, the Dome of the Rock is an especially important mobile building. Its importance in Islam is due to the fact that it is believed to mark the place of God's and Muhammad's ascension into the celestial spheres, as well as the location of the Day of

Judgment at the end times.[23] While in earlier centuries it too was ornamented with textiles – in particular, curtains of brocade draped around the rocky outcrop in the building's interior[24] – it is the totality of its constituent forms and decoration that coalesced into mobile markers for this Islamic holy site in Jerusalem from the medieval period to today.[25]

For instance, within contemporary Iran, numerous maquettes and fountains of the Dome of the Rock were placed in Iranian cities during and immediately after the Iran–Iraq War of 1980–88 [Figure 6].[26] These relatively faithful albeit altered models materially reified Iran's express wish to 'liberate' Jerusalem both during and after the war, while also ensconcing a key visual index of the Islamic Holy Land within an Iranian domestic landscape.

Additionally, the Dome of the Rock's recognizable tile-clad octagonal walls and golden dome were used to ornament the top of relics cases of Iranian war martyrs who are buried in the cemetery of Behesht-e Zahra in southern Tehran [Figure 7]. Within this modern Iranian funerary context, the Dome of the Rock functions as the martyr's treasure box, in which his photographic image and personal possessions are preserved in perpetuity. The diminutive building visually insinuates the deceased's deliverance through death as well as his salvation in the afterlife, in a manner akin to churches in the shape of the Holy Sepulchre that multiplied in Europe during the medieval period in order to denote Christian resurrection through the sacrament of baptism.[27] In the Shiʻi Iranian case, martyrdom is likewise equated to a baptism or purification; however, this baptism is achieved through the spilling of blood,

Figure 6: Temporary maquette of the Dome of the Rock, Serah-i Quds (Jerusalem three-street junction), Niavaran, Tehran, Iran, 2001. Christiane Gruber.

Figure 7: A martyr's relics case topped with a model of the Dome of the Rock, Behesht-e Zahra, southern Tehran, Iran, 2010. Christiane Gruber.

itself a liquidity of flesh that is in turn echoed by the mobility of a built form. Here, both soul and building promise a passage to the afterlife.

While models of the Dome of the Rock in Iran aimed to promote war efforts along with a Shiʿi salvific world-view, other iterations of the building in Islamic lands cater to different political and religious agendas.

In recent years, claims to the building as an Ottoman structure – as evidenced by its renovation and revetment undertaken under the patronage of Sultan Süleiman (1520–66) – have been furthered by cultural actors within Turkey.[28] A model of the Dome of the Rock, for example, is included in the section entitled 'Ottoman Heritage Abroad', in Istanbul's Miniatürk, a nation-themed miniature park that counts among the most visited tourist sites in Istanbul [Figure 8]. Along with a model of the Al-Aqsa Mosque, the miniaturized sanctum is used to recall a Turco-Sunni imperial past, in the process buttressing contemporary Turkish discourses that glorify the so-called Ottoman 'Golden Age'. In this case, a mobile form of architainment both contributes to, and flows from, a particular brand of neo-Ottomanism thriving in Turkey under the Justice and Development Party (AKP), itself

Figure 8: Model of the Dome of the Rock, located in the section 'Ottoman Heritage Abroad', Miniatürk, Istanbul, Turkey, 2009. Christiane Gruber.

a staunch Sunni political consortium with ambitions for greater influence in the Middle East. In this particular case, micro-architectural representation puts on display a Turkish nostalgia for a now lost Ottoman-Islamic past while concurrently envisaging an enlarged sphere of Turkish influence abroad.[29]

As these peregrinations of the Dome of the Rock highlight, miniaturized buildings fluctuate from one place to the next, accumulating symbolic meanings along the way. In Iranian war and funerary milieus, the sacred structure builds narratives about life after death, while in Turkish tourist industries it proclaims global standing and power. Last but not least, in their variegated settings these mobile small-scale structures also contribute to the articulation of political and religious positions, shifting from side to side within debates that are framed or imagined as sectarian in character.

Tented Flows and Hubs

At times, it is not buildings per se but rather the archetypal mobile dwelling – i.e. the tent – that travels far and wide.[30] Although associated with pre-modern and/or nomadic traditions of transhumance, tensile forms have made a vigorous reappearance in architecture in the Islamic world during the past few decades. In the contemporary period, tent motifs frequently act as allegories of tradition and authenticity as well as symbolic stand-ins for places and states of transience. These architectural flows and hubs consequently reveal the extent to which buildings and tents echo the lives and trajectories of citizens, tourists and wayfarers today.

Tents stipple Shi'i and Sunni spheres, in which they can embody a faith community. In Iranian Shi'i Muharram ceremonies, which commemorate the Battle of Karbala and the martyrdom of Imam Husayn and his supporters, large-scale tents are erected outdoors, where they function as stage props in re-enactments of the historic confrontation between Sunni and Shi'i forces in 680 CE [Figure 9]. Actors and participants circle the tent while chanting and beating their chests or heads in sympathetic pain before they set fire to the tented structure in a ritual practice known as 'tent-burning' *(ghayme-suzi)*. Within this public performance, the tent does not merely serve as a centrepiece for a religious theatre-in-the-round, setting in motion poignant expressions of loss and mourning. Much more significantly, the tent's destruction emblematizes the annihilation of Husayn's family and followers, all the while promising a renewal of life for today's Shi'i ceremonial partakers. The faith community is rebuilt and reborn on a yearly basis through this tented personification that grows tall and turns to dust.

Among religious festivities of the Islamic world, the annual pilgrimage *(hajj)* to Mecca holds pride of place. The *hajj* is marked by its paramount mobility: pilgrims flow into Mecca from all corners of the globe and, once there, perform physical forms of devotional obeisance, including ritual circuits *(tawaf)* around the Ka'ba, a series of prostrations *(raka'at)*, and walking or running *(sa'i)* seven times between the hills of Safa and Marwah.

Figure 9: The ritual tent burning (prior to its lighting aflame) during Iranian Shiʻi Muharram festivities, Tehran, Iran, December 2010. Christiane Gruber.

Thereafter, they proceed onward to Mina, where they spend time commemorating Muhammad's last sermon on Mount Arafat. Mina provides respite in the midst of motion, a pause in tempo. However, despite its role as a halting place, Mina's modern tented structures appear temporary, recalling pilgrims' encampments from past centuries [Figures 10–11].[31] However, the tents in today's Mina are permanent and made to withstand extreme heat thanks to Teflon-coated membranes and air-conditioning. So, whilst modern in its use of advantageous materials and technologies, the tent city of Mina continues to pay tribute to time-honoured tentage traditions particular to the *hajj* in the Arabian Peninsula. Embracing technological advances of the present while citing a built heritage of itinerant ritual, Mina achieves a kind of kinesis in both time and place.

Such bivalence typifies places of transit in particular. In its creative coupling of stasis and movement, airport architecture is often contingent upon visual metaphors of flight, especially curvatures and flows that recall a bird soaring through the air.

From Denver to Jeddah, contemporary airports worldwide also include white fabric roofs in harmonious dialogue with local geomorphologies and sites, such as the snow-capped
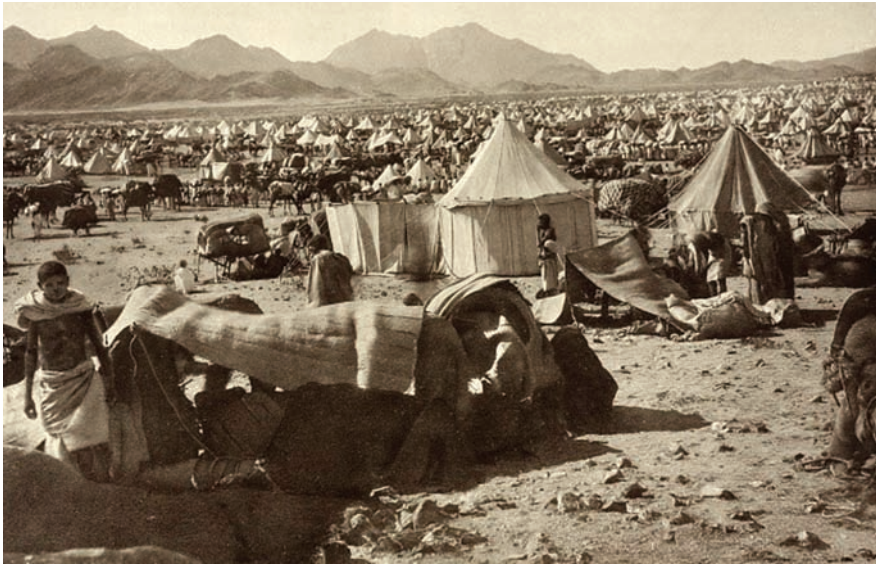
Figure 10: Pilgrims and tents at Mina, from C. Snouck Hurgronje, *Bilder aus Mekka* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1889), plate XV. Item 7088, Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress, Washington DC. Image courtesy of the Library of Congress.

Figure 11: The tent city of Mina today. BBC World Service, Creative Commons.

Rocky Mountains or the white tents of the Hijaz [Figure 12]. Unleashing tensile analogies, the Hajj Terminal in Jeddah was designed by Sidmore, Owings & Merrill and won the 1983 Aga Khan Award for Architecture. In their project description the architects state that they wanted to design an efficient transitional shelter to 'avoid confusion or cultural shock for the pilgrims,'[32] by visually, spatially and emotionally preparing them for their journey onward. For them, the roof's Teflon-coated fibreglass membrane units function like a modern shaded shelter that recalls 'villages of the traditional Arabian desert'.[33] Indeed, the airport approximates the look of Mina, itself a contemporary architectonic ode to nomadism and ephemerality.

The architecture of airspaces has been of interest to scholars working to develop new mobilities paradigms.[34] For some, such as David Pascoe, airports 'should never be taken for simple thoughts; they are neither monuments to immobility, nor instruments of the mobile society, but instead, the improbable conjunction of both'.[35] In other words, the airport is not simply a non-place or an every-place. Rather, it is a locus of in-betweenness that invites the traveller to dwell – passingly and yet persistently – in an aeromobile world.[36] A lasting tribute to episodic pilgrimage, the Hajj Terminal thoroughly embraces the contingencies and aesthetics of migration, acting as a visual index and interim hub for human flow.

Figure 12: Hajj Terminal, Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, 1982. Aga Khan Award for Architecture.

Slumming as Resistance

Most recently, architectural projects and urban constructions have not just been mobile; they also have come under vocal opposition, as was the case with the Summer 2013 Gezi Uprisings in Turkey.[37] Demonstrators took to the streets across the country to voice their grievances against Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and the ruling AKP government. Many of them squatted in Istanbul's Gezi Park to save it from being razed to the ground.

Within this small park in bustling Taksim Square, protestors erected a makeshift commune, complete with services and accommodations made of outdoor camping tents [Figure 13]. With humour and obstinacy, these temporary settlers declared Superman-like strength in their refusal to bow down and abscond from their right to demonstrate in and occupy public space. For the opposition, this physically enacted statement carried the weight of moral and ethical authority, insomuch as tents, in their role as primitive huts, likewise imply rootedness in the soil and hence legitimacy of presence.[38]

Figure 13: The tents of Occupy Gezi, Gezi Park, Taksim Square, Istanbul, Turkey, June 2013. Christiane Gruber.

The demonstrators' two-week stay in Gezi Park turned this important urban node into a temporary protest city similar to others that emanated elsewhere before and during the international Occupy movement. While similarly critiquing social and economic inequality, Turkish Occupy efforts also addressed more local issues, such as the failures of urbanism and neo-liberal growth within Turkey. Among such problems are the *gecekondus* (literally, 'built overnight'), or shantytowns that emerged from mass migration to large cities, which are now being razed to make way for new large-scale developments.[39]

As an indictment of such failures, and to laud their position as political and social 'underdogs' in need of such housing for survival,[40] Gezi demonstrators erected their own tented shanties. Via tentage and word play, they proudly referred to these squatters as *gezikondus* instead [Figure 14]. Built overnight in Gezi, this kind of protest shanty functions as a latter-day primitive hut and a tool to question the political agenda of civic space. Indeed, its expedient candour undercuts the official language of architecture, and thus the values of governing institutions more broadly.[41] As Lance Hosey highlights, this type of protest construction acts as a form of display, in which viewers 'ogle' the shanties as a form of lurid entertainment.[42] Beyond visual regalement, Gezi squatters engage in conflict aesthetics,

Figure 14: A tent inscribed with 'Gezikondu', Gezi Park, Taksim Square, Istanbul, Turkey, June 2013. Christiane Gruber.

revealing the extent to which architectural 'slumming' can also act as social and political resistance against the status quo.

Gezi demonstrators also protected the streets leading to Gezi Park by erecting a number of barricades [Figure 15]. These quick-and-dirty barriers against police tear gas and water-cannon attacks were made possible by the omnipresence of construction materials in the Taksim area. In an ironic twist, metal construction barriers acted as fortified walls and iron beams doubled up as spikes and spears – here, built forms were turned into weapons against their makers and peddlers. These oppositional barricades threatened Turkey's building elites on behalf of those wishing to regain their rights to expression and public property at a moment in time when freedom of speech and the global commons are noticeably imperiled. Thus, guerrilla construction scavenged the city's waste and repackaged it as scathing critique, stripping bare the ideological fault lines within Turkish society today.[43] In this new heterotopic space of aesthetic dissonance and disgrace, built forms were spoliated and amassed much like Roman triumphal mounds.

Figure 15: A makeshift barricade made during the Gezi Uprisings, Taksim Square, Istanbul, Turkey, June 2013. Christiane Gruber.

Conclusion

Islamic architectural traditions have spread through the transference of knowledge, practice, typologies and designs over the centuries. During the modern period, however, built forms have embarked on increasingly far-flung and accelerated pathways of dispersal and fragmentation. In their new milieus, such forms yield an admixture of reconstituted signs and meanings, generating matrices for the construction of cultural, political, social and religious identities. They also provide newly articulated zones of experimentation and activity – or 'third spaces' – that display degrees of both dependency and autonomy.[44] Shedding absolutes, modern Islamic architecture on the move yields a multitude of creative results via the possibilities of interaction and interface.

Architectural projects show a clear engagement with local practices through a revivalist discourse that touches upon questions of tradition, authenticity and cultural heritage. Such dialogues with the past have continued to the present day, with patrons, entrepreneurs, architects and designers working in creative synergy to preserve, revive and even invent 'indigenous' forms while also promoting a particular vision of Islamic modernity that at times seeks to collapse temporal and geographic distances in order to strengthen a particular ideological position or agenda – from Shi'i mourning and funerary ceremonies to Sunni claims to transnational power and custodianship.

Catalysing new registers of value and meaning, the built world of Islam has thrived both locally and globally through the media of textiles, tents and small-scale constructions. Fabric metaphors, tentage and micro-architecture are only a few examples of architectural mobility among many, however. Citation and emulation (as well as theft and restitution) also highlight the quintessentially peripatetic quality of architectural knowledge, practice and materials. A host of factors contribute to each instance of movement and reconstitution, in which 'mobility is always located and materialized, and occurs through mobilizations of locality and rearrangements of the materiality of places'.[45] Through their sheer materiality, built forms can be both specific and general, and cater to express needs and circumstances. Above all, they often are unmoored and productively adrift, daring scholars to shed methodological and theoretical fixity to instead exploit the fruitful potential of wandering 'all over the map'.

Notes

1 Eric Hobsbawm, *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 2.
2 Subha Mukherji, ed., *Thinking on Thresholds: The Poetics of Transitive Spaces* (New York and London: Anthem Press, 2011).
3 James Clifford, *Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997).

4   On acts of cultural transferal and translation, see Nikos Papastergiadis, 'The Limits of Cultural Translation', in *Over Here: International Perspectives on Art and Culture,* ed. Jean Fisher and Gerardo Mosquera (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2004), 337.

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