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Islamic Architecture: Form, Function, and Meaning (review)

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too brief discussion of the World's Parliament of Religions, but the issue is pressing far beyond Chicago in 1893. Since, by her account, the world religions discourse ultimately comes into its own in North American college and universities in the 1920s and 30s, how is this story adequately told under the moniker of European identity? If this is "very much an American phenomenon," then surely the scholarship on American religious and cultural pluralism—including such obvious sources as the intellectual histories by David Hollinger and William Hutchison—has to be engaged (32). By the end of this book, one has the distinct impression that it is Masuzawa herself who cannot resist the universalizing gesture of containing the multitudinous worlds of European and American thought in a flattened totality, her own "enormous apparition, the essential identity of the West" (20).

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Islamic Architecture: Form, Function, and Meaning. By Robert Hillenbrand. Columbia University Press, 2004. 645 pages. \$30.00.

Ever since it came out, Hillenbrand's book has served as a major source for the study of Islamic architecture and has been awarded two prizes: an Association of American Publishers Professional/Scholarly Division award (1994) and the Alice Davis Hitchcock Medallion from the Society of Architectural Historians of Great Britain (1996).

The book is an elaborate and extensive survey of premodern Islamic architecture that covers over a thousand monuments from different parts of the medieval Islamic world extending from Spain to Afghanistan and dating from 700 to 1700. It distinguishes itself from previous surveys by tackling the material in a thematic fashion. While previous surveys have been chronological, stylistic, or monographic, the author adopts a typological approach. The novelty of the book lies in its classification of buildings into functional types and its analysis of their corresponding formal types. Emphasis, therefore, is not on chronology but on evolution of building types: their origin, development, and regional adaptations. The survey is illustrated and supplemented by a remarkable number of photographs and drawings totaling about 1600. Among them are 1249 line drawings and 282 three-dimensional drawings that reveal the spatial qualities of the buildings. The supplementary catalogue of drawings is organized into thematic groups and offers the reader the advantage of comparative review.

The book addresses a vast range of buildings: religious, civic, funerary, commercial, and palatial. It focuses on six major Islamic building types: mosques, minarets, madrasas, mausoleums, caravanserais, and palaces. Accordingly, the book is divided into chapters, each devoted to one functional type. Each building type is then studied through the analysis of the single or multiple formal types that correspond to its function. The chapters devoted to madrasas and

palaces are of particular importance and contribution, for these are relatively neglected in earlier major surveys. The chapter devoted to the minaret, as one of the six major building types, is slightly puzzling, because it is not an independent building type, compared to the other five, but rather an element of the architecture of the mosque whose function is part and parcel of that of the mosque. There is no doubt that this is a major element with urban implications worthy of study, but it seems distinct in the context of the book and the book's organization, especially since the book does not tackle other architectural and urban elements such as bridges, towers, or city gates.

The author employs architectural analysis as a method to investigate individual buildings, but he primarily uses it to trace the evolution of the building types and to comparatively examine regional variations against the social and urban context of the time. The author critically surveys the major scholarly positions on issues such as origin, social practices, and stylistic influences as he puts forth his own expert opinion as an authority in the field. In each chapter, the typological approach to the survey of the building type is slightly adjusted to the nature of the surviving material in terms of its quantity, geographic distribution, and plurality of corresponding formal types—whether one, as in the case of madrasa and caravanserai, or several, as in the case of the mosque and the palace.

In the case of the mosque, where numerous monuments survive and where multiple formal types are found within different geographic and time zones, the approach is adjusted. The emphasis of the architectural analysis is not on any single building but on regional trends. Though more are recognized, three of the most distinctive formal types are studied: the hypostyle, the four-iwan, and the centrally planned mosque. Each formal type is surveyed in the region where it appeared, spread, and developed. Its development is traced through historical periods. For example, the hypostyle mosque, which appeared in the Arab world, is studied as it evolved through the early Umayyad and Abbasid periods, and as it spreads to Yemen, Anatolia, North Africa, and Spain, producing regional interpretations.

In the case of the madrasa, a reasonable number of monuments survive and one general formal type prevails. The iwan madrasa is found throughout the larger part of the temporal and geographic span addressed by the book. The author discusses the origin of the function and the formal typology then traces its evolution in each region through its particular historical periods. Regional variations of the type, such as the single-iwan Syrian madrasa, are examined and explained through operative factors such as building techniques, type of patronage (that of emirs rather than sultans), and the constraints of the urban conditions, as they are inserted into an existing, dense, urban fabric.

In the case of the palace, surviving cases are scarce and their formal typology is varied from one region to another. Though a small number of palaces from a specific region and historical period are grouped together, such as Umayyad desert palaces or Safavid garden pavilions, at times a single building or palatial complex survives and constitutes the only sample or a unique formal type. The approach is again adjusted to cater to the limitations. Emphasis of the analysis is more on individual cases and less on their grouping into a type or typological evolution.

The value of this typological approach to the study of Islamic architecture lies in extending a new reading across time and space that is responsive to the historical, geographic, and archeological conditions. It does not confine itself to a spatially horizontal reading across geographic boundaries or to a chronologically vertical reading across historical periods. The downside of this approach, however, is the restriction it places on fully examining the multifunctional nature of many of the buildings or the interchange between functional and formal types, such as the case with the iwan type mosque, madrasa, and bimaristan (a minor building type not covered by the survey). The book does recognize the restriction of its own classification into distinct building types and includes, within its analysis, buildings that fall outside the boundaries of the single functional or formal building type. Mamluk urban complexes are such cases, whether the complex of Qalawun, in which multiple functions are housed (mosque, madrasa, and mausoleum), or the Khanqa of Barquq, in which two formal types, the hypostyle and the iwan type, are juxtaposed.

The selection of buildings is not limited to masterpieces but aimed at revealing the diversity of formal types and the variety of their regional interpretations that are responsive to climate, local building traditions, urban conditions, and patterns of patronage. Aware of the risks of generalities and the restrictions of iconic representation through masterpieces, the book strikes a critical balance through the selection of major and minor buildings, in the geographic center of an era and in the periphery, within a historic period and outside its conventional boundaries. Such selection of variety within the designated categories of type reveals the richness of the building practices within the plurality of cultural contexts to which they belong.

With this intent and mechanism of revealing variety and plurality, the book also strikes a balance between the two major schools of thought in the scholarship on the architecture produced during the medieval era under Muslim caliphates, empires, and dynasties. One school adheres to the notion that there is an "Islamic" architecture that is a direct product of a singular Islamic culture or that is identified through common characteristics, formal and stylistic, shared across the great time and space span of the medieval Islamic world. The second school of thought acknowledges the multiculturalism within the world ruled by Muslims and the distinct period styles that are products of particular building, social and patronage practices. It thus adheres to the more delineated art historical periods such as Abbasid, Timurid, and Ottoman. Though the book chooses to place buildings of the medieval Muslim world under the titular umbrella of Islamic architecture, it recognizes the period and regional distinctions and aims at revealing the diversity of building types.

The brilliant dimension of this book is the author's investment in raising issues of intellectual inquiry that are embedded in the challenges that face a scholarly task of this nature. The issues are raised at every turning point: the difficulties, the misconceptions, and the limitations. The alternative possibilities are presented and the choices are explained. This reveals the critical discourse on the material studied and the approach selected in handling such a vast and

complex body of material and engages the reader in the process of intellectual editing and position taking.

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Life after Death: A History of the Afterlife in the Religions of the West. By Alan F. Segal. Doubleday, 2004. 866 pages. \$37.50.

The ambition of this book is breathtaking, and on first sight its length is more than a little daunting. It is, therefore, a tribute to Alan Segal's accomplishment that, on finishing the book, the reader wishes for more.

Segal's basic premise seems to be that afterlife beliefs are not universal but in fact correlate with the worlds in which those who hold them live. Most scholars of religions will not find this to be a very remarkable claim, but to judge from the writing style, Segal aims at a wider public. That audience may find the premise startling, even unsettling. Furthermore, Segal sets afterlife beliefs in a much wider context. As a result, the book can provide general readers with a wonderfully thorough education. It may provide scholars with an opportunity to reconsider a broad range of material.

The subtitle is a little misleading. The book does not provide a history of western ideas of the afterlife. It concentrates on the ancient Middle East and Mediterranean region. Segal actually begins "before the beginning" with a brief mention of Neanderthal evidence. Then he gives much fuller treatment to beliefs about the afterlife in ancient Egypt, Mesopotamia, Canaan, First Temple Judaism, Zoroastrianism, ancient Greece, Second Temple Judaism, apocalyptic texts, sectarian groups during "New Testament times," Paul, the Gospels, the Pseudepigrapha, the Church Fathers, the early Rabbis, and nascent Islam.

Given such an expansive range one hardly expects the treatment always to sparkle with new insight. The view that the respective environments of ancient Egypt and Mesopotamia conditioned their religious beliefs is at least as old as *The Intellectual Adventure of Ancient Man* (Henri Frankfort, H. A. Frankfort, John A. Wilson, and Thorkild Jacobsen, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, IL, 1946). But Segal has not been afraid to take positions, even minority positions, on controversial matters. That, to my mind, is a distinctive plus. Along the way, he makes some intriguing suggestions. For example, he attributes the general absence of afterlife beliefs in the texts of First Temple Judaism not to a general absence of such beliefs in early Israel and Judah but to the presence of beliefs that the writers and redactors wanted to suppress. Another example is the distinction between belief in an immortal soul and belief in bodily resurrection, which forms something of a leitmotif. As Segal notes, in the United States these two beliefs correlate strongly with liberal and conservative religiosity. He derives the notion of bodily resurrection from apocalyptic movements in the late Second Temple Period, when it provided compensation for martyrdom. Belief in an