Chapter Nine
Theories and Principles of Design in the Architecture of Islamic Societies: A Ceremonial Approach to Community Building

Abdelhalim I. Abdelhalim

The values of excellence and beauty are needed to overcome the underdevelopment, alienation, and apathy now prevalent in most communities in the Islamic and developing world. The underdevelopment lies in the separation of the means of production, especially within the built environment, from what is germane to their cultures. Despite this separation, there are still cultural mechanisms that can link the construction of buildings to the culture of the community. These include people's creative energy and community resources and skills. In many communities today, however, building operations are under control of formal institutions such as law and management. A class of events in which the process of the community can be regenerated includes the definition of boundaries, the establishment of centers, and connecting building to the community. If the community's regenerative process is channeled into these building operations, then the building's construction can contribute to the vitality of the people and to the creative development of their community.

There is a connection between the building process and the life of the community. Building, in theory and practice, has thus far viewed these instances of regeneration as, at best, ancillary to the rational process of building. The majority of the world's population lives in communities in which custom and tradition are the only available means of organizing them. Any development must rely on local abilities and resources. The building ceremony, regardless of the community or culture, is the mechanism that links building with the community. Building has always been intimately connected to the people and their creative instincts that have produced buildings and artifacts. This basic regenerative process embodies the rituals and ceremonies of many societies and the vital process that guides growth and forms individual identity, despite the argument of some that today building should be separate from ceremony in the name of economic necessity and efficiency. At most an appropriate integration between culture and production must remain on the symbolic level.

The integration of culture and production is both essential and possible. Building can combine economic growth with creativity and add to the accumulation of capital and knowledge. An important project built in the heart of a community can restore its creative capacity, especially when using local craftsmen and building materials best suited to the local environment. It helps to combine the skills of the stoneworker and his knowledge of geometry with the technician's ability to work from written instructions and drawings, the combination of which leads to innovation.

Chapter Ten
Reflections on Technology and Development: A Cultural Perspective

Hamed Ibrahim El-Mously

The problem of bias lies at the heart of our cultural and scientific interests. Many terms related to modernization, development, and technology are still commonly used, equally by Western and Muslim governments and world institutions. Such terms cannot be used in different political and cultural contexts without a change in their meanings. Attempts at development that are based on Western concepts have failed in Arab and Muslim countries, as well as Third World countries. Insistence on using these terms indicates a desire to replace religion and cause Muslims to believe in modernization and Western technology. Muslims have been subjected to Western winds of change to varying degrees in the course of their cultural, scientific, and professional formation. Muslims have to change themselves first before they can change the world around them. They have to re-examine all the axioms, criteria, and values that have governed their cultural, scientific, and practical activities and that have been subjected to Western cultural bias.

The issue of bias is closely linked to the urgent issue of cultural independence. As time passes, Muslims become increasingly subservient to the West and face more restrictive terms and conditions in their independent cultural enterprise. It is difficult for an individual or group to be totally detached from its original cultural pattern and to adopt a foreign one. The process of cultural shift requires the constant operation of a large number of foreign cultural elements for prolonged