

## Field Report

# Architecture of the Adelaide Mosque: Hybridity, Resilience and Assimilation

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This report describes a little-known and inadequately documented facet of the Islamic diaspora in Australia: its architectural legacy. Mosques were first built in Australia by Muslim camel drivers brought there in the nineteenth century to assist in exploring and developing its vast outback. The little work that has been done on this population so far has mostly focused on socio-cultural and anthropological issues. However, by exploring the origins and early use of the Adelaide mosque, we argue that a more comprehensive study is needed of the other small mosques that were once scattered around the outback. With their diverse, hybrid forms, these structures provide the only tangible evidence of the material culture of this early immigrant group. They call attention both to its resilience and drive to assimilate and to the need for a new theoretical framework for understanding Islamic architecture.

The first group of Muslim camel drivers was brought to Australia in 1860 to help in the exploration and development of its remote central regions. In the decades that followed their number increased on a regular basis, and by the beginning of the twentieth century there were around 4,000 Muslims in Australia. This population included camel drivers and people with related professions, who came mainly from Afghanistan and different parts of British India. Although collectively referred to as “cameleers,” or “Afghans,” they were in fact a rather loosely defined group, representing a number of different ethnicities.

As time passed and the periods of their contracts expired, some within this population saved their money and returned to their homelands. But others remained and gradually settled down, ending their nomadic lives by mingling and intermarrying with the local population. As the first Muslims in colonial Australia, this group struggled to establish its identity by constructing structures for prayers. Currently, a handful of buildings and tombstones located widely across the vast continent are the only traces of this early “Muslim” presence. For many present-day Australians, as well as many Muslims, they provide the only evidence of this blurred and elusive phenomenon in the history of Australian civilization.

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In 1920, according to a summary of replies from Customs Authorities and from A.H. Pritchard, secretary of the Austral-Indian Society, to a query from the Department of External Affairs, there were some seven permanent mosques in Western Australia, the greatest number in any Australian state.<sup>1</sup> In other states the mentionable mosques were the Adelaide mosque and two mosques in Hergott Springs (Marree) in South Australia, the Broken Hill mosque in New South Wales, and the Holland Park mosque in Queensland. While little trace of many of these structures remains, some were once among the most distinguished features of early colonial settlements.

The Adelaide city mosque is a good example. While mosques (as well as other non-Christian religious buildings) have become increasingly normal features of the expanding suburbs of multicultural Australia, its construction in 1889 marked a significant achievement by Australia's early Muslim community. Yet, among many Adelaide residents of European background, this atypical building was known as the "Afghan Chapel," and its imam as the "Mohammedan Priest." Such lack of awareness of Islam indicated the marginal position of this small community, financially and politically cornered within Australian civil society.

In terms of its planning and design, the Adelaide mosque, with its hybrid features, appeared in striking contrast to the colonial townscape. For this reason it is now listed as a heritage building. Yet little work has been done to understand its architecture or that of other early Australian mosques. Such buildings represented a particular time and material culture, and reflected the value system of the people who built them, their social status, resilience, and drive to assimilate. Most importantly, they attested to these people's need to create an imaginary parallel to spaces they had known in their home countries. It is necessary to read this architecture as a text to appreciate their lives in a foreign and apparently hostile land.

#### THE HISTORICAL QUESTION

According to the official heritage guide to Adelaide, the city's historic mosque is "one of the few relics of Afghan immigration to South Australia and embodies in built form Afghan and Mohammedan culture which is otherwise not significantly represented."<sup>2</sup> Is it possible, assuming that architecture is a valid representation of a people, to reconstruct or fill in the missing cultural history of cameleers in Australia from such scant built evidence? And what does such a mosque, with its hybrid characteristics, say about Islamic culture and the spatial concepts of first-generation Muslims in an alien land?

This report attempts to interpret the transient trace of Islam in colonial Australia through its limited tangible remains. From the point of view of architecture, it attempts to discern the different historical layers that overlapped and fused to shape the design of early mosques. And, from the point of view of settlement history, it examines these mosques

as evidence of qualities inherent to the Islamic diaspora. It is important to ask how the spatial concepts of Muslim migrants were realized in a non-Muslim environment. In this sense, the mosques need to be seen as a record of the resilience and compromises made by this early Muslim population.

This report also contends that such examples, which have largely been left out of the historical record, raise questions about gaps, or histories untold, as well as myths received, in histories of "Islamic" architecture. Few studies have focused on the architecture of Muslim communities in regions such as Australia where Islam was not the predominant faith. And it is in this regard that the hybridized form of the Adelaide mosque (which was recently measured and documented by the principal author<sup>3</sup>) provides an important counterpoint to historical confabulations that champion selective, supposedly authentic, largely Arab-centric (and possibly mythologized) forms of "Islamic" architecture, or that privilege the dynastic marvels of imperial patrons. This report argues, then, that a new theoretical framework is required to interpret architectural hybrids like the Adelaide mosque. We argue that such structures should be seen as typical rather than exceptional, and as no less important, despite their antipodean locale, than representations of the faith elsewhere.

#### THE HYBRID COMMUNITY AND ITS ARCHITECTURE

The celebration of hybrid design in "Islamic" architecture, or indeed the hybridity of Muslim communities, is a recent phenomenon. For example, pluralism and hybridity were key themes in the 2013 cycle of the Aga Khan Award for Architecture (AKAA).<sup>4</sup> However, interest in this concept goes back to at least the 2007 cycle. In the opening essay to *Intervention Architecture*, which featured the winning entries in the tenth cycle of the award, the AKAA jurist and postcolonial theorist Homi K. Bhabha identified an "ethic of global relatedness that reflects the ideals of a pluralist *umma* at the heart of Muslim societies which is repeatedly celebrated by the cycle of awards."<sup>5</sup>

In the same publication, the British-Iranian architect Farshid Moussavi made a case for hybrid or cosmopolitan identities with reference to the winning projects. These were perceived as expressing a postnational condition resulting from processes of globalization:

*Through their cosmopolitan societies Cairo, Leeds, Istanbul and Kuala Lumpur are being drawn ever closer together. Hybrid identities and cultures are emerging through the "intersection and combination" of identities with other identities (Ulrich Beck), which then determines social integration. Cosmopolitanism is generated through hybridity and the transformation that arises from new and unexpected combinations of cultures and ideas. Unlike Universalist ideas that enforce one vision of reality, cosmopolitanism is avowedly pluralist.<sup>6</sup>*

Moussavi presented this stance as in contradistinction to the standard historiography of “Islamic” architecture:

*As opposed to starting from an imagined whole (as is the case with stylistic approaches), the whole is grown out of the hybridisation of the parts, akin to the way hybrid identities evolve in individuals. Hybridisation transforms fixed architectural categories and unleashes possibilities for architectural experimentation.<sup>7</sup>*

These essays by Bhabha and Moussavi focused on contemporary buildings and landscapes located within the traditional geographical band of the Islamic world: Egypt, Lebanon, Yemen, Burkina Faso, Bangladesh, Malaysia, etc. In this sense, Moussavi’s perception of hybridity (also endorsed by the award committee) corresponds to a positive and celebratory discursive shift also identified by the anthropologists Deborah Kapchan and Pauline Turner Strong. As they wrote in 1999, Viktor Turner noted as early as 1982 that “what was once considered ‘contaminated,’ ‘promiscuous,’ ‘impure’ [was] becoming the focus of postmodern analytical attention.”<sup>8</sup> Such derogatory appellations of hybridity had long been identified with representations of Islamic architecture from Istanbul to Lucknow.

What this report attempts to document, however, is that architectural hybridization is not limited to postcolonial cities, or, as Moussavi argued, to the postnational condition. It is a phenomenon that has gone hand in hand with the mobility characteristic of the emergence and diffusion of Islam, the submission to Islam by peoples of different cultural backgrounds, and the mobility of Muslims whether for purposes of the Hajj, fulfillment of knowledge, missionary work, ambassadorial exchange, or travel for the sake of curiosity.<sup>9</sup>

To make this argument, it helps to reflect on a definition of hybridity and the antecedent concept of symbiosis, and to draw parallels between architecture and language. In *The Cassell Concise Dictionary*, “hybrid” is defined as follows:

*Hybrid* a. 1 (Biol.) produced by the union of two distinct species, varieties etc. 2 mongrel, cross-bred. 3 heterogeneous. 4 derived from incongruous sources. n. 1 an animal or plant produced by the union of two distinct species, varieties etc. 2 anything composed of heterogeneous parts or elements. 3 a word compounded from elements from different languages. 4 (offensive) a person of mixed racial origin. 5 a mongrel.<sup>10</sup>

Putting aside well-rehearsed nineteenth-century definitions of hybrid architecture as “contaminated,” “promiscuous” or “impure,” this report interprets the hybrid as a heterogeneous union akin to that produced when creativity or experimentation leads to a new word being compounded from elements of different languages. Importantly, we also argue that such unions may be plural.

In applying this interpretation of hybridity to architecture, Julio Bermudez and Robert Hermanson identified the human body as a hybrid whose healthy functioning depends on symbiotic relationships that defy clear-cut dualist differentiations. Architecture similarly oscillates, “between a call to express our time and a call to creatively resist it. Rather than taking a side, we suggest considering the ‘hybrid’ and ‘symbiotic’ as mutually compatible, yet paradoxical states that offer architecture further choice and evolution.”<sup>11</sup>

Symbiosis, defined as “a mutually beneficial relationship between people, things or groups,” can thus be seen as preceding hybridity.<sup>12</sup> According to Kisho Kurokawa, it implies a relationship where there may still be competition, opposition and struggle, but where common elements and values keep the interaction going. As the one-time Japanese metabolist further pointed out, “the concept of symbiosis is basically a dynamic pluralism. It does not seek to reconcile binomial opposites through dialectics. . . .”<sup>13</sup> Instead, a plural and polyvalent process emerges whereby hybridity and symbiosis can be perceived as the generators of creative and dynamic historical processes which shape diverse morphological outcomes.

From the outset, then, it is necessary to understand the underlying diversity of Afghan and Mohammedan culture referred to as singular in the City of Adelaide Heritage Study. In fact, the cameleers were tribesmen from Afghanistan and the Northwest Frontier Province of British India who belonged to four main ethnic groups: Pashtun, Baluchi, Sindhi and Punjabi. Each group was culturally and linguistically different from the others, and while Islam had been introduced into the region between the seventh and tenth centuries (and so provided a common bond), faith within each group was “. . . blended with local custom such as the Pashtun code of honour, the *Pashtunwali*.”<sup>14</sup> The original camel men who came to Australia were also later joined by Indian hawkers and merchants. Arriving from Karachi, Peshawar, Baluchistan, the Punjab and Bengal, they traveled across the Australian countryside, offering their merchandise for sale to people living in remote transit and rest stations and mining camps. These men were in turn supplied by wholesale merchants, who opened small shops in the towns and cities.

With the progress of time, these people, coming from very different parts of British India, formed the first Muslim communities in Australia. Yet, in the eyes of Eurocentric Australian society, they were all “cameleers” or “Afghans.” Such racial stereotyping should not obscure in retrospect the diverse origins of the early Muslims, or the fact that their language and customs became increasingly hybrid through cohabitation and intermarriage with indigenous women, or with European women who had been marginalized for various reasons from Anglo-Australian society.<sup>15</sup> Nor should it appear surprising that this group would also chose a hybridized architecture to represent their religious convictions.

## MATERIALIZING SHARED VALUES

*O People who Believe! When the call for prayer is given on [Friday] the day of congregation, rush towards the remembrance of Allah and stop buying and selling; this is better for you if you understand. And when the prayer ends, spread out in the land and seek Allah's munificence, and profusely remember Allah, in the hope of attaining success.<sup>16</sup>*

These verses from the holy *Qur'an* aptly describe the life a Muslim should live and how it should be integrated with religious pursuit. The majority of early camel drivers were practicing Muslims, and they never forgot the customs and religious traditions of their homelands. However, the sense of community that Islam provided in these homelands was largely absent in their early years in Australia. According to Peter Scriver,

*... the men were typically engaged on limited term contracts that did not allow for women or children to accompany them to Australia. Many of them therefore worked and lived communally as a brotherhood of fellow cameleers, observing strict religious and related halal dietary practices that tended to discourage significant social interaction with others.<sup>17</sup>*

Instead, the men usually adopted an itinerant mode of dwelling. As they moved around the Australian outback, they camped along camel trails, resting between journeys in semipermanent settlements, so-called "Ghantowns," on the fringes of emerging colonial cities. Compared to white Australian society their numbers were also small, and without a permanent place to claim for themselves they could easily seem to disappear.

Initially, there were also no mosques to provide a sense of belonging. Daily prayers were performed in the desert or in empty bushland, while in more established settlements a special room might be set aside in someone's house to serve as a place of prayer. But as the number of Muslims in Australia increased, an overwhelming need arose to build mosques. Along with the formation of Ghantowns on the edges of colonial settlements, mosques in remote transit centers like Marree (Hergott Springs) and gold-mining camps such as Coolgardie were the first instances of places that concretized a sense of community for this small and isolated group (FIG. 1).

Although not of any particular architectural style, these structures were the only places the cameleers could claim for themselves in this unfamiliar society. They were typically made of mud and corrugated iron, in the tradition of other self-built vernacular buildings in British India (FIGS. 2–4). Yet, despite these undistinguished qualities, they provided not only space for prayers but also a focus for social life. As such, they became nodal points in the wandering culture of



**FIGURE 1.** The earliest mosque in Marree. The different styles of turban worn by the worshippers indicate their different tribes. State Library of South Australia B15341.

the cameleers, "places" for gathering and celebrating religious events together. According to Hanifa Dean,

*The highlights of the year were the celebrations for Eid ul-Fitr, marking the end of Ramadan (the month of fasting), and Eid ul-Adha, 90 days later. According to Islam, fasting should not be undertaken while travelling, so the men would cease working and join together during Ramadan. At the end of the 30 days, during which no food, water or tobacco could pass their lips from sunrise to sunset, the men would enjoy the Eid-ul-Fitr celebration. On festival days there was no loneliness, just plenty of food, laughter, smiles and stories as they lounged around, feasting and enjoying each other's company.<sup>18</sup>*

Although used only at certain times of the year, such as when the cameleers returned from expeditions or from supply trips to the mining camps, these mosques provided the sense of an imaginary homeland. A mosque was crucial because it was the only way for them to establish a presence of their own in an unfamiliar society. It was for this reason that community leaders in Adelaide, Perth and Brisbane went to great effort in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century to secure land and raise funds to build more permanent structures.

In the late 1880s, after failing to obtain government support to secure land, Muslims in Adelaide took the initiative to build such a mosque. Haji Mullah Mehrban, the local Afghan leader, was the initial driving force behind this effort.<sup>19</sup> However, with the financial support of the Afghan community in Adelaide, it was another leader, Abdul Wade, who actually purchased the land at 20 Little Gilbert Street from a European settler.<sup>20</sup> The plot was in the far southwest corner of the Adelaide city grid. At the time there were few other buildings in the area, only large paddocks where the cameleers grazed their camels. Its location was thus further evidence of the marginal status of this group in colonial society.

Wade was the rightful owner of the mosque from 1890 to 1920, and during this time it became a place of identity for the Muslims of Adelaide and other parts of South Australia. As evidence of its importance as a place of respite for the roaming camel drivers, a residence or guest house was soon constructed beside it.



FIGURE 2. *The isolated tin mosque outside Marree town. National Archive of Australia: M914, SOUTH AUSTRALIA 3506.*



FIGURE 3. *The tin mosque of Broken Hill. Photo by Katharine Bartsch.*



FIGURE 4. *A typical house in Gbantown, showing how little difference there was with early mosques in terms of architectural expression. National Archives of Australia, M914, SOUTH AUSTRALIA 3504.*

Although there is no record of the actual process of its construction, it is highly unlikely that Afghans built the mosque themselves. Nonetheless, there must have been a considerable amount of communication with a local builder, who would have had no prior experience with such a structure.

#### THE ARCHITECTURE OF ASSIMILATION

The narrative of the Adelaide mosque provides tangible evidence of the gradual assimilation of Muslims. Its transformation, alteration and extension related directly to their status in Australian society. The form itself demonstrates the pluralistic and hybrid nature of the early Muslim community and their aspiration to assimilate. Situated today on a small back street in the southwest quarter of downtown Adelaide, the mosque began as a humble stone and brick structure, as shown in the accompanying drawing (FIG. 5).

In terms of its architecture, the mosque was a simple rectangular building (approximately 12 by 7.5 meters in size) made of unadorned bluestone masonry with a simple hipped roof, a typical feature of Adelaide architecture. The building was thus similar in scale and construction to adjacent residential buildings. A street-facing *mihrab* and arched windows and doorways were its only distinguishing features. However, the building also provided an imaginary parallel to a typical South Asian mosque. Its main prayer hall was entered through a verandah, and its compound included a small walled garden on the east with a rectangular tank for ablution. This little prayer space clearly signaled the intention of the early Muslims to claim a place — a foothold — in an alien land.

On the Indian subcontinent (including present-day Afghanistan, Pakistan, India and Bangladesh), the legacy of mosque building goes back many centuries under Mughal and pre-Mughal Muslim rule. Early Muslim migrants to Australia would thus have had preconceived ideas about appropriate forms.<sup>21</sup> But these would have been difficult to realize with limited funds, inexpert labor, and unfamiliar resources. Nevertheless, the Adelaide mosque did represent an attempt to maintain the basic morphology of the South Asian

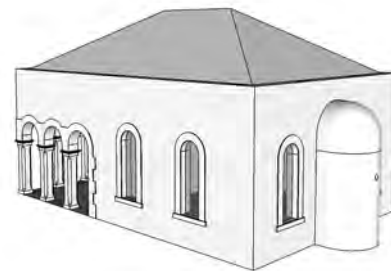


FIGURE 5. *Reconstructed image of the Adelaide mosque following its initial construction in 1891. Drawing by Mizanur Rashid.*

mosque. This included the transition of spaces from exterior to interior. A place for ablution was also provided, and strategies were employed to mitigate the extreme heat.

The description of the mosque in 1915 by a visitor, Sayed Jalal Shah, seems a bit exaggerated, but it captures the aspirations of the mosque users and their desire to emulate mosques on the subcontinent. Jalal Shah wrote that the mosque contained “a basin in the yard for ablutions and a garden with fig trees and vineyard.” He further reported that “£500 was currently being raised to build a madrasa [school] for the instruction of the children of [the] growing Muslim community.”<sup>22</sup>

For the next decade the Adelaide mosque served as a place of gathering and bonding for the loosely structured community of Muslims working throughout the central and eastern interior of Australia (FIG. 6). Visits by individual cameleers to this urban mosque were infrequent because of the distances involved and the itinerant nature of their work; however, the mosque provided a place of rest and retreat from their expeditions, particularly during the holy month of Ramadan. It gradually also became the social hub for the cameleers during intervals between journeys — as well as for Muslims who settled in the city.

With time, some Muslims became integrated into Australian society, adopting different professions, even if they were not entitled to the status of lawful citizens. And as a symbolic expression of their struggle to assimilate, attempts were constantly made to upgrade the mosque. Thus, in 1891 it was painted, and in 1903–1905 minarets were added at its four corners at the cost of £250 — quite a sum compared to the meager income of a cameleer at that time (FIGS. 7, 8). The chimney-like minarets were approximately 20 meters tall and recalled the distinctive profile of North Indian, Afghan, or even Turkish precedents. Because the cameleers had little or no experience in such construction, it is likely that mosque



FIGURE 6. Elders of the Muslim community gather in front of the ablution tank and fountain after the prayer. State Library of South Australia B 7286.



FIGURE 7. A 1930 photograph of the mosque showing its verandah and four minarets. Australian National Archive, Canberra.



FIGURE 8. The Adelaide mosque in 1964. State Library of South Australia B 21920.

patrons hired a local mason to build the minarets. Thus, while their distinctive profile suggests non-Australian roots, the use of customized bull-nosed brick suggests they were erected by local bricklayers experienced in the construction of freestanding industrial chimneys, many of which were being built in and around Adelaide at the time. It is perhaps for this reason that these minarets do not segregate it from its surroundings; rather, they create a dialogue between the Adelaide townscape and the mosque. It is clear the minarets were not intended to segregate the little Muslim community, but to allow it to define its identity while becoming more deeply rooted in the locale.

Until 1915 donations from the cameleers allowed the mosque grounds to be complemented with a garden, vineyard and fountains. According to Sayed Jalal Shah, the mosque cost the camel men around £3000, plus the £500 raised to build the madrasa.<sup>23</sup> Gradually, however, the significance of the mosque changed to reflect the changing status of local Muslims. According to Christine Stevens, the mosque no longer served only as “a meeting place for the cameleers, a place to exchange religious, economic and political views, to discuss contracts and to be with Muslim compatriots, safe for a time from prevailing spiritual and racial intolerance.”<sup>24</sup> It also became a locus for the aspirations of local Muslims and their future as a community.

Of course, the Adelaide mosque still provided a spatial refuge for visiting cameleers and remained a place where they did not have to endure the degradation and inconvenience of being “colored” in colonial society. The erection of a high, fortress-like boundary wall might thus be seen as an effort to provide additional security and safety. But the mosque was also a place that expressed the hope of being settled in local society. Many of the old cameleers left the dispersed Ghan-towns toward the end of their lives and retreated to cottages near the mosque to pass the rest of their lives near this symbol of their homeland. This might be one reason the Muslim community managed to gather enough money from their meager incomes to build it. Regardless of its small size and hybrid features, the Adelaide mosque provided a multivalent space and institution for Muslim society.



FIGURE 9. The transformation of the Adelaide mosque through time. Drawing by the authors.

## CONTEMPORARY DEVELOPMENTS

The camel era eventually ended between the World Wars with the arrival of trucks and improved roads, and most of the cameleers were forced to return to their original lands. Those few who remained mostly clung to the margins of white society, living humble, impecunious lives in Ghantowns or near the mosque.<sup>25</sup> For a number of years thereafter, the mosque was only sparsely used, until a new wave of Muslim migrants began to arrive in Australia after 1950. Faced with the need to serve this increasing population, the Adelaide mosque received another major renovation in 1978. This involved the integration of the verandah and the main chamber to create a larger prayer hall and the addition of an interior mezzanine over the verandah for women (FIGS. 9, 10).

With the original Afghan or cameleer population having died out, the mosque and its neighborhood are now the center for new groups of Muslim migrants. Most patrons of the mosque today are either students, who have come to the



FIGURE 10. The Adelaide mosque in its current state, showing its bluestone masonry, mihrab, arched windows, and four minarets. Photo by Mizanur Rashid, 2012.

city from a variety of countries, or migrants who have come to Australia as skilled workers.

Today Little Gilbert Street and the surrounding neighborhood is again home to many Muslim residents who prefer to stay near the mosque. The presence of this community is evident in the opening of a Halal shop, a Sunday school for



FIGURE 11. A typical bluestone masonry building in the neighborhood of the mosque. Photo by Mizanur Rashid, 2012.



A



B

FIGURE 12A, B. The Adelaide mosque and its neighborhood. The mosque building can hardly be distinguished in terms of scale except for its four minarets. Photo by Mizanur Rashid, 2012.

Muslim children, and an increasing number of worshippers at daily prayers. In recollection of past times when a marginal community of Muslims clung to the mosque to establish a sense of belonging, the mosque neighborhood is also now known to some locals as “Little Beirut” (FIG. 11, 12).<sup>26</sup> The building and its street have even been marketed to the film industry for location shoots — for example, the 1997 *Heaven’s Burning*, directed by Craig Lahiff, with Russell Crowe in the lead role, in which these buildings suggest a present-day Muslim-Australian neighborhood that is home to a gang of stereotypically unsavory villains of Afghan origin.

Despite such portrayals, Muslims are generally no longer marginalized in Australian society. And a camaraderie similar to that which once tied the heterogeneous ethnic groups of British India together can be observed in the everyday activities of new groups of Muslims at the mosque. The mosque is currently looked after by the Islamic Society of South Australia, and it has received official recognition as a place of worship.

Most recently, the increase in the local Muslim population has allowed for another major renovation. This has included covering the large courtyard with modern steel vaults to shelter the large number of worshippers at Friday prayers. The new covered area also provides space for gathering and feasting during Ramadan and at Eid festivals (FIG. 13).

PURPOSEFUL CREATION

The writings of Jacques Berque have enduring resonance when it come to interpreting the architecture of Muslim communities.<sup>27</sup> Berque argued that the Islamic built environment can be understood using a linguistic model. As in a language, elements of building (its rhetoric) may be shared between cultures, regions and contexts. But the morphology that combines these elements into a system should be consistent with-



FIGURE 13. A community gathering under the recently completed vaulted glass and steel structure. Source: About Time; South Australia History Festival 2013.



in a particular architectural tradition. Islamic thought has expressed the idea of morphology as a system of invariables (in Arabic, *thawābit*), while it has identified the variables (rhetoric) as *mutahawilat*. As long as the invariables remain expressed as in the original system, a sense of identity persists.

In other words, Islamic architecture must have a morphology that goes beyond the specifics of history, geography, culture, etc. However, unlike other building traditions, this morphology is not materialized. Rather, what makes architecture “Islamic” are invisible aspects, which may or may not completely translate into the physical or built environment.<sup>28</sup> The inherent morphology of Islamic architecture is thus always the same, due to the permanence of its philosophy and values; what changes are the ways and means that different groups use to materialize these.

As discussed earlier, the Adelaide mosque is an architecturally conspicuous representation of the Muslim presence in Australia. Yet the structure’s apparently nondescript character (other than its four chimney-like minarets) has also led it to be excluded from mainstream study of “Islamic” architecture. However, it is time to reexamine the importance of such buildings according to a new framework.

Architecture has played an instrumental role in recording the facets of the Islamic diaspora through time and space. The character of Islamic architecture in a given place thus depends on the emergence of Islam there and its subsequent impact on the social, political and cultural life of local people. There are two general aspects of this process. At an explicit level, it involves the conscious attempt to create a particular place with a religious and symbolic meaning. But it also involves a vernacular mode of understanding centered on the worldview of a particular culture, its values, and attitudes toward space. Thus, while an overt, religious consciousness may shape the “visible” superstructure, underlying vernacular ideas define the “true” nature of space. This has led to the production of architecture throughout the Muslim world that is diverse and enriched with different varieties of forms, articulations and morphologies.

What this means is that the Adelaide mosque should primarily be examined from the perspective of settlement history and the Islamic diaspora: in particular, how were its spatial concepts realized in a non-Muslim environment? As architecture, any mosque represents a particular time and material culture. In this case, the Adelaide mosque reflected the value system, social status, resilience, and desire to assimilate of its early patrons. And it expressed their imagination of a space in a foreign land that would parallel that they remembered from their homelands.<sup>29</sup> It is thus not the mosque as object that we must assess today; rather, it is the means through which it was realized and its impact on contemporaneous Muslim society.

In this sense, the hybridized forms and shared architectural narratives that arose among the minority Afghan group established the mosque as more than just a space for worship. Indeed, it was a socio-political “place.” This is commensu-

rate with the teachings of the *Qur’an* and the *Hadith*, which describe a mosque as a complete institution for Muslims, not just a sacred or sanctified space for ritual worship. By examining the Prophet’s mosques in Madinah, it is evident that a mosque can be a social, political and religious center. It may serve as a place for political discussions, communal celebrations, guest residence — even to hold prisoners of war. Just as Islam is a holistic religion that encompasses every aspect of life, so should the mosque cater to all activities Muslims perform. Its basic purpose, then, is to provide a sense of identity for a Muslim community.

From its conception to its current position and architectural expression, the Adelaide mosque could be described as contested terrain — a place of perpetual struggle by Muslims to assimilate into broader Australian society. It might not be a distinguished piece of architecture in terms of its exterior appearance, but it is distinguished in the way it blends subtly with the urban fabric. The building and its four minarets were constructed using simple load-bearing masonry techniques common to its time and place. But its sequence of spaces responded to traditional notions familiar to early users from their experiences in their South Asian homelands. Rather than mimicking their own images of a mosque, mosque patrons relied on a local builder to interpret these qualities in the setting of colonial Adelaide. Unlike other contemporary urban mosques in Australia (for example, the Perth mosque or the Auburn mosque in Sydney) the images of homeland, the aspirations of the user, the fabric and the scale of the neighborhood, and the available technology were hybridized here to create Australia’s first urban mosque.

As Islamic architecture, the Adelaide mosque should be examined as a hybrid, rather than attempting to categorize it according to the elemental domain of forms and styles based on dynasty, local tradition, and building typology. These presuppositions about Islamic influence, artifacts and cultures are largely irrelevant in a situation where supposedly “Islamic” elements have no precedent. Hybridized forms and shared architectural narratives that arose during the Islamic period in a particular region and which are unique to the material culture of that place sometimes remain elusive due to the myopic but popular perspective that there are “correct” forms of “Islamic identity.” Such stereotypical conceptions of Islamic architecture obscure historical processes of hybridization and its diverse morphological outcomes. They also diminish the value of buildings like the Adelaide mosque.

Examination of the built environment of Muslim communities must put aside formal concerns, to instead concentrate on codes of conduct outlined in and interpreted by the *Qur’an*, *Hadith*, and other sources, especially in situations where Muslims were a marginal community. Islamic architecture should be evaluated according to morphological elements that facilitate these codes within the multiple regional and historical contexts of the Islamic world. This necessitates a close observation of the process by which minority Muslim

peoples across the world integrate and assimilate cultural-historical contexts, regional styles, functional needs, and environmental possibilities within that system.

This report has examined the Adelaide mosque with an emphasis on the process of assimilation to connect the microcosm of architecture to the macrocosm of society. It has not focused on elements, motifs or decorations (rhetoric) that may or may not exemplify typical representations — fabrications — of “Islamic” design. It has focused on how religious beliefs, social and economic structures, political motives, and aesthetic sensibility were articulated through the long and tenuous process by which a marginal religious and cultural group sought to claim a place of its own. The report is not concerned with the beauty of the mosque, although beauty and utility are never separated in the Islamic perspective. Its focus has been to discern the process — the complete narrative — through which this architecture was shaped and materialized.

In the case of the Adelaide mosque, respect for the needs of the users should be paramount. The structure fulfilled

the purpose and aspirations of early Muslims in a local and regional context by providing both a sense of relevance and authenticity. It is thus a true example of hybrid or symbiotic architecture that encompasses Islamic values as well as local and regional particularities.

Three major concepts were materialized in the Adelaide mosque. First was the concept of the mosque as a religious and social center — and, thus, a locus of identity for the early Muslim community. Second was the use of available technology and local architectural practice. Third was the evocation of underlying imagery from its patrons’ homelands, evident in its articulation of spaces and the later addition of minarets. Most importantly, this building elucidates a process of continuous dialogue between these three concepts. In summary, then, it could be said that the architecture of the Adelaide mosque is the result of a process of hybridization where the Qur’anic tenet of communal prayer, the local architectural language, and imported values were fused into a purposeful creation that served the needs of a hybrid community.

## REFERENCE NOTES

1. Pritchard “provided an effective conduit between the Victorian Muslim community and the government. Pritchard wrote long, well-argued petitions to the Minister on behalf of local Muslims, interceding when difficulties were encountered over matters such as re-entry to the country.” H. Dean, “Muslim Journeys,” National Archive of Australia, available at <http://uncommonlives.naa.gov.au/muslim-journeys/stories/cameleers-and-hawkers.aspx>
2. City of Adelaide Heritage Study Item No. 159, Adelaide Mosque file, Heritage South Australia.
3. This project was funded by the International Islamic University Malaysia. As part of this project, Mizanur Rashid traveled to Australia in January 2012 to conduct measured drawings of the Adelaide mosque, with the permission of the Mosque Secretariat, and undertook archival research.
4. Founded in 1977, this program celebrates the built environment of Muslim communities, past and present. It presents awards in three-year cycles.
5. H.K. Bhabha, “Architecture and Thought,” in Aga Khan Trust for Culture, ed., *Intervention Architecture: Building for Change* (London: I.B. Tauris & Co., Ltd., for the Aga Khan Award for Architecture, 2007), p.7. Katharine Bartsch has argued that this recognition of pluralism has not been celebrated or prioritized throughout the entire history of the award process, as Bhabha stated; rather, it is a theme that has emerged as the award has matured. K. Bartsch, “Rethinking Islamic Architecture: A Critique of the Aga Khan Award for Architecture through the Paradigm of Encounter,” Ph.D. diss., University of Adelaide, 2005.
6. F. Moussavi, “Hybrid Identities,” in Aga Khan Trust for Culture, ed., *Intervention Architecture*, p.166.
7. Ibid., p.167.
8. Viktor Turner (1982), as quoted by D.A. Kapchan and P.T. Strong in “Theorizing the Hybrid,” *The Journal of American Folklore*, Vol.112 No.445 (Summer 1999), p.239.
9. Pilgrimage and migration are discussed in D.F. Eickelman and J. Piscatori, eds., *Muslim Travellers: Pilgrimage, Migration and the Religious Imagination* (London: Routledge, 1990); and F.E. Peters, *The Hajj: The Muslim Pilgrimage to Mecca and the Holy Places* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994). Ross E. Dunn has researched the travels of Moroccan pilgrim and adventurer Ibn Battuta. See R.E. Dunn, “International Migrations of Literate Muslims in the Later Middle Period: The Case of Ibn Battuta,” in I.R. Netton, ed., *Golden Roads: Migration, Pilgrimage and Travel in Medieval and Modern Islam* (Richmond, U.K.: Curzon Press, 1993), pp.75–85. For a comprehensive new study of travel literature, including authors, transport, and types of journey, see J. Speake, ed., *Literature of Travel and Exploration: An Encyclopaedia*, 3 vols. (London: Routledge, 2003). For insights into scholarship, see I.R. Netton, *Seek Knowledge: Thought and Travel in the House of Islam* (Richmond, U.K.: Curzon Press, 1995); M. Tolmacheva, “The Medieval Arab Geographers and the Beginnings of Modern Orientalism,” *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol.27 No.2 (May 1995), pp.141–56. Maritime trade is discussed in G.F. Hourani and J. Carswell, *Arab Seafaring in the Indian Ocean in Ancient and Early Medieval Times* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995). David Abulafia has prepared several studies on Mediterranean trade, including *Commerce and Conquest in the Mediterranean, 1100–1500* (Aldershot: Variorum, 1993). See also P.D. Curtin, *Cross-Cultural Trade in World History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984); and D.A. Agius and I.R. Netton, eds., *Across the Mediterranean Frontiers: Trade Politics and Religion, 650–1450* (Leeds: David Brown Book Co., 1997). For studies of cultural encounters amidst world systems prior to the modern period, see S. Amin, “The Ancient World-Systems Versus the Modern Capitalist World-System,” in A.G. Frank and B.K. Gills, eds., *The World System: Five Hundred Years or Five Thousand?* (London: Routledge, 1993), pp.247–77. Studies that explore world-systems theory are evident in world historiography, archaeology, ancient history, economic history, and political geography. For further discussion of the proliferation of world-systems theory in relation to Islam, see J. Abu-Lughod, *Before European Hegemony: The World System, A.D. 1250–1350* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989).

10. *The Cassell Concise Dictionary* (London: Cassell, 1997).
11. J. Bermudez and R. Hermanson, "Tectonics after Virtuality: Re-turning to the Body," *Proceedings of ACSA International Conference* (Copenhagen, Denmark: Royal Academy of Fine Arts School of Architecture, 1996), pp.66–71.
12. *Cassell Concise Dictionary*.
13. K. Kurokawa, *The Philosophy of Symbiosis* (London: Academy Editions, 1994).
14. P. Jones, *Australia's Muslim Cameleers: Pioneers of the Inland, 1860s–1930s* (Kent Town, Australia: Wakefield Press in association with The South Australian Museum, 2007), p.29.
15. R. Ganter, "Muslim Australians: The Deep Histories of Contact," *Journal of Australian Studies*, Vol.32 No.4 (December 2008), p.488.
16. *Qur'an*, 62:9, 62:10.
17. P. Scriver, "Mosques, Ghantowns and Cameleers in the Settlement History of Colonial Australia," *Fabrications*, Vol.13 No.2 (May 2004), pp.19–41.
18. Dean, "Muslim Journeys."
19. Mehrban, of the Afghan Tarin tribe, was born in 1801. He was the caretaker of Adelaide mosque in the 1890s, and "Chief among the Adelaide Muslims." In the Adelaide mosque he conducted the Eid-Ul-Adha services from 1890 to 94 (in 1890 for "eighty Afghan and one Hindu," in 1894 for "67 turbaned residents of Adelaide"). Mehrban lived in Coolgardie from 1894 to 1897 (SA register, July 30, 1890).
20. Abdul Wade was originally an Afghan native of Quetta. He arrived in Australia in 1879. He was a merchant, and a cameleer for the Bourke Expedition. Wade was fluent in English and was the trustee of the Adelaide mosque.
21. Most early mosques in Afghanistan were highly influenced by Persian types. A typical Persian mosque (for example, the Blue Mosque of Mazar E Sharif) was built following the concept of "Charbagh," a rendition of paradise in the earth, containing water bodies and gardens.
22. C. Stevens, *Tin Mosques & Ghantowns: A History of Afghan Cameldrivers in Australia* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989).
23. Ibid.
24. Ibid.
25. Dean, "Muslim Journeys."
26. City of Adelaide Heritage Study (Item No.159) "Adelaide Mosque, 20-28 Little Gilbert Street," original typescript report compiled by Paul Stark, Dept. of City Planning, 1984, Adelaide Mosque file, Heritage South Australia.
27. Berque was a professor of sociology at College de France and a scholar and writer on traditional and modern Muslim societies. This model of an Islamic city was discussed during the seminar on "Architectural Transformations in the Islamic World" held at Aiglemont, Gouvieux, France, in April 1978, organized by the Aga Khan Foundation. See J. Berque, "An Islamic Heliopolis?" in R. Holod, ed., *Toward an Architecture in The Spirit of Islam* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1978). pp.19–31.
28. S. Bianca, *Urban Form in the Arab World* (London and New York: Thames and Hudson, 2000).
29. Scriver, "Mosques, Ghantowns and Cameleers," pp.19–41.