

The Time of Building
Kamil Khan Mumtaz and
Architecture in Pakistan

Chris Moffat
with Kiran Ahmad
and Amen Jaffer

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Introduction

Chris Moffat

Down a narrow lane in the densely inhabited Lahore neighbourhood of Baghbanpura, there is a construction site. The construction site is also a shrine. This is Mazaar Baba Hassan Din, the resting place of a Sufi saint who died in 1968 and also of his disciple, Hafiz Iqbal, a *pir* (spiritual guide) in his own right, who died in 2001. Two tall minarets signal the site from afar. A hand-painted green sign announces the Mazaar to passers-by, while a vault decorated with *muqarnas* and a cypress tree relief – an ancient symbol of mourning – guides the visitor towards the entranceway.

Construction of the Mazaar began in 2001 and continues today, in 2023, as I write the introduction to this book. The main structure is finished, as are decorations in the rooms that house the saints' remains, and the building is open to devotees and other visitors. Custodians of the tomb have ample space to host an annual *urs*, the customary death anniversary celebrations for a Sufi saint which is intended to publicise their teachings. These activities take place beside scaffolded walls and around piles of building materials. Certain areas remain closed off; parts await ornamentation. On my first visit in 2018, I met a glass artisan assembling a *sheesh mahal* (palace of mirrors) in a room off the main courtyard. He had, at that point, been working for one year and estimated it would take him another four or five to finish laying the intricate patterns of small, blown glass



0.1 Approaching Mazaar Baba Hassan Din, Lahore, 2019. Image by Chris Moffat.

pieces. There are also plans to adorn the external façade with glazed tile mosaics, deploying the traditional craft of *kashikari* (ceramic work).

The craftsmen commissioned to complete decorative work on the building – from stone carving and inlay to plaster relief (*thoba* and *ghalibkari*) and engraving (*naqqashi*) – work with significant independence from the building’s architect, Kamil Khan Mumtaz. Mumtaz established the basic structure and layout for the Mazaar, his efforts devoted to ensuring correct proportions, symmetry and an overall harmony of space. Some of this work can be seen in the elevations that serve as chapter dividers in this book. But Mumtaz readily deferred to his craftsmen collaborators, many of whom come from families that have refined particular practices across multiple generations.

At Mazaar Baba Hassan Din, the time of building is rich with significance. The slow pace of the work and the freedom given to creative practice contrasts starkly with the commercial imperatives and compressed timelines of most contemporary architecture – in Pakistan and elsewhere. But beyond the refusal to pursue a particular idea of productivity and profit, the construction in Baghbanpura is also understood as an act of devotion. For Mumtaz and his collaborators, the building is not simply a material shelter for physical remains, but a means to express and encounter a sense of the sacred. Baba Hassan Din and Hafiz Iqbal sought to inculcate in their community an alternative way of inhabiting the world, and the Mazaar is a vehicle for carrying on this work – even in its incomplete form. It is difficult, here, to separate the phase of ‘building’ from the phase of ‘dwelling’. The labour of building will eventually segue into the work of maintenance, repair and conservation. The mausoleum will continue to be animated by that vital link between craftsmen, the communities they belong to, and the place where they work and live.

The Time of Kamil Khan Mumtaz

Mazaar Baba Hassan Din is an unusual building in twenty-first century Lahore. Its design and construction have been approached with an ethic that is exceedingly rare in the city. But the Mazaar is further distinguished by the fact that it is modelled on another building, the famous shrine of Imam Ali in Najaf, Iraq, which Mumtaz adapted for the much smaller plot in Baghbanpura. This holy site, which first appeared in the eighth century, owes its current form to extensions and restorations pursued by Safavid patrons in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. What does it mean to insert a seventeenth century building into Lahore's bustling, twenty-first century metropolitan reality?

This book is in part an attempt to understand the trajectory which brought Mumtaz to this point – the journey he has taken since the 1950s as an architect trained in the modern style toward a practice deeply suspicious of the 'generative' time of modernism, its concern with the 'new'. Mumtaz's approach is, in my reading, premised on a 'recursive' model of time, an understanding of building that is invested in rhythms of repetition, recurrence and return.¹ His work in Pakistan over many decades has established him as one of the country's most celebrated architects, an iconic figure not just for the profession but also in the realms of architectural education and activism around heritage and the built environment. But this prominence has not translated straightforwardly into influence. Mumtaz's approach to building demands a level of care and commitment that is notably absent in the vast majority of building activity in Pakistan.

The Time of Building records a set of conversations I had with Mumtaz in November 2020. We had previously met in person a

¹ For an extended discussion, see Chris Moffat, 'Building, Dwelling, Dying: Architecture and History in Pakistan', *Modern Intellectual History* 18:2 (2021), 520-46.

number of times, in 2018 and 2019, when I was based in Lahore as a Visiting Faculty Member in the Department of History, Government College University. But the exchanges recorded here took place over Skype. I was locked down in my London flat and Mumtaz was in the office attached to his residence in the Upper Mall Scheme, Lahore. We met online in the context of a global pandemic, the long-term consequences of which were not yet clear. The book came together slowly and carefully over subsequent years, echoing the pace of the Baghbanpura craftsmen. It was guided to completion by the Karachi-based designer Kiran Ahmad, who brought her own particular craft to the project and carefully assembled each and every one of the pages that follow.

Mumtaz was initially uncertain about the title I chose for the volume. He preferred a title that was more explicit about his philosophy, something like 'Continuing Tradition', a notion he detailed in our conversations (see, in particular, Chapter 8). But I was convinced that 'The Time of Building' helped to capture not just where Mumtaz arrived but also where he began: that contrast between the 'generative' time of modernism and the 'recursive' time of tradition, his movement from seeing architecture as the 'creation' of something new to building work as the 'realisation' of spiritual truths through structure and form. This phrase, 'The Time of Building', is also illuminating in a more general sense. Mumtaz is deeply engaged with the time in which design and construction takes place. His approach to architecture is premised on a sense of responsibility to the *present* – his context of work – but also to the *future*, the question of how a building will be inhabited and used and how it will endure the passage of time. This is evident from his early experiments in housing at a site like Kot Karamat (see Chapter 7) but has become more pressing in the twenty-first century, as the architect grapples with Pakistan's place on the front lines of climate change (Chapter 10).

There is one other 'time' to take seriously, and that is the time of Mumtaz himself – the world he was born in to, the experiences of his generation, the national and global conjunctures which determined his practice and guided his commitments, political and otherwise. Born in Calcutta, British India, in 1939, Mumtaz was in Murree at the time of independence and partition in 1947. He had a peripatetic childhood, moving between Karachi, Chittagong and Lahore. Mumtaz trained as an architect in London (1957-63) and, after a short period of work in the UK and Ghana (1963-66), returned to Lahore in 1966 to begin his career as an architectural practitioner and educator. His work as an activist and campaigner followed closely.

Mumtaz belongs to Pakistan's first 'postcolonial' generation of architects – figures born around the time of independence, who came of age in Pakistan and established their practices in the country, even if they might have been trained abroad. His major contemporaries include Habib Fida Ali (1935-2017), Yasmeen Lari (b.1941), Nayyar Ali Dada (b.1943) and Arif Hasan (b.1943). As a generation, they are distinguished by their concern to identify an 'appropriate' architecture for Pakistan. This preoccupation was prompted, in part, by a broader, global reassessment of international modernism in the 1960s and 70s – a sense that the radical promise that had launched the Modern Movement in the early decades of the twentieth century had now been exhausted. Rather than crafting new spaces of equality and possibility, modern architecture appeared increasingly as a prestige object for the elite and ruling classes. Where modernist principles and practices were animated in service of 'the people' or 'the nation' – from social housing projects in Europe to the expansive urban development projects of postcolonial Asia and Africa – they swiftly attracted critique as impositions from above, undemocratic, out of touch with local histories and everyday desires. Mumtaz's response has been a radical one, questioning the architect's identification



0.2 Portraits of Kamil Khan Mumtaz taken in London, 1963.

as instigator of a new world and inverting dominant ideas of creativity, innovation and production. In this he has taken very seriously the relationship between Islam and architecture, seeking to learn from local traditions and practices whilst also challenging the narrow and politicised forms of religion that have been a recurring feature of Pakistan's recent decades.

Mumtaz's generation of architects is also distinguished by positions of privilege in Pakistani society. Pakistan's government did not establish an institution for architectural training in the country until 1958. Mumtaz and most of his contemporaries belonged to families with the resources to fund their education abroad, primarily in architectural schools in the United Kingdom and the United States. Associated with elite circuits through family connections, their fledgling practices found a ready market for private commissions. The play of ideas that has characterised Mumtaz's professional path cannot be seen outside of this context: his ability to dwell on the problem of 'dwelling' has been enabled by his distance from the economic pressures and the discourse of 'need' that informed large-scale development projects elsewhere in the country, even if he initially desired to have an impact in such domains, for instance through an early interest in mass housing.

What can be learned from this generation today? Several conditions no longer hold. In twenty-first century Pakistan, there is now a large number of established and prestigious architectural schools as well as a process for accreditation which has significantly diversified the profession. The sense of an open future that drew the young Mumtaz to modernism – as well as, we shall see, to Marxist and Maoist organising – has long disappeared, with environmental crises, persistent economic inequalities and an oppressive political atmosphere creating a highly attenuated sense of the possible in contemporary Pakistan.

But on the other hand, Mumtaz and his generation remain instructive. The careful and committed attention they have paid to questions of context and history in their work, and the courage demonstrated by Mumtaz, in particular, to radically question the thoughtless drift of the status quo, provide enduring models for how architects can critically engage the industries, politics and economics of building and construction. This book frames Mumtaz's approach to building by delineating his specific disposition towards time, infused with ideas of the sacred but also the dignity of work and the value of patience. Our conversation considers what this approach means for the practice of architecture in the contemporary world but also as an intervention into the fault lines of Pakistan's twenty-first century present.

Archiving Buildings, Building Archives

The writing of history is premised on a particular understanding of time, one that is linear and progressive, tracking change from the past into the present and toward the future. Mumtaz's commitment to *recursive* time in design and building coexists with his historicist practise in the realm of architectural education: specifically, his work to document Pakistan's built heritage, to capture and disseminate evidence of the territory's diverse building activities for posterity. While some of Mumtaz's craftsmen collaborators carry certain traditional methods into the present as a form of embodied knowledge, there are other practices that need to be revived or 'rescued' from obscurity, reconstructed through the careful analysis of historic architecture. This is true, for instance, of the *kashikari* intended for the exterior of Mazaar Baba Hassan Din. As Mumtaz has noted elsewhere, the last recognised master of this particular ceramic craft died over fifty years ago.² Mumtaz's efforts as an

² Kamil Khan Mumtaz, 'Architecture of Sufi Shrines' in Samina Quraeshi (ed.), *Sacred Spaces* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009), 41-68, 42

architectural historian are reflected in his pioneering 1985 book *Architecture in Pakistan* (see Chapter 6) and they were also central to his involvement during the 1980s and 1990s with the Anjuman Mimaran, a group of architects devoted to producing literature and exhibitions on traditional building practices in Pakistan (see Chapter 8).

Mumtaz's wide interests are a reminder of the complexity attending histories of architecture and the question of what, exactly, should be considered part of the 'archive' for the study of architecture's histories. Traditionally, architectural historians have relied heavily on the professional archives produced by individual architects, assessing their drawings and writings and often, by extension, the built structures produced by their creative 'vision'. Such archives exist only if those architects have made their private documents available for scholarly consultation, which usually requires depositing them in a publicly accessible institution or library. Many of the major international architects who practised in Pakistan during the early decades after independence have done this: Louis Kahn's records are in the University of Pennsylvania Architectural Archives; the CA Doxiadis Archives are at the Benaki Museum in Athens; and the Edward Durrell Stone Papers stored in the Mullins Library, University of Arkansas. It is for this reason, perhaps, that much of the literature on Pakistan's architectural history is focused on the work of international architects. There are precious few such collections available for contextualising the work of Pakistan's own talented architects. The archives of Mumtaz's generation, as important and productive as these architects have been, are dispersed and fragmented, kept in private storehouses if they have not already been destroyed or lost, accumulating dust rather than utilised by scholars or referred to by younger and aspiring Pakistani architects.

This book should be read, in part, as an attempt to make documents and images related to one of Pakistan's pre-eminent postcolonial

0.3 Mumtaz (left) with Ustad Jafar (right) at Sally Town Mosque, Lahore, 2007.





0.4 Construction of Challe Sharif Tomb and Mosque, Gujrat, 2022. Courtesy: RK Studios.

architects more widely accessible. But another goal of the volume is to invite speculation around what an expanded archive of architecture might include. If, as Mumtaz insists, the architect's authority as individual 'creator' must be destabilised, what does this mean for the writing of architectural history and the design of architectural education? Who and what else must be considered in our archives of the built environment? In this book, builders and craftsmen appear crucial. But what about a building's clients, residents, visitors, or users? The afterword for this volume is written, accordingly, by the urban ethnographer Amen Jaffer, whose family home in Model Town was designed by Mumtaz in the 1990s. Beyond human actors, can we also account for a site's geography, its climate, the incursions of flora and fauna, a building's (dis)connections to infrastructure or surrounding architecture, the passing of traffic, the migration of pigeons? What about the saints who, according to the Sufi tradition, continue to inhabit the Mazaar in Baghbanpura? It may seem paradoxical to raise such points in a volume organised around an individual architect. But my contention is that this is where Mumtaz's work and thinking leads us, the direction he nudges us toward, patiently and with humility, even as the stakes for the future of our built environment remain incredibly high. *The Time of Building* has been produced for a general readership, but it was funded by the British Academy and Queen Mary University of London due to its potential as a teaching resource for architectural students studying in Pakistan. Mumtaz's career deserves to be read as a prompt for thinking about architecture's entanglement with wider worlds and multivalent histories. It is also a guide for how to engage these worlds and histories with thoughtfulness, commitment and care.

Kiran Ahmad

The design concept for this publication is grounded in the forms and textures of an *archive*. The content gathered to support the text - various documents, drawings and photographs - is part of an ongoing, archival project around the history of architecture in Pakistan. The book itself can be seen as a portable archive. The font choices - a combination of typewriter and sans serif font - are intended to evoke the bureaucratic style of more conventional archival institutions.

The strong use of patterns and symmetry in Mumtaz's architecture was also used as an underlying layer to organise the publication. The design grid allowed movement but also held everything together. Positive and negative space has been used to represent rhythm and modulation, following the flows and pauses in the conversation taking place between Chris Moffat and Kamil Khan Mumtaz. The body text's shifting indentation is another indication of the dialogue's interchange from one speaker to the other. Repetition is used as a strong design principle, with echoes of form and layout repeating throughout the text, slowly progressing and cohering as we arrive at the understanding of architecture elaborated by Mumtaz.

The chapter dividers are deconstructed from Mumtaz's drawing of the Mazaar Baba Hassan Din in Lahore. They not only connect the inner sections of the book to the photograph of the Mazaar used for the front cover design, but also demonstrate how the design and construction of a building moves from simple to

complex forms. This progressive increase in complexity can also be seen as symbolic of the trajectory of Mumtaz's professional and artistic practice, away from modernism's clean lines to the intricate processes and techniques of traditional craftsmanship.

The printed version of this publication should be raw and coarse to the touch. The paper used in the printing process is uncoated and slightly textured. Holding the book, one might think of brick or concrete, softly laying our hands against the walls of the architecture depicted in its pages.

As we read in this book, the time of building is a time of patience, commitment and care. I have tried to reflect Mumtaz's ethic of craft in my approach as a designer, transporting to the very different medium of the computer the spirit of the bricklayer, woodworker and stonemason alike.

0.5 Challe Sharif under construction, 2022. Courtesy RK Studios.



Chapter 1

One of the aims of this conversation is to think about the particular opportunities and obstacles that characterize working as an architect in Pakistan. But you were born in 1939, before Pakistan existed. Could you say a bit about your early years, and how your family navigated the upheaval of partition, moving from Calcutta to Karachi, and eventually to Lahore?

Yes. My father was an engineer, working in the Port in Calcutta at the time of partition. But I was studying in Murree, which is now in Pakistan, in boarding at the Presentation Convent School.

So the way we experienced partition was simply that in the next winter vacations we were going to Karachi instead of to Calcutta, that's it. My father began working as an engineer at Karachi port. So, we didn't really have the kind of traumatic experiences that so many people had to go through. I don't know how my father got from Calcutta to Karachi, but everything was for us quite peaceful and normal.

Of course, at school, up in Murree, we got some of the repercussions of the armed conflict that was taking place in Kashmir, and so there were incidents which we remember as school children. An Indian plane came through and we pointed our hockey sticks! And found the next morning that it had been shot down by a local with a .303 rifle. And so we all went down as a school group, down to see the wreckage. That and a few burnings of properties, that sort of thing, but very little from where we were.



I remember Calcutta, the war years, the Tommies as we used to call them, and their comings and goings.

At what point then did you come to Lahore?

I remember Lahore from pre-partition times. A lot of my aunts went to school in Lahore, and I suppose... well, at that time Lahore was a kind of academic and cultural centre, and two of my aunts – my father's sisters – were with a dance and theatre group.

So, I remember them. My mother was very friendly with them. She was an artist, and I remember her painting a huge mural on the wall of the house where the dance group was based, and going to the open-air theatre in Lawrence Gardens, going to the performances.¹ So I remember Lahore from that period, which was very different of course.

And then after Karachi I went through a number of schools. By the way, the first school that I went to was Queen Mary College in Lahore, in 1944. My sister was a year older than me, and so I used to be sent with her. I tagged along. The two classes I remember, one was embroidery, and the other was having a nap!

And then it was probably partly because of a kind of fashion amongst our kind of families, they thought that the right thing to do was to send their children to boarding schools. That's what the British did!

I went through a little, well, for me, a very serious problem. My parents were getting divorced. So, I suppose, for both of those reasons, my sister and I were placed in boarding schools.

But then after partition we came to Karachi. We stayed with my father; my mother stayed on in India. I went to St Patrick's School. Again, a Christian missionary school. At that I didn't do

¹ Lawrence Gardens is a large park on the Mall, Lahore, established by the Agri-Horticultural Society of the Punjab in 1860. It is today called Bagh-e-Jinnah.

too well. I was shifted to a madrasa. Nothing like the kind of madrasa that we now are given to imagine: this was very proper, and one of the leading schools in Karachi. It was called Sindh Madressatul Islam. In fact, Quaid-e-Azam also went to that school.

So, that was a very nice time for me. And then my father moved to Chittagong, East Pakistan. I went with him to Chittagong. I went to the Railway School, and that was a disaster! They did nothing much, I wasn't learning much. My father decided to put me in Aitchison College in Lahore.²

So that's how I ended up in Lahore. That was 1952. And I did my senior Cambridge there – now called O Levels – in 1955, from Aitchison. And it was after that that I had a discussion with my housemaster about what I was planning to do. I told him I thought I wanted to be an artist, a painter, or else the other subject I was interested in was nuclear science, nuclear physics.

Were you influenced by your mother in being drawn to art?

Yes, I grew up in a house where my mother's influence and interest in art [was prominent]. Their friends were mostly artists, poets, and so on. It was Mr Goldstein, my Aitchison housemaster, who suggested why don't you combine these two interests in architecture.

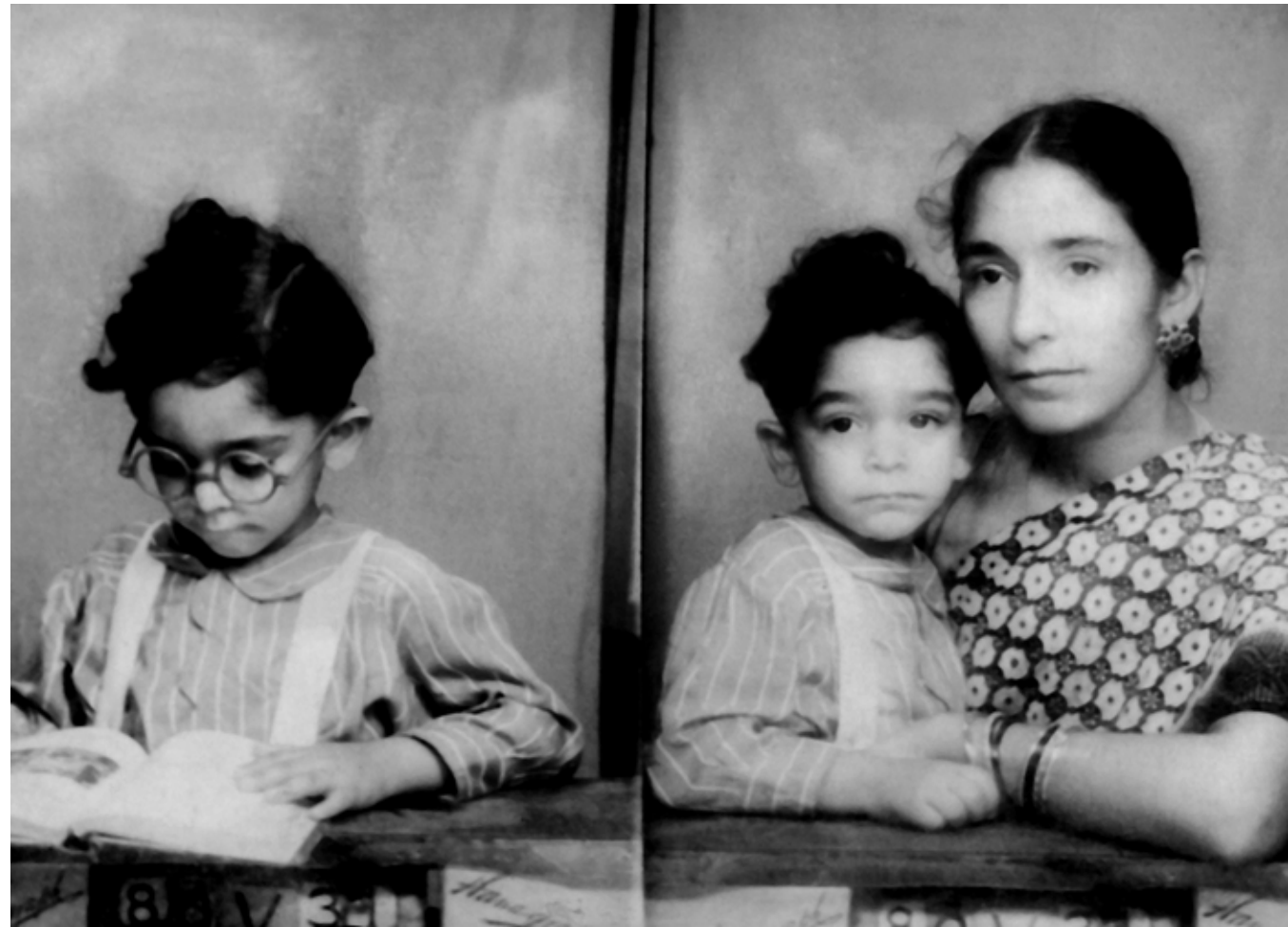
I had never thought about architecture until then. I had a similar discussion with my father in Karachi, and he also asked me what I wanted to do. His suggestion was exactly the same. He pointed out the problems with the future as an artist, you never know... The same with science. It's a good field, but it's not as if you're going to be creating new inventions every day. He thought architecture is a field where you can see your creations coming up and that's a great satisfaction.

² Aitchison College is a prestigious, semi-private boys' school in Lahore, founded in 1886. The College's main building, an example of the eclecticism of Indo-Saracenic architecture, was designed by Swinton Jacob and Bhai Ram Singh.



1.1 Kamil Khan Mumtaz with his father, Zakaullah Khan, in Calcutta, 1940.

1.2 Mumtaz with his mother, Khadija Begum, in Calcutta, 1942.



Later on, I found out that it was his first passion. He wanted to be an architect! Of course, he never let this on at that time.

So, a year ahead of me, in the same school [Aitchison], was Habib Fida Ali, a great architect who passed away a few years ago.³ He was also with us in our art group, and he ended up going to the Architectural Association (AA) in London.

When I decided to do architecture, that was the only thing I knew about architectural education. I just followed in Habib's footsteps!

So that's the reason you were drawn to the AA, because of that connection.

At that time in Pakistan, there weren't yet institutions for studying architecture. There was a deficit in trained architects. So, to take that leap must have been exactly that: a leap, a risk, but a necessary one.

Yes. There were no schools of architecture in Pakistan.⁴ There was the Mayo School of Art [in Lahore], but that only had draughtsman classes. For professional architects, one had to go outside the country. That's how I ended up at the AA. I had no idea of how unique, how odd a place it is!

It's interesting to hear how much you moved around as a young man: you were in Calcutta, Murree, Karachi, Chittagong and Lahore. Was the AA your first time in London?

Yes, I'd not been outside the country – India, that is. But I remember arriving in London. Originally, I was supposed to go by sea, and for some reason ended up by going by air. I remember from the airport going into town. It seemed completely familiar. I didn't feel like a stranger at all.

³ Habib Fida Ali (1936-2017) was a Karachi-based architect known for his commitment to modernist design.

⁴ The partition of India in 1947 was a partition of land but also resources and institutions. The Sir JJ School of Architecture in Bombay was the first institute of architectural education in Asia; after 1947, it was part of India. While many of Pakistan's earliest architects were trained in pre-partition Bombay – notably Zahir-ud Deen Khwaja, Minoop Mistri, Abdhusein Thariani, etc. – the need for local institutions became pressing in the 1950s. In 1958, the first degree-granting programme was established at the National College of Arts in Lahore. In the early 1960s, Universities of Engineering and Technology were established in Lahore and Dhaka.



1.3 Mumtaz on Adamson Road in Belsize Park, London, in 1960.



1.4 The Isokon Building on Lawn Road, Belsize Park, London in the 1950s. Courtesy: Pritchard Papers, University of East Anglia.

Why is that, do you think?

I think this is because of having been brought up on essentially English books, in English schools. So, the whole thing was like, 'I know this place'. We had friends and relatives in England, and they took me under their wing. They soon found me digs. For most of my student life I was around Hampstead.

Interesting, since Hampstead is an important neighbourhood for early modernist architecture in London – I am thinking of Ernő Goldfinger's home on Willow Road (1939), or the Isokon flats on Lawn Road (1934). But the bigger modernist projects came later.

At that time there were very few [modernist buildings], and they really stood out as exceptions.

Generally, the whole atmosphere and lifestyle was very easy. I continued my artistic activities in London. In my schooldays [at Aitchison], we had a wonderful teacher, Moyene Najmi, who was of course an integral part of what was called the Lahore Art Circle.⁵ And this was a kind of avant-garde outpost, pioneering the modern art movement in Pakistan.

Through him, I became very friendly with all the great names of modern art in Pakistan. Shakir Ali, [Anwar Jalal] Shemza, Ali Imam and so on. We were very much the kids on the fringes of this group. But meeting with them, [joining] their discussions, their parties after their exhibitions, we imagined ourselves to be stepping into [our own] as young artists. We would not only go to their shows, but we organised our own exhibitions. Even in school, in high school. So I continued to paint in London, and exhibited in a number of places.⁶ Hampstead was a wonderful place for that kind of individual.

⁵ Moyene Najmi (1928-1997) was a Pakistani painter and teacher at Aitchison College. The Lahore Art Circle is recognized as one of the earliest art movements in Pakistan, and included such figures as Ahmed Parvez (1926-1979), Ali Imam (1924-2002), Anwar Jalal Shemza (1928-1985), Shakir Ali (1924-1975), and Sheikh Safdar Ali (1924-1983).

⁶ During his time in the UK, Mumtaz exhibited at: the Witch's Cauldron, London (1958 and 1959); Student Movement House, London (1958); Woodstock Gallery, London (1958); Castle Museum, Norwich (1960); Howard Roberts Gallery, Cardiff (1960); New Vision Centre, London (1961); Commonwealth Institute, London (1961); Bear Lane Gallery, Oxford (1961); Commonwealth Biennale of Abstract Art, London (1963) and Edinburgh (1964).

At the AA, of course I didn't know of how other schools worked, but for me this was very exciting. I completely jumped into the whole thing. From first year onwards, it was great. This was the kind of happening place at that time, especially for the modern movement. We were completely immersed in the modernist discourse: the buildings, the designers, the British modernists like James Stirling and James Gowan, Arthur Korn.⁷ Everyone came through the AA – Félix Candela, Louis Kahn.⁸



1.5 L-R Denis Ong, Kamil Khan Mumtaz and Ong Chin Bee at Marguerite and Chotu Padamsee's wedding, London, c. 1960.

⁷ James Stirling (1926-1992) was born in Glasgow and is considered one of postwar Britain's most important architects. Stirling's practice with another Scottish architect, James Gowan (1923-2015), lasted from 1956 to 1963 and resulted in the pioneering Leicester University Engineering Building. Arthur Korn (1891-1978) was a German Jewish architect deeply influenced by Bauhaus aesthetics. Korn fled Nazi rule to the UK in the late 1930s, and taught at the AA from 1945.

⁸ Félix Candela (1910-1997) was born in Madrid but made his career as an architect and engineer in Mexico, where he became famous for experiments with reinforced concrete. The Estonian-born American architect Louis I Kahn (1901-1974) was based in Philadelphia but worked extensively in South Asia, famously in Dhaka, then capital of East Pakistan.

Were there any particular teachers that you were inspired by or that you worked closely with?

I think all the teachers. Except one, in second year I think it was, who I did not get on with! But otherwise I found everyone so encouraging, so helpful, so inspiring. I remember Cedric Price, especially: he was a great inspiration.⁹ Furneaux Jordan, who taught history.¹⁰ Niels Lisborg, who taught structures.¹¹ And the modern art historian, Reyner Banham.¹²

So, some of the leading names, as I realised later, were amongst the people we were introduced to, as regular teachers and visiting lecturers and so on. We were very conscious of being at the cutting edge, the very forefront of the most exciting thing that was happening in the world.



1.6 Jury at the Architectural Association, c.1960, with Mumtaz seated far right. Courtesy: AA Archives.

⁹ Cedric Price (1934-2003) was an English architect famous less for his buildings than for his provocative writings about architecture, technology and play.

¹⁰ John Robert Furneaux Jordan (1905-1978) was an English architect and architectural historian, author of books on Victorian Architecture as well as on Le Corbusier. He was Principal of the AA from 1948-1951.

¹¹ Niels Lisborg was a structural engineer and lecturer at the AA. He was author of *Principles of Structural Design* (London, 1961).

¹² Reyner Banham (1922-1988) was an English architectural historian and critic best known for his book *Theory and Design in the First Machine Age*, published in 1960 during Mumtaz's time in London.

Were you encountering these new architectural ideas primarily through lectures and talks, or were you visiting sites in London or elsewhere in the UK, buildings that were experimenting with new methods and materials?

Indeed, both. Through the talks and of course the library, the magazines, and the discussions in the studio with fellow students. This was even our main subject of discussion amongst friends at parties. It was the question of the purpose of architecture, the basis, the philosophy. Of course, Le Corbusier and Mies [van der Rohe] and these people were at the centre of all our discussions, our thoughts and our work.¹³

Wherever possible, there would be some organised visits from the school. And wherever else one could visit, we tried to visit things. There was not that much. I mean, modernism in England was a kind of fringe activity. On trips to the continent, hitch-hiking with my classmate Ong Chin Bee through Belgium and Holland, to Paris and Berlin, we got to see much more of the works of the modern masters.¹⁴

Because you would later take a more critical perspective on modernism, I wondered if you recall feeling any doubts or uncertainties in these years. Were you questioning how, for instance, this architecture might look and feel if it was shifted to a new context, to a place like Pakistan?

Not in the early years. I just simply took it hook, line and sinker, and swallowed the whole thing. This was the future for mankind. There was no question of a Third World or a developed world or anything like that. It was where man was going.

In the early years, there was no questioning. From about third year onwards, however, and especially in fifth year, the

¹³ Charles-Édouard Jeanneret, 'Le Corbusier' (1887-1965), and Ludwig Mies Van der Rohe (1886-1969) are recognized as pioneers of the modern movement in architecture. Both are associated with what became known as the 'International Style', an approach to architecture that emerged from western Europe after WWI and which is typically associated with functionalism, mass-produced industrial materials, the use of modular forms and the rejection of ornament.

¹⁴ Ong-Chin Bee is a Singapore-based architect, who from 1970-1978 was part of the practice Group 2 Architects with Tan Puay Huat.



1.7 Zakauallah Khan (centre) and Mumtaz (right) in Holland, c.1960.



1.8 L-R David Wilde, Judy Pratt, Ong Chin Bee, Janet Ma, Johnny Miles and Mumtaz in London, 1963.

Asians [in our cohort] tended to gang together, [through] some sort of a cultural empathy. You kind of had something... Similar vibes.

This Asian club was not exclusively Asian. In fact, there were two or three very lovely British students as well. But, somehow, they were drawn much closer to our group, and became completely part of our Asian club or Asian group or whatever. There were several of us: Chotu Padamsee, Patrick Wakely, Ong Chin Bee, Fred To, Sung Pei Lee, Johnny Miles, Frank Ng [now Ling].

In that group, I think the consciousness of being from another kind of environment, which had very different problems, gradually crept into our discussions about architecture. We became more and more conscious of the need for a different kind of thinking about modernism in the context of the developing world.

We all – well, not quite all – decided to opt for the Tropical Diploma, which we could do in the fifth year, simultaneously with our fifth year, and so most of us went in for that. This was Otto Koenigsberger's Department of Tropical Studies.¹⁵

¹⁵ Otto Koenigsberger (1908-1999) was a German architect and planner who worked across Asia, Africa and Latin America. He was Director of Housing for the new state of India from 1948 to 1951 before moving to London to establish the AA's Department of Tropical Studies in 1953. His influence is explored further in Chapter 2.

Chapter 2

Architecture for the Tropics

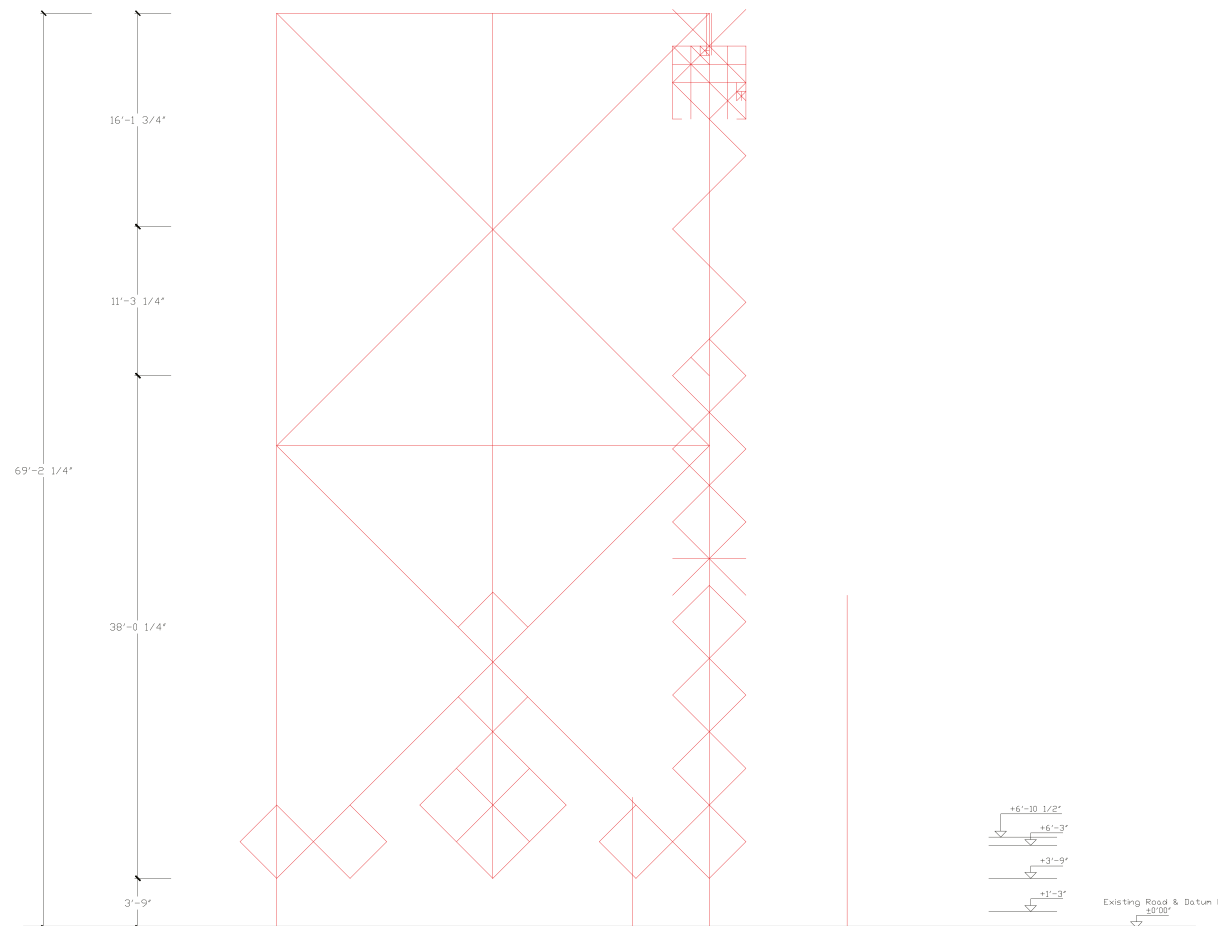
I want to ask you more about the Department of Tropical Studies. But out of curiosity, when you say 'Asian Club', do you mean that in broad terms referring to the whole continent? There were people from East Asia and Southeast Asia also training at the AA?

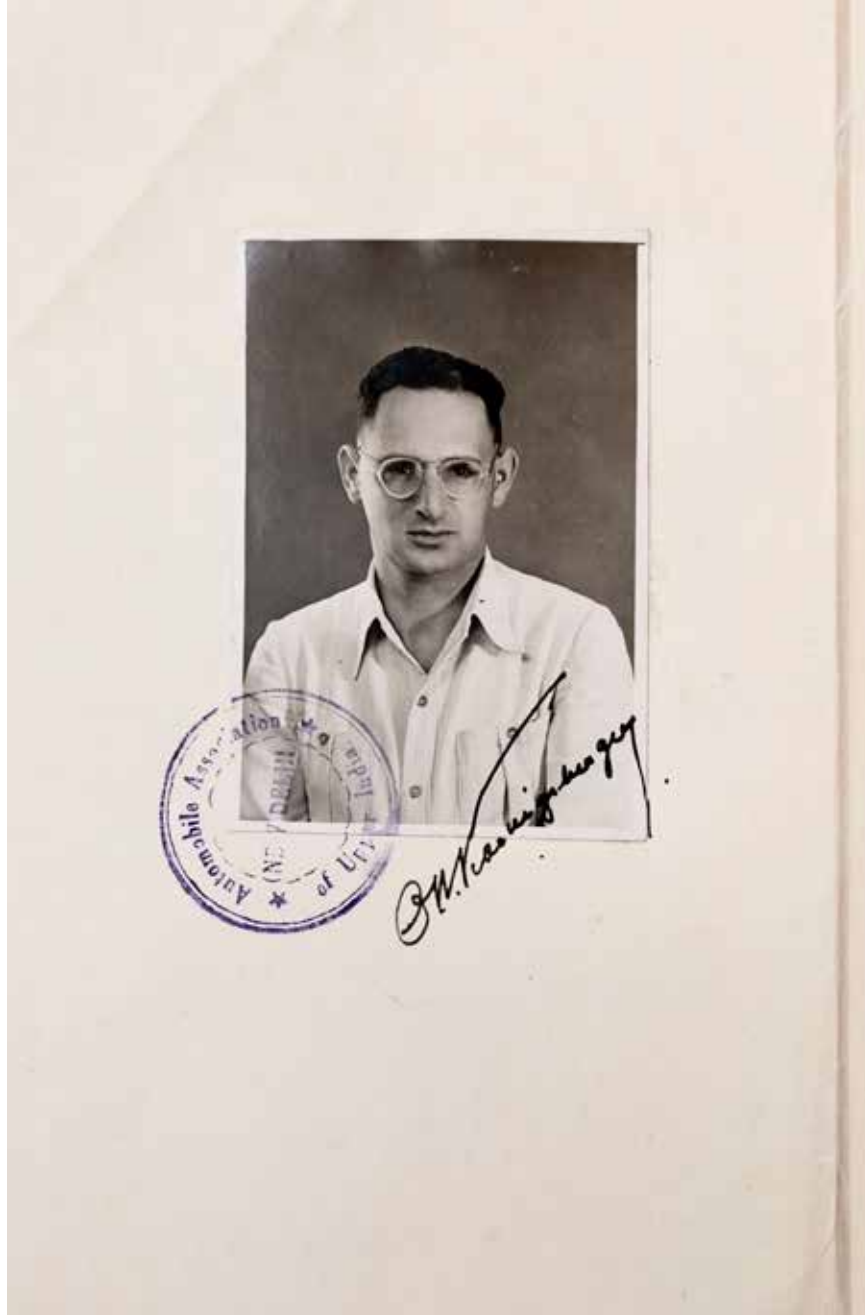
Yes, a number of Chinese [students], as well as South Asian. Even students from the West Indies were as much part of our Asian group!

So, there was quite an international group at the AA at this time.

Yes. It was not just Asia-centric; it was more a kind of south, Third World or developing world kind of focus. We were conscious of there being a different set of problems, agendas, a need to relate to issues of post-colonial societies, which were different from the developed world. We became very conscious of that.

Otto Koenigsberger and the Department of Tropical Studies really gave us a systematic, theoretical base. It offered great clarity about the need for different kinds of thinking – physically, economically, technologically – and different kinds of solutions for that context.





2.1 Portrait of Otto Koenigsberger, 1948. Courtesy: AA Archives.

I'm quite interested in Koenigsberger, who had trained in Berlin and Cairo and had worked as chief architect and planner for the state of Mysore in the late 1930s. He came to the AA in 1953 straight from his work as Director of Housing for Jawaharlal Nehru's Government of India. How close were you working with Koenigsberger? How was the diploma structured so that you could complete it in addition to your fifth-year study?

This was a department within the Architectural Association. It was designed for postgraduate students, so a lot of the students were mid-career architects, and it was supposed to be mainly for those who are from the Third World, or who wanted to work in those tropical areas.

So, it was a postgraduate diploma, but for those AA students who'd gone through the five-year programme, we had an option of enrolling in the Tropical Department, which would be counted as simultaneous with our fifth year. We just took certain special courses, and then, gradually, the studios [became organised around] different problems, tropical-based problems, and we had theory courses on climate and thermal comfort and all of those things.

Otto Koenigsberger was a wonderful teacher. He was the head who had founded this department, and then with him he had younger teachers, who acted as studio masters: Rory Fonseca, Jerry Ingersol.¹⁶ Very good teachers, very dedicated. And there was again a great awareness of something very important that we are doing here.

I think because of Dr K's particular background [i.e. as Director of Housing in India], our interests were widened beyond buildings. We became more and more into urban issues, planning, economics, development... These kind of things.

¹⁶ Rory Fonseca (1932-2018) was a Burma-born, Canadian architect whose early work was centered on urban renewal and the walled city of Old Delhi: see *Landscape* 18:3 (Fall 1969) pp12-25. The American architect Tudor Garland (Jerry) Ingersoll (1930-2021) worked at the AA from 1960-65 and was co-author (with Koenigsberger and others) of the *Manual of Tropical Housing and Building Design: Climatic Design* (London, 1974).

This category of 'tropical architecture' belongs to a certain historical moment, emerging from within global processes of decolonization, and is not really used anymore.¹⁷ Do you think there is something worth salvaging from debates around this category? Are there lessons that remain valuable for architects today?

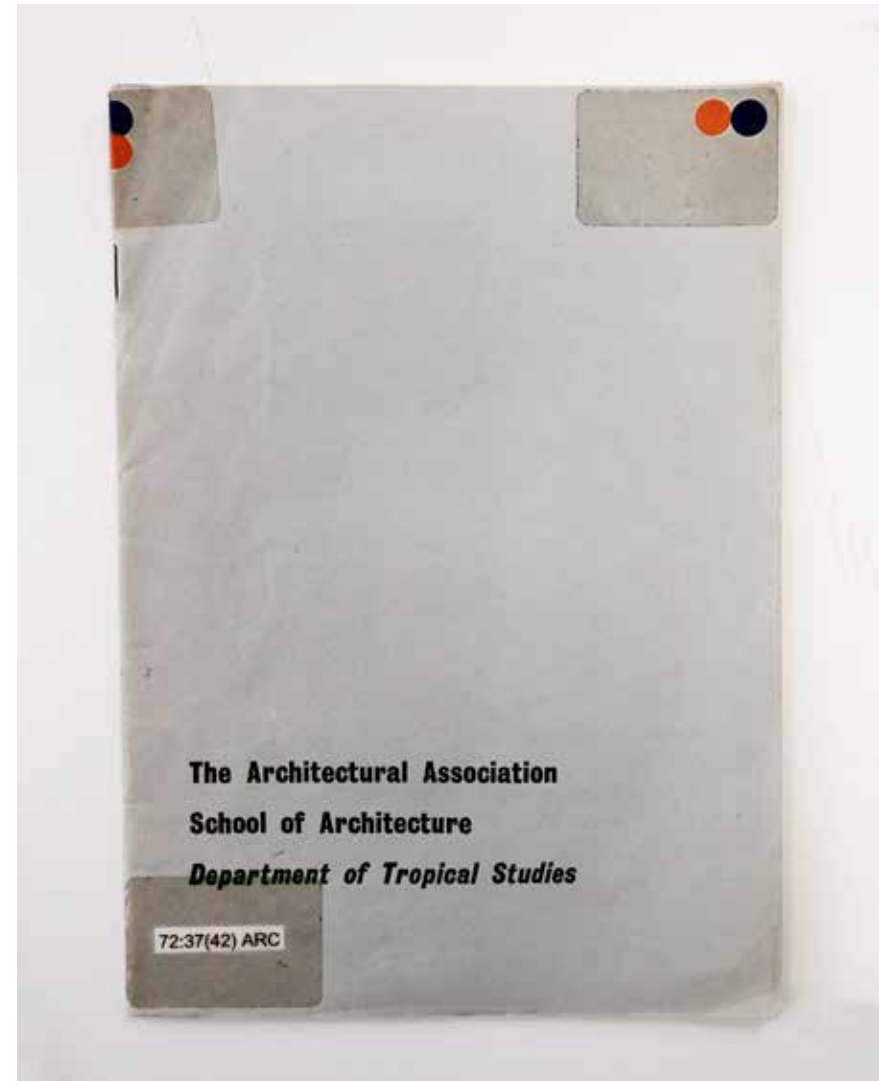
I think that it must have started off very simply as something that was needed, because all the schools in England, Europe, and America were focused on the northern hemisphere and on Eurocentric cultures.

Particularly, I think this was a post-war phenomenon, where despite the British Empire and its involvement all over the world, particularly the tropical countries, there was no specialised institution that was teaching design from that perspective. So, I think that it was out of very practical necessity that it began. I suppose Dr Koenigsberger set it up because he had had first-hand experience working in a tropical environment.

But as I said, it quickly became more than just a question of climate and microclimate. It became about economics, development, technology, and planning. The focus really shifted. By the time we were in the tropical department, it was an area that was engrossed as much with the politics and economics of developing countries as the technical problems of designing in tropical climates.

I think that approach has become – for me at least, and I believe for the whole world – the kind of approach that one should bring to architecture and planning. It is, I suppose, in some ways a kind of extreme modernism! Because you do not have the baggage of classical art and architecture and culture. It's kind of a completely pared down, raw situation. You're dealing with basics.

¹⁷ For context, see Hannah le Roux, 'The Networks of Tropical Architecture', *The Journal of Architecture* 8:3 (2003), 337-354.



2.2 Handbook for the Department of Tropical Studies, 1965. Courtesy: AA Archives.

That aspect of the tropical department was consciously developed later on by Dr K, who took the Department to University College London and established it as the Development Planning Unit.¹⁸ So, from tropical architecture it became, actually, development planning. That became the centre of focus. So, development planning should be at the centre of all architecture training.



2.3 The Architectural Association in Bedford Square, London, c.1950. Courtesy: AA Archives.

¹⁸ The Department of Tropical Studies was absorbed by UCL in 1971 and became the Development Planning Unit (DPU), part of the Bartlett Faculty of the Built Environment. Mumtaz's classmate and friend, Patrick Wakely, would later serve as Director of the DPU, from 1989 to 2003, and was succeeded as Director by Babar Mumtaz, Kamil's brother, from 2003 to 2005.

That's interesting, this idea that you're escaping from the weight of the canon of European architecture and design to just think about the specifics of place and the connections between places, in a very pragmatic, rooted sense.

After you finished at the AA, you did not return immediately to Pakistan but were able to test out some of the principles of tropical architecture along with some of your colleagues from the AA in Kumasi, Ghana. I would like to speak about this experience in a moment. But first, you did have some experience of working with architectural offices in London itself, is that correct? This was after you finished the programme?

I had, actually, failed the third year, so I had to take a year out. That's when I worked in a very small practice, Quine and Newberry. These were two young architects, wonderful people, very different individuals, and it was just the two of them with an office secretary, and myself working as assistant draughtsman.

It was a great chance to work in that kind of environment. Very simple. Our clients were not big corporate organisations, just pretty middle-of-the-road kind of commissions.

But Michael Newberry was an absolutely, purist modernist.¹⁹ Despite running this very tiny practice, he was doing things with materials, with glass, with detailing, that were amazing. At least I thought so. I really think he was breaking new ground.

So, that was one year in that small practice. Very intimate; a great learning experience. Then, after the diploma, Leo de Syllas – who was on our fifth-year final jury at the AA – asked me to come and work in his office. This was the Architects Co-Partnership.²⁰

¹⁹ Michael Newberry (1930-2016) was a British architect who, in 1958, achieved renown for building the UK's first glass and steel house – for himself and his family – named 'Panshanger' in Capel, Surrey.

²⁰ Stelios Messinosos ('Leo') de Syllas (1917-1964) was a founding member of Architects Co-Operative Partnership, later known as the Architects Co-Partnership, established in 1939 by a group of AA graduates and committed to modernism as an egalitarian social programme as much as an aesthetic.

This was again a very avant-garde kind of partnership. The whole idea of co-partnership we thought was so progressive! And they were doing a lot of work in the tropics: in North Africa, Tunisia etcetera. I remember we worked on designs for schools in Tunisia.

Around the second year of working with Architects Co-Partnership, satisfying and gratifying as it was, gradually a sense of frustration began to grow, gnawing at me inside.

I had imagined that the whole purpose that I'm studying for is to go back and do something positive and constructive for my own country. That's why we'd taken the tropical course and worked with Architects Co-Partnership: one of the attractions was they had worked in the tropics.

So, very much our focus was towards development. But I was getting frustrated with this feeling of working like a tiny cog in a very well-oiled machine, and thinking to myself, "What the hell difference does it make whether I'm here or not here? I don't matter."

This was my state of mind when a small group from Kumasi University in Ghana were visiting London, and there was a partnership forged between the AA and the Kumasi school. This group of faculty came to London, to the AA, and they were recruiting faculty. When we heard about this, Patrick Wakely – one of the British members of our 'Asian Group' – and I went to attend this tea and chat with these people. Immediately we decided, "Sure, we're going to sign up."

So that's how we ended up with John Lloyd, as he was then – he later changed his name to Michael Lloyd – in Kumasi.²¹

²¹ Michael (John) Lloyd (1927-2017) was an English architect who graduated from the AA in 1953 and later served as Principal in the late 1960s.

So, you jumped at the opportunity. Before we talk about Kumasi, can I ask a question? You mentioned that your plan was always to come back to Pakistan, that you had a sense of responsibility that ensured you would return. Was that ever in doubt?.

Never two ways about that. I was very clear: that is my responsibility. That is what I want to dedicate myself to.

My father was a great internationalist, and he would often say, "Don't worry about coming back, it's a wide world. There are so many frontiers to explore. Go to South America, that's the future!" And I remember arguing with him, maybe not very forcefully, saying, "Yeah, yeah – sure. But I've got to get back to my country!" There was a kind of commitment.

2.4 Children's Clinic under construction in Bromley, Kent, by Architects Co-Partnership, 1964.





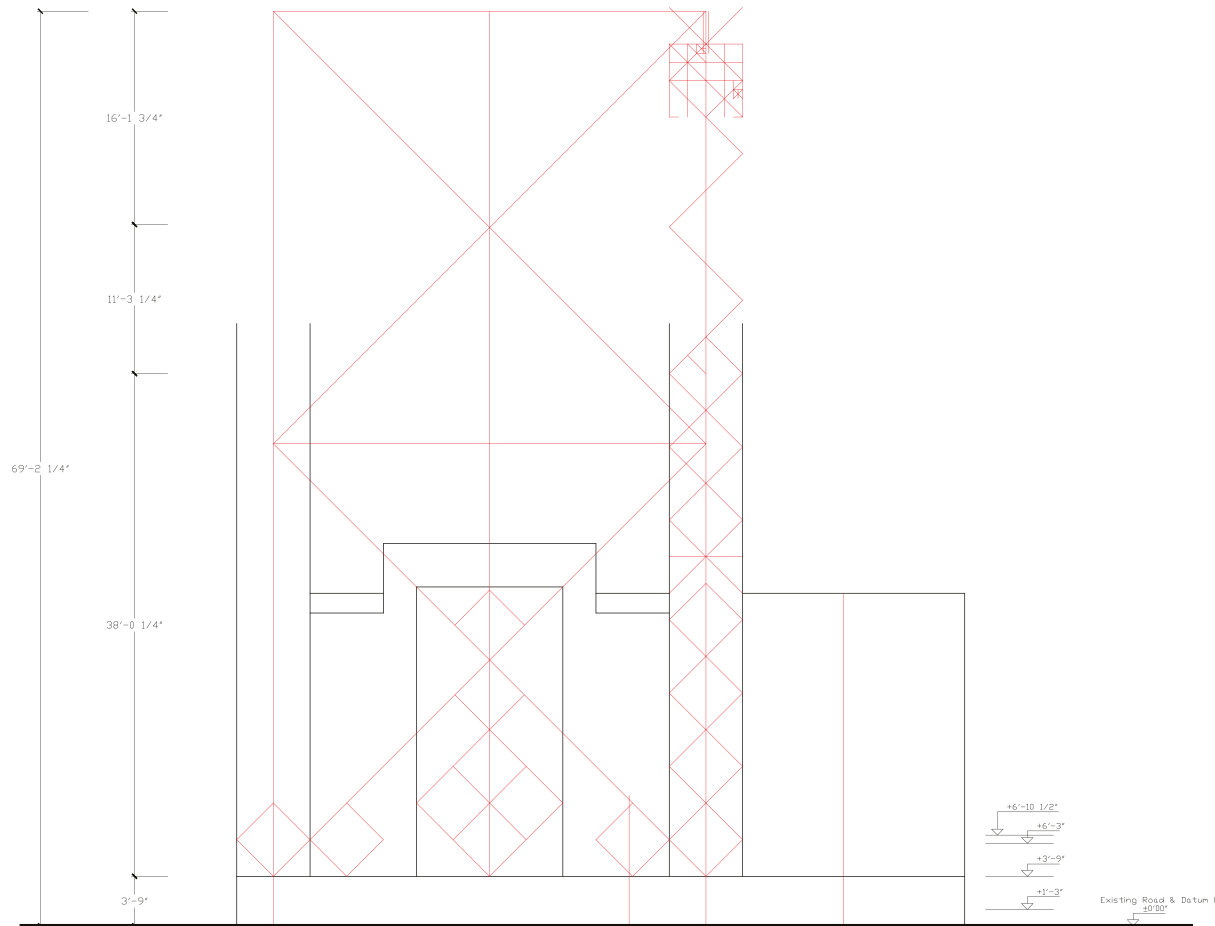
2.5 Junior Staff House at Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, Kumasi, Ghana.
James Cubitt & Partners, 1956. Courtesy: Architectural Press Archives, RIBA.

What do you think informed that commitment? Was there something about your experience growing up in Pakistan that made you feel that you must come back?

I think it was, essentially, the consciousness of Pakistan's underdevelopment. I felt that's where I was needed. In London, I was not needed. What was I doing?

And I had this very satisfying experience in Kumasi, where one felt that every day mattered. What we were doing was important for a country, for a people transitioning, really transforming their lives. That's what I thought I should be a part of. In that world, this was the modernist dream.

Chapter 3



You mentioned coming from Pakistan to England and experiencing a strong sense of familiarity with the place. I expect that going to Ghana in 1964 was a bit more of a change. What do you remember about arriving in Ghana at this time?

Yes, Ghana was something I had no exposure to. It was a new experience altogether. But as I said, every day felt as if you were contributing to building a new country, a new state, a new society. This was the sense throughout the faculty. We all felt we were doing very important work.

You were part of a very international group visiting the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST) in Kumasi.²² You were tasked, as I understand it, with building a new architectural programme for the university, working in collaboration with existing Ghanaian faculty. Is that right?

Yes, the Ghanaian faculty were very nice. But it was mainly people like John Lloyd who gave us responsibilities, who gave us tasks as year masters or to run studio courses. He asked me to do a course on history: on the comparative study of world culture, which included special studies of Africa.

Now, my mindset at the time – beginning from zero, the typical Bauhaus approach – was that with everything you have to start from the basics. So, I took this task, and even though I knew very little about this, it was like any problem: you start with analysing the basics, and then build up from there in a rational manner.

²² KNUST was founded as the Kumasi College of Technology in 1952; it was initially affiliated with the University of London. The School of Architecture, Town Planning and Building was established the same year that Ghana attained independence from British rule, in 1957. The institution was transformed into a university in 1961 and named in honour of Ghana's first Prime Minister (1957-1960) and later President (1960-1966), Kwame Nkrumah (1909-1972).



3.1 Lecture Room Block at KNUST, Kumasi. James Cubitt & Partners, 1956. Courtesy: Architectural Press Archives, RIBA.



3.2 Junior Staff House at KNUST, Kumasi. James Cubitt & Partners, 1956. Courtesy: Architectural Press Archives, RIBA.

So, I worked on the task of designing and teaching world culture and history, in that way. And I think John Lloyd recognised or acknowledged this somewhere: that what we did was actually a very important new way of looking at architecture, history, culture.²³

You took the opportunity to re-tell the the history of architecture, from your location in an African country.

Yes, absolutely. Because what we had been brought up with – the Eurocentric narrative, clearly and very sharply – was irrelevant. If you had half a mind, any sense at all, you would realise, “What the hell are we talking about, ‘renaissance’ and ‘gothic’ architecture? There are other issues to be talked about!” This, I think, was a great learning process for me: questioning and finding a new perspective to look at architecture.

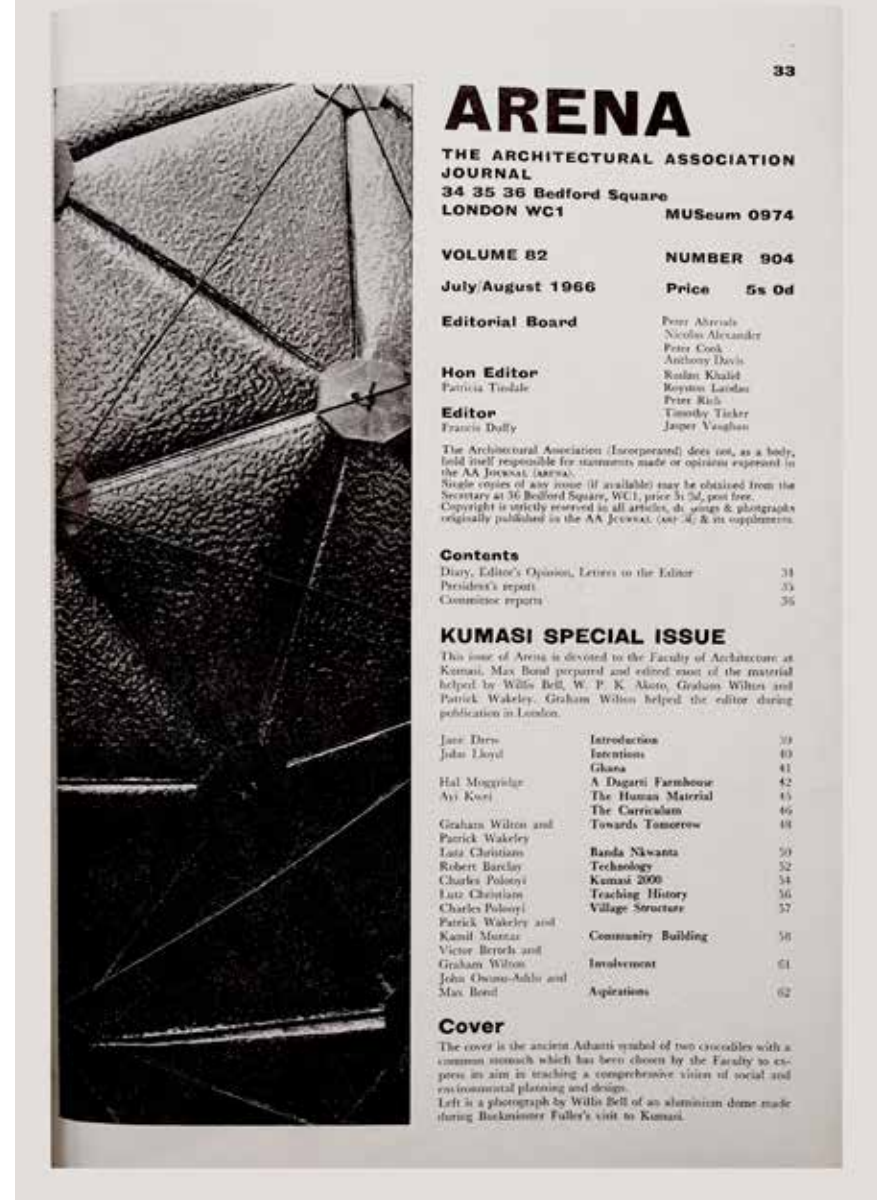
In Kumasi you were teaching this course on world cultures; you were also a studio master. In addition to this, you were doing some work for Ghana’s Department of Social Welfare and Community Development. It seems that projects for the government were closely connected to work at the university at this time.

Yes, the faculty was constantly involved. There was always some project or other ongoing, brought to us from the government agencies, including resettling peoples displaced by dam construction, rural economic issues, and more. We were involved in all of that.

The resettlement and housing projects led to some faculty members – Dick Fullerton, it was – working on earth, rammed earth, sun-dried earth, for structural use.²⁴ Making it stable.

²³ *Arena: The Architectural Association Journal* released a ‘Special Issue on Kumasi’ in July/August 1966 (Volume 82, No. 904); it includes John Lloyd’s reflections on the AA’s efforts at KNUST, as well as an essay by Patrick Wakely and Mumtaz on ‘Community Building’.

²⁴ Richard Lewis Fullerton (1911-?) was the author of *Building Construction in Warm Climates* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967), part of the Oxford Tropical Handbooks series.



3.3 Arena: The Architectural Association Journal, Special Issue on Kumasi, 1966. Courtesy: AA Archives.

So, there was a lot of that going on in the experimental building yard that we had. Then we had a chance to actually put this into practice in the field.

You were involved in building rammed earth housing in Ghana?

I was a spectator. Learning a lot, just observing what Dick Fullerton was doing in the faculty and discussing what he was doing. A lot of that. But no, I was not myself directly involved in that particular project.

There was great satisfaction in being able to explore and experiment and rethink, from basics, so many issues.

Kumasi turned out to be a hotbed for experiments in architecture at this time. I know that people like Jane Drew and Buckminster Fuller spent time at KNUST as Visiting Faculty.²⁵ Do you have any recollections of interacting with these architects during your stay?

I don't recall Jane Drew, I don't know if she was there at the time I was there. But certainly Buckminster Fuller was a great sensation. So inspiring, just to be in his presence. And his lectures, the typical Bucky Fuller lectures that would go on for hours and hours and hours!

Once again, he was making us think from first principles. Throughout these early experiences, it became kind of a habit: questioning everything and starting from first principles and basics.

²⁵ Jane Drew (1911-1996) was an English architect and planner, a graduate of the AA, and a prominent exponent of modern architecture. With her partner, E Maxwell Fry (1899-1987), she authored the influential *Tropical Architecture in the Humid Zone* in 1956. The American architect Buckminster Fuller (1895-1983) is celebrated for his buildings (especially his experiments with geodesic domes) but also as a futurist and inventor, describing his work as 'comprehensive anticipatory design science'.

3.4 Housing Project in Nangodi, Ghana, 1965.





3.5 Mumtaz (standing, right) with geodesic dome at KNUST, Kumasi, c.1965.

It must have been quite a liberating feeling – that freedom to step back, reflect and experiment.

The AA Lecturer and artist Keith Critchlow was also there in Kumasi.²⁶ He would later become very interested in Islamic architecture and wrote a classic study of patterns in Islamic design in 1976. Do you recall interacting much with him in Ghana?

Oh yes, we were very friendly. We spent a lot of time discussing different things. And again, he was such an exciting person. Like Buckminster Fuller, he was looking at design, pattern and geometry, from very basic first principles. We were all conscious that he was right up there with Bucky Fuller as a kind of pioneer, on the frontier looking at three-dimensional geometry, exploring close-packing solids, tile patterns and modular grids, etcetera.

Keith, for us, was very much a kind of big brother, leading the way to a new world, as a modernist. A kind of super modernist.

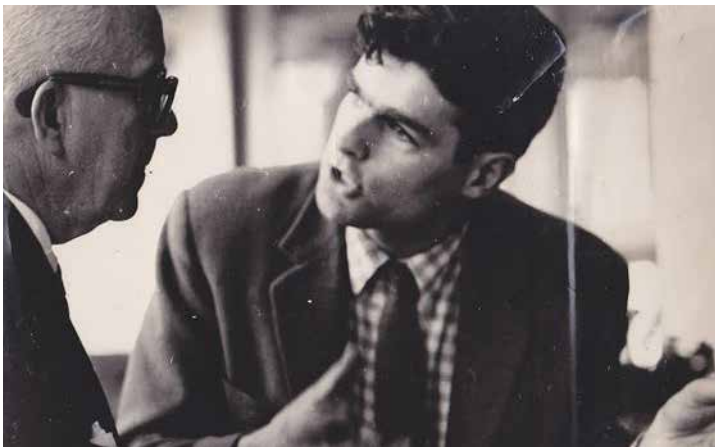
I remember once that Pat and I were having tea at his house. It was a wonderful campus; we all had bungalows and independent offices. We were having tea with him, and he showed us some sketches of work that he was doing. We were fascinated and intrigued but quite puzzled and amused. “What the hell is Keith doing?! What is he talking about?!” Because he was talking about Buddhism and Taoism and mysticism, and the symbolism of design forms and so on. We thought, “Where the hell is he going, off on this crazy tangent?”

We all eventually left Kumasi, parted ways, and I went to Lahore. Many years later, when I felt I had to relearn so much, lo and behold, I find that one of the only sources that I had was this book by Keith, *Islamic Patterns*! And I thought, “My god! Look at him, he’s gone from being a super-modernist, he went off

²⁶ Keith Critchlow (1933–2020) was an English artist and author. His book *Islamic Patterns* was published by Thames & Hudson in 1976.

to Buddhist and Taoist symbolism, esoterism and spiritualism, and now he's talking about Islamic spirituality!" So wonderful.

We very rarely crossed paths, but I do remember meeting him again in London, and then we got to spend a little more time together at a symposium held by the Aga Khan Program for Islamic Architecture at the MIT, in November, 1987.²⁷ He was a great inspiration, in every way.

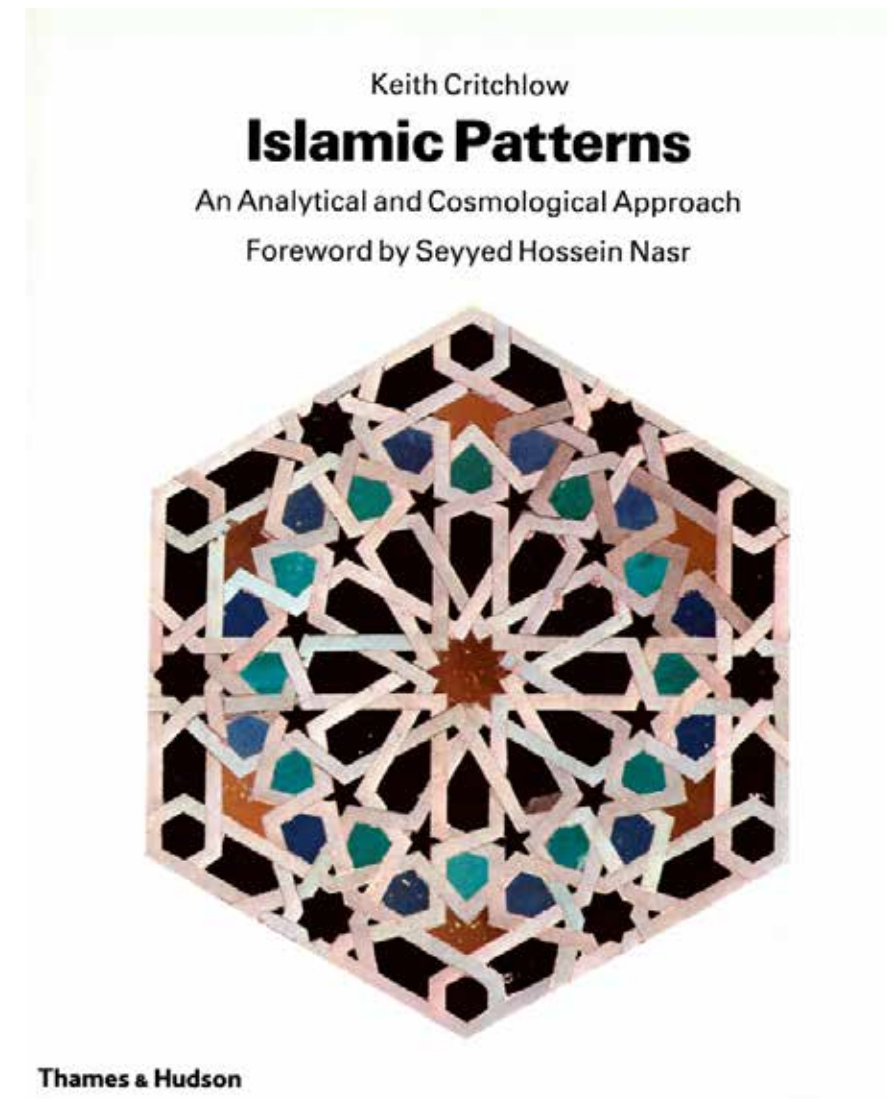


3.6 L-R Buckminster Fuller and Keith Critchlow, undated. Courtesy: Keith Critchlow Legacy CIC.

What inspired him to take that trajectory, do you think?

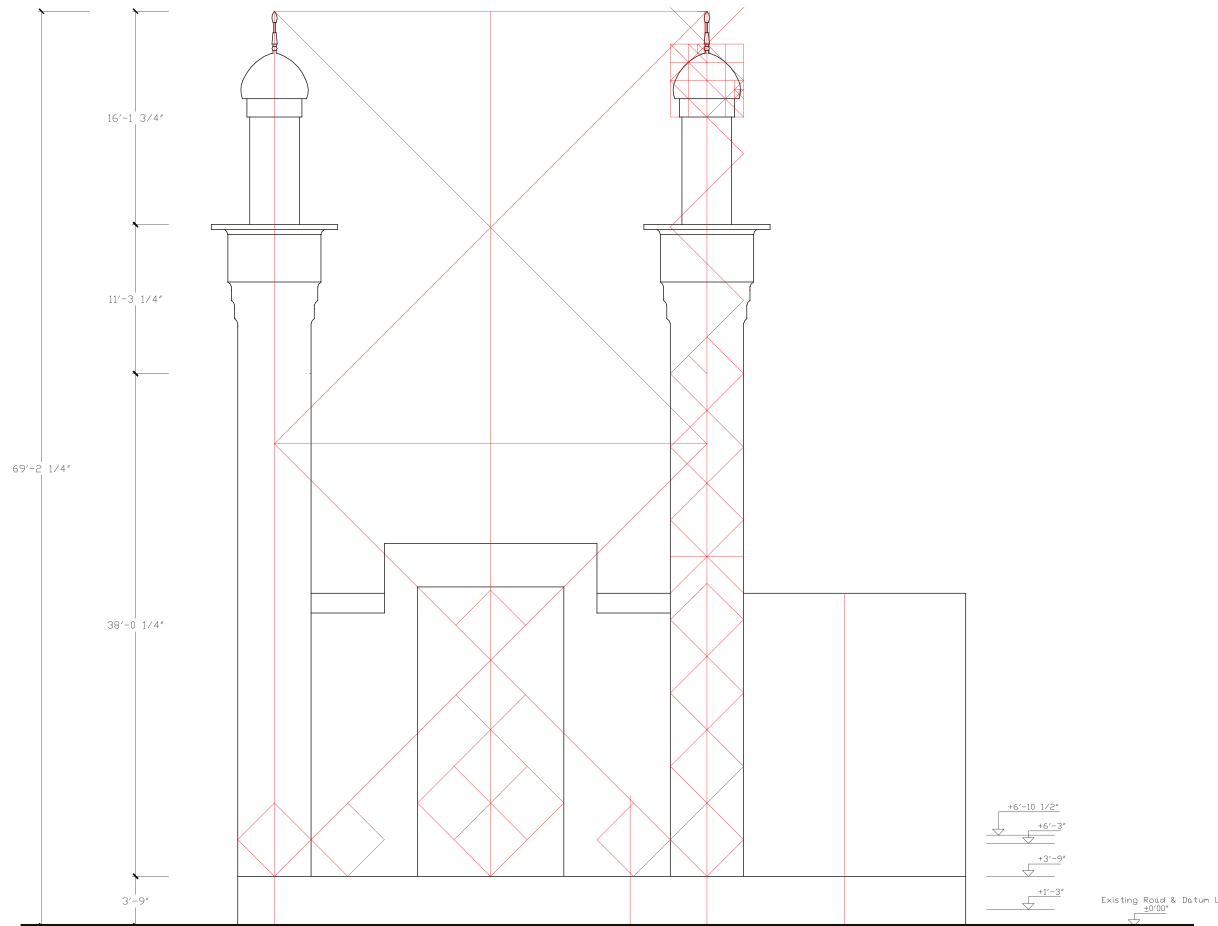
I don't know what led him into that direction. But as I say, even at Kumasi he had become aware of this other dimension of art and culture and symbolism, and it was at that time mainly through the Chinese model. He then went on and began to find the same basic world view in all pre-modern cultures. And indeed, in that sense, I very much followed the same path.

²⁷ The theme of the MIT symposium was 'Theories and Principles of Design in the Architecture of Islamic Societies', hosted 6-8 November 1987. The proceedings were published in a volume of the same name, edited by Margaret Bentley Sevcenko, in 1988.



3.7 Cover of Keith Critchlow, *Islamic Patterns*, first published in 1976.

Chapter 4



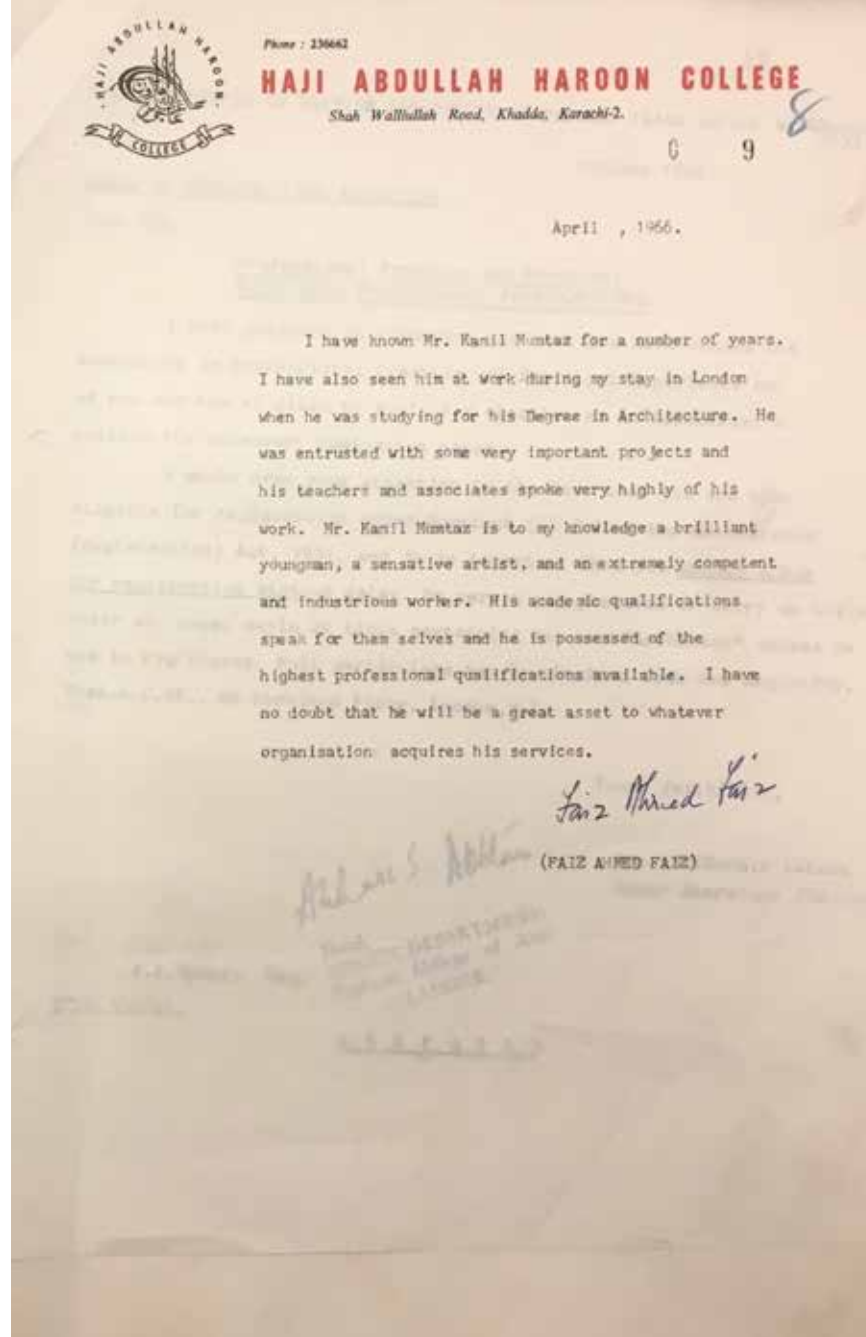
You mentioned that you followed Habib Fida Ali to the AA, but did you interact with him much while you were in London?

Oh yes, we were very friendly throughout. He also stayed in Hampstead, but his apartment was much more posh! We were very good friends, very close, and not only because we were coming from the same school, the same country, the same kind of cultural background. Habib never got bitten by the bug of development issues. He was 100% committed to the Eurocentric modernist position, and never moved from that. I admire him for that. He was very clear, very firm, very committed.

You can certainly tell that from his buildings in Karachi and elsewhere. That said, later in his career one can see some concessions – the Lahore University of Management Sciences campus, for instance, deploys different sorts of materials and ornament.

Yeah, that was, I think, perforce having to work in Lahore. He could not escape. He needed to pay some homage to this historical environment that he was working in.

The power of Lahore in shaping an architect's work!



4.1 Reference Letter for Mumtaz provided by Faiz Ahmed Faiz, 1966. Courtesy: NCA Archives.

Lahore is where you returned in 1965, to take up a position as Head of the Department of Architecture at the National College of Arts. You left Pakistan in 1957, before General Ayub Khan's coup in 1958, and returned amidst the martial ruler's 'decade of development'.²⁸ How closely had you been following changing approaches to architecture and planning in Pakistan's cities during your time away? What were your impressions returning to Lahore?

What was going on politically at that time just could not be escaped. And particularly because a lot of the anti-Ayub movement was connected with students and universities. Being in a teaching position and located right on the Mall Road in Lahore... Issues of dictatorship and democracy, political issues, were in the forefront of all our discussions, socially.

Even in England of course, as a modernist, I had found myself moving towards Marxist ideology and philosophy. I read a lot of Lenin and Marx. Not Mao so much then, but I did later on.

Very quickly, after returning to Lahore, I found that the main, first struggle had to be a political struggle. There's no future unless we get that right first. I became very much a part of small, progressive groups, Marxist groups. I became politically active. I chose to work with the peasantry, and for me again that was a great learning experience. I'd never been exposed to that world. I learnt a lot about our own culture, about the economic and social realities in which we were living.

In the process, we got arrested; we went to prison. I had two stints in prison.

²⁸ Muhammad Ayub Khan (1907-1974) was a Pakistan Army General who overthrew the First President of Pakistan, Iskander Mirza, in 1958. Ayub Khan remained in power until March 1969.

**Would this have been around the time of 1968, 1969?
Connected to the mass protests against Ayub Khan? Or was
it earlier?**

This is soon after Ayub Khan was replaced by Yahya Khan.²⁹ Our group carried on with our work amongst students, workers and peasants. We had a small cell, or study circle. As idealists, around Eid time we thought, "Now, what shall we do as a revolutionary group?" So, we decided to design, print and distribute an Eid greeting card, addressed to the students, peasants and workers!

It is a long story, but eventually the card found itself in the limousine of the Governor of Punjab! And he immediately ordered to find out who these people are and do something, so we got arrested. That was my first stint.

And the second was during Bhutto's time.³⁰ He was supposed to be a progressive, espousing Islamic socialism and all that. In fact, we piggybacked a lot on the People's Party, working amongst the people. We used their contacts and structures and so on.

But in his early period, we had organised a peasant rally in a small town in the Punjab. This was raided by the police and we were all beaten up with batons and rifle butts and all kinds of things. Eventually we were pushed into jail. That was my second stint.

This was at the time of Shakir Ali, and he himself was very sympathetic to the progressive cause. He was very much [connected with] other leftist intellectuals. They were his friends. So, he fully sympathised and supported us.

²⁹ Aga Muhammad Yahya Khan (1917-1980) succeeded Ayub Khan as President of Pakistan and Chief Martial Law Administrator from 1969 until 1971 and the return to civilian rule.

³⁰ Zulfikar Ali Bhutto (1928-1979) served as President of Pakistan from 1971 to 1973 and then as Prime Minister from 1973 to 1977. He was founder of the Pakistan People's Party.



4.2 Ijaz ul Hasan, 'Police Lockup, Qila Didar Singh', undated. Courtesy of the artist.

The arrests didn't affect your position at the NCA.

Not at all. He minded our backs! I say 'our', because another school friend of mine, a class fellow of mine, Ijaz ul Hassan, was also teaching at the National College of Arts.³¹ We studied at Aitchison together, with the same art master. He also went to England, to Cambridge, but came back to the Arts College. And it was he that wrote to me in Kumasi, on behalf of Shakir Ali, saying that we need you to come back to Lahore and take charge of the architecture department.

Ijaz ul Hassan. A great painter, and he continues to paint. He and I were in the same Marxist group, and the second time around we were both arrested in the same rally. Shakir looked after us. He put us down as being on leave, rather than being absent. He covered up for us a great deal.

That's interesting to hear. I know that Bhutto came to prominence on a tide of worker and student activism in Pakistan. But once in power, the PPP worked to contain some of the more radical energies of the time, cracking down on trade unions and more militant groups. This cell or study circle that you were associated with, was it connected to a larger party?

Well, the Communist Party in Pakistan never really took off. It wasn't anything other than a name, and we were very critical of the old guard. We were just a group, but it turned out that our group – known as the 'Professors Group' or the Azizuddin Group – became very influential amongst intellectuals in Lahore and across Pakistan.³² A lot of the students went on to become important journalists, lawyers, all kinds of things.

So, it was just a Marxist group, a revolutionary group. We thought we were bringing about the revolution!

³¹ Ijaz ul Hassan (1940-) is a Pakistani artist and writer, who studied at Saint Martin's School of Art in London and St John's College, Cambridge. He taught at the National College of Arts from 1966 to 1975.

³² Professor Azizuddin Ahmad taught at Islamia College, Lahore, and was active in organizing trade union activity around teachers and lecturers. The 'Professors' Group' was composed of left-orientated lecturers and teachers associated with Punjab University in Lahore and other colleges in the city. Prominent members included Khalid Mahmood, Ijaz ul Hassan, Munir Ghazanfur and Mumtaz.

That sort of politics does, of course, align with the idea you were mentioning earlier: this sense that a new world was possible. Everything was going to change. A new world was within your reach.

Absolutely. This was a set of the same ideas.

Did you see your political activism as connected to your architectural work? Was architecture part of the revolutionary process, or was it a separate endeavour?

Well, I was more involved as a graphic artist. Often, I was given the task of making cartoons or covers for our magazine, posters for students, for workers, for peasants.

That, again, was a great learning experience for me. I think it was very much responsible for the turn that my life eventually took. Because as I worked with the graphic aspect of communicating, I realised that what I was working with was a sensibility, a palette, a way of representing, that was *completely not understood*. It was not getting across to my audience. This really worried me. Constantly I had to ask myself, "What am I missing? What is it that I'm not getting?" And so, this forced me to educate myself on our own culture and traditions and values and so on.

As a way to communicate better with people.

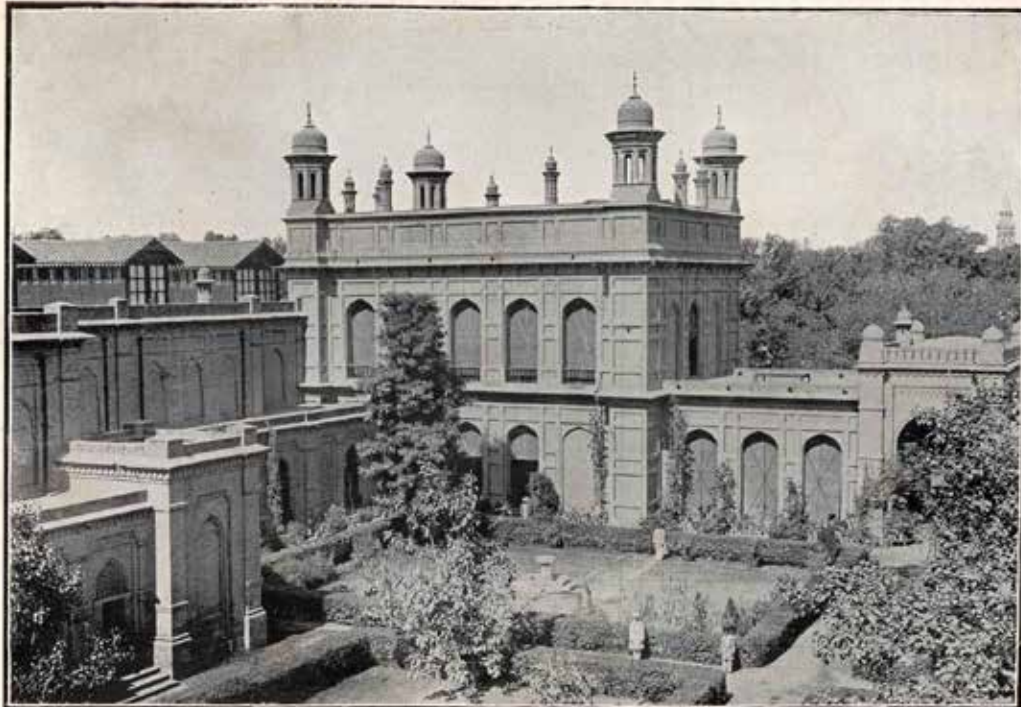
It was happening in both my architecture and in my work as an artist. In the buildings that I was doing – very few at that time – I was facing the same problem. I thought I was giving a certain message, which was that modern architecture is *not* the Western, American 'style'. Modern architecture is an *attitude*, a philosophy, a world view, a rational and scientific



4.4 Poster illustrated by Mumtaz calling for unity of the ghareeb 'awam (poor people) against government oversight of land and crops. Issued by the Kisaan Committee in Sangla Hill.

4.3 Poster illustrated by Mumtaz to advertise 1 May 1973. Issued by the Cloth Spinning Workers Federation, Hafizabad.





MAYO SCHOOL OF ART, LAHORE.

4.5 Colonial-era postcard depicting the Mayo School of Art, Lahore. Main building designed by Bhai Ram Singh. Courtesy: NCA Archives.

way of problem-solving. But the way it was being read by users and by students was, "Oh, you're working in the Western style." And this really worried me.

Both these realisations, in art and architecture at the same time, led me to search for a better understanding of what was going on.

The National College of Arts was quite a young institution at this time, even though it had taken over the Mall Road campus of the older, colonial Mayo School of Industrial Arts. Shakir Ali was its second Principal, following on from the American sculptor Mark Sponenburgh.³³ Ali had invested the curriculum with a certain sort of modernist energy, and I expect this was part of the inspiration for your hire – it says something about his vision for the architecture programme.

To return to Pakistan and immediately take up this position as Head of the Department of Architecture must have been exciting but also intimidating. Were there any particular challenges you faced there?

I was terrified! I mean, to take up such a big position at my age and with my lack of experience. I remember talking to John Lloyd, saying, "Should I really take this up? Can I do this?" But he was very encouraging and supportive, and said, "Of course you can. Go on, do it!"

Shakir Ali was, as I've said, so supportive. He would completely back you up with whatever you wanted to do, whatever you needed. All kinds of support.

The reason why he asked people like myself and my friend Ijaz ul Hassan to come into the college was that he really believed

³³ Mark Ritter Sponenburgh (1918-2012) was an American artist, art historian and educator. Based at the University of Oregon in the 1950s, he was commissioned by the Government of Pakistan in 1957 to oversee the establishment of the National College of Arts. He was Principal of the NCA from its opening in 1958 until 1961.

that we could turn things around and transform this arts and crafts institution into a modern, professional school of art, architecture and design.

This was part of our commitment, Shakir included. All the modernists were committed to this notion of transforming the world into a better place.

So, I had full support. At the time, of course, I was committed to the modernist position, and so coming to the National College of Arts was very exciting, in the sense that it gave one the opportunity to again build from scratch, starting from zero. There was almost nothing there, and so we had to think up, from basics, a lot of the questions about what should be taught in this specific environment, how should it be taught and so on. Designing the courses, putting together a faculty, working with students, all of this was very satisfying, very rewarding, and for me always a great learning experience.

Looking through the NCA archives, I noticed that funding and support from the United States was very prominent during the institution's early years. There was a lot of money coming from the Fulbright programme; there were visiting faculty from American universities. Did this have a noticeable effect on the culture and climate of the NCA? Did you feel American influence was something you needed to work against?

Only in the sense that, on principle, we violently rejected the idea of American aid in particular and foreign aid in general. We were always pushing for self-reliance and independence. In that sense, we were not impressed by Fulbright, etcetera. If anything, we detested their interference.

Would that also be true for how you thought about some of the larger development projects of the time? When you arrived in the mid-1960s, the new capital city of Islamabad was nearing completion. I believe the government moved there in 1966. This was truly a great modernist project, an attempt to craft a new way of living, even as it was informed by the Greek architect CA Doxiadis' particular philosophy of 'Ekistics'.³⁴

How did you, as a young, politically active architect, think about a project like Islamabad?

As architects, we thought that Islamabad was a great and exciting project. Like Chandigarh, it was all part of building a new world. And the capital of a new country, a young country, again starting from scratch. What a wonderful opportunity.

As for Doxiadis, we disliked him on principle. He was supported by the Americans and the Ford Foundation, and belonged to the imperialist camp. We were always looking for negative things to say about him. We made a lot of fun about how he sold his Ekistics and his dynapolis to the Ayub Khan government, selling it on the grounds that this was Islamic because it was geometric! It was using geometric grids, which meant that it was Islamic!

We thought this was ridiculous. It was cause for a lot of merriment and ridicule. We thought this was absurd, hypocritical, dishonest, etcetera, etcetera.

³⁴ Constantinos A Doxiadis (1913-1975) was a Greek architect and town planner. He is best known as the chief architect of Islamabad, but his work brought him around the world, with projects from Athens to Baghdad, Rio de Janeiro to Riyadh.



4.6 Mumtaz addressing the Pakistan Conference on Regional Planning and Architecture in Dhaka, 1968.

So, you were in favour of this idea for a new city, a new capital, but disagreed with the way it was pursued.

Can I ask about developments in Dhaka at this time? I'm speaking of the late 1960s, before the independence of Bangladesh, when it would have been the 'second capital' of Pakistan.

As an architectural educator working at the NCA, was there any connection with architectural institutions in East Pakistan like Dhaka's University of Engineering and Technology?³⁵ This institution was also being set up with American money, its curriculum designed under the influence of faculty from Texas A&M University and in a striking building designed by Richard Vrooman.³⁶ Did you have interactions with East Pakistan at all?

Yes, we did, a fair amount. In the way that universities and departments in the same field are constantly interacting with seminars, the exchange of students and faculty. There was a lot of that.

There were also connections at the professional level. The Institute of Architects of Pakistan was a young organisation.³⁷ Muzharul Islam had been very much a leading figure in that.³⁸ Muzharul Islam in particular, is a person that I was very much influenced by, impressed by. I loved his work. I admired him. When we got to know each other, we became very good friends. I really enjoyed every moment of being in his company, and I really loved the work that he did.

³⁵ The Ayub Khan Government set up the West Pakistan University of Engineering and Technology in Lahore and the East Pakistan University of Engineering and Technology in Dhaka, both in 1962. The latter would become the Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (BUET) after the break-up of Pakistan in 1971.

³⁶ Richard Vrooman (1920-2002) was an American architect who helped to establish East Pakistan UET in the 1960s and served as first Dean of the School.

³⁷ The Institute of Architects of Pakistan was established in 1957 as a professional development body for architects in the country. Its founding members included Minoo Mistri, Zahir-ud Deen Khwaja, Muzharul Islam, AM Peermohammed, MA Ahed, Tajuddin Bhamani and RS Rustomji.

³⁸ Muzharul Islam (1923-2012) was a Bangladeshi architect and urban planner, and is celebrated as a pioneer in regional modernism in South Asia.

When did you have a chance to meet him?

In the sixties, the late sixties. In conferences – sometimes in West Pakistan, sometimes in East Pakistan – and different occasions. Either I would travel to East Pakistan, or he would be in West. It was very rare of course, but memorable every time. My last meeting with him was probably in Dhaka in 1985.

Islam was someone who was also very inspired by Marxism, in his early engagements with architecture, but also the question of what it means to be Bengali.³⁹ This relates to what you've been saying about the importance of 'place' and the context of building. These ideas seem to have been central preoccupations for his work, too.

I have been intrigued by these connections, and how they negotiate the break-up of Pakistan and the independence of Bangladesh in 1971. Unfortunately, I never had a chance to speak with Bashirul Haq, the Bangladeshi architect who passed away in April 2020.⁴⁰ Haq was part of one of the earliest cohorts trained in architecture at the NCA, graduating in 1964, just before your arrival.

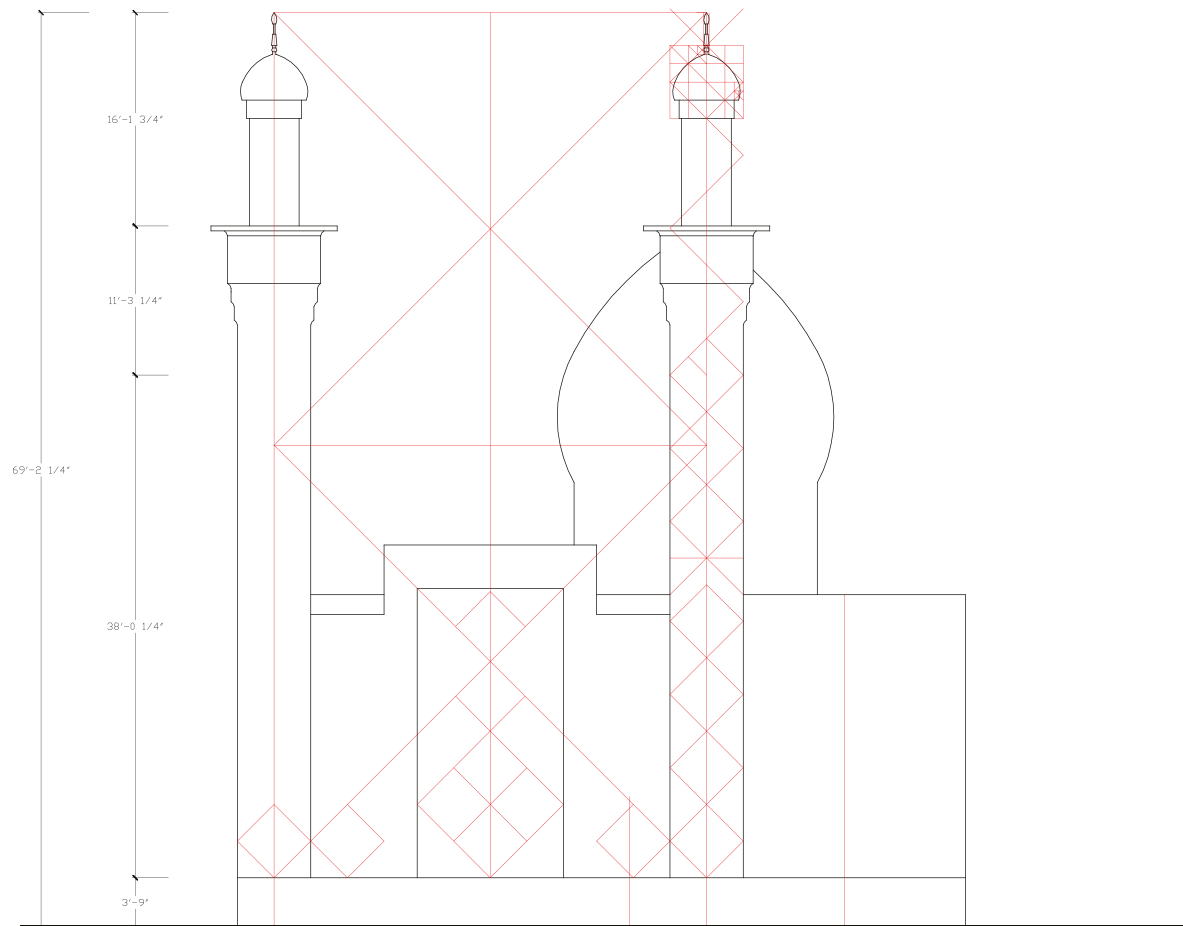
³⁹ On Islam's career and philosophy, see Kazi Khaleed Ashraf (ed), *An Architect in Bangladesh: Conversations with Muzharul Islam* (Dhaka: Loka Press, 2014)

⁴⁰ Bashirul Haq (1942-2002) was a Bangladeshi architect and planner who trained in Lahore and New Mexico and started his career in the office of Muzharul Islam. He is best known for his buildings in Dhaka.

4.7 L-R Charles Correa, Rabiul Hussain, Syed Zaigham Jaffrey, Shamsul Wares, and Mumtaz in Dhaka, 1975, at Muzharul Islam's Vastukalabid. Courtesy: Chetana Sthapatya Unnoyon Society.



Chapter 5



I would like to talk more about the early years of your professional career in Pakistan. You have mentioned your work at the NCA, your political activities, but alongside this you also established an architectural practice, BKM Associates.

Yes. When I came back to Lahore and started teaching there were many opportunities for doing all kinds of architectural projects. As a public institution, naturally a lot of government assignments would come to the Department of Architecture at the National College of Arts.

I made it a kind of policy, first of all, not to take any project that came officially to the department myself, but to pass it on to one or the other faculty members. My commitment was to the faculty, to the department. I continued my private office in my own house, just a studio. Sometimes I would have a young assistant as draughtsman, but it was just a one-man show. And there were very few projects that I took on.

So, during the time that I was teaching, I was really very marginally connected with private practice. I had a friend, a school friend who was junior to me at Aitchison, Fuad Ali Butt, a lovely architect.⁴¹ A lot of our mutual friends from school, almost every time we would be together, they would often say, "Why don't the two of you get together?"

⁴¹ Fuad Ali Butt (1940-2006) was trained as an architect at Washington State University, completing his BArch in 1965 before returning to Lahore to establish a practice.

So this was constantly raised. I thought, “Yes, that’s a very good idea.” But at that time, I was deliberately staying away from getting involved too much in private practice.

We finally succumbed to this idea around 1975. Fuad Ali Butt, myself, and then we asked Hashim Khan, a lovely engineer, to join. Together we formed this firm, BKM Associates. From the beginning, Hashim was really only there in name. He never actively joined the studio. But Fuad Butt and myself set up a very nice little practice.

In 1977, we were contacted by Christopher Harding, an English architect who worked out of Denmark. This was the time when the anti-Bhutto movement had come to a head, and Zia-ul-Haq took power in a coup d’état.⁴² Harding asked us if we would join him as the local partners for this very large, World Bank-funded project. That was the Lahore Urban Development and Traffic Study.⁴³

We thought this was a crazy idea. A tiny little firm like ours, we don’t stand a chance in this international competition! So, partly just as a lark, we said, “OK Christopher, we’ll join you. If you think that would help you, we don’t think we’ll be much of an asset for you.”

Did you have a prior relationship with Harding, or was his approach out of the blue?

Totally out of the blue. I don’t know how or why he contacted us. But then of course we became very friendly. He was a very likeable crook! [Laughs] A very nice man.

The government had changed, a new president had come in, and we thought that now everything’s going to be straight and narrow. No corruption, no favouritism. So, we said, “Well OK,

⁴² Muhammad Zia-ul-Haq (1924-1988) was a General in the Pakistan Army who deposed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto in a 1977 military coup. He ruled Pakistan as President under Martial Law until his death in 1988.

⁴³ CC Harding was a consultant architect and planner, originally from England but based in Denmark. He coordinated this survey for the Lahore Development Authority by linking together his office in Copenhagen, BKM Associates in Lahore, and the British firm Halcrow Fox and Associates in London.

maybe we’ll take our chance.” And to our great surprise, we got the project. This was a huge project involving extensive urban planning – from a structure plan for the Lahore metropolitan area to a five-year action plan including urban expansion, traffic engineering and management, and a Walled City component for upgrading of utility services, building renewal and conservation. We’d never done anything like it, and because it was such a big enterprise, I decided to take leave from the college. I took two years off to do this project.

When I went back to re-join the NCA, I was met with very embarrassed looks all around in the office. Nobody would say or commit to anything. They wouldn’t accept my joining back. And it transpired that they’d decided to throw me out.

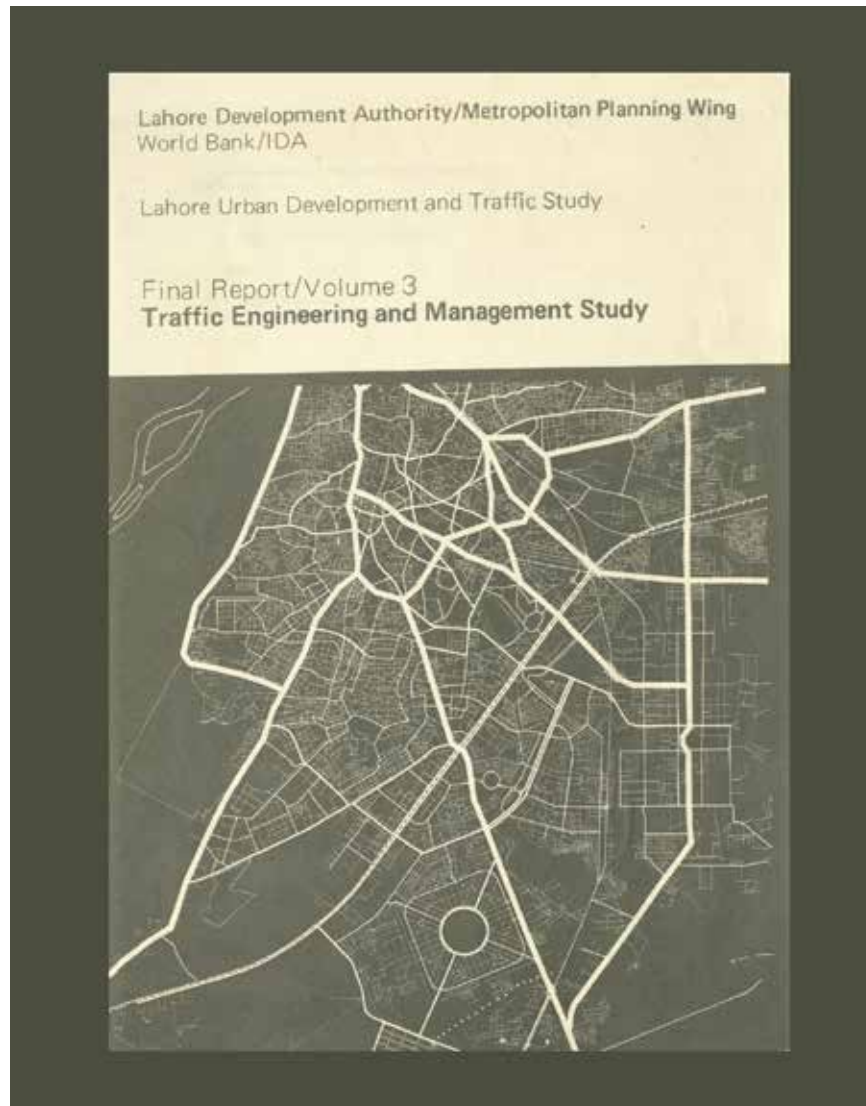
They gave you no explanation?

No explanation. I said, “Look, I don’t want to stay one minute in a place where I’m not wanted, but could you please tell me why you want me to leave?” And nobody would give me a straight answer.

I kept at them. With the help of a lawyer friend, I contacted the board, and finally they said, “Well, let’s call the principal to explain why you can’t be in the college.” And the way the Principal, Iqbal Hassan, put it was that we cannot keep law and order in the college as long as Ijaz ul Hassan and myself are around.⁴⁴

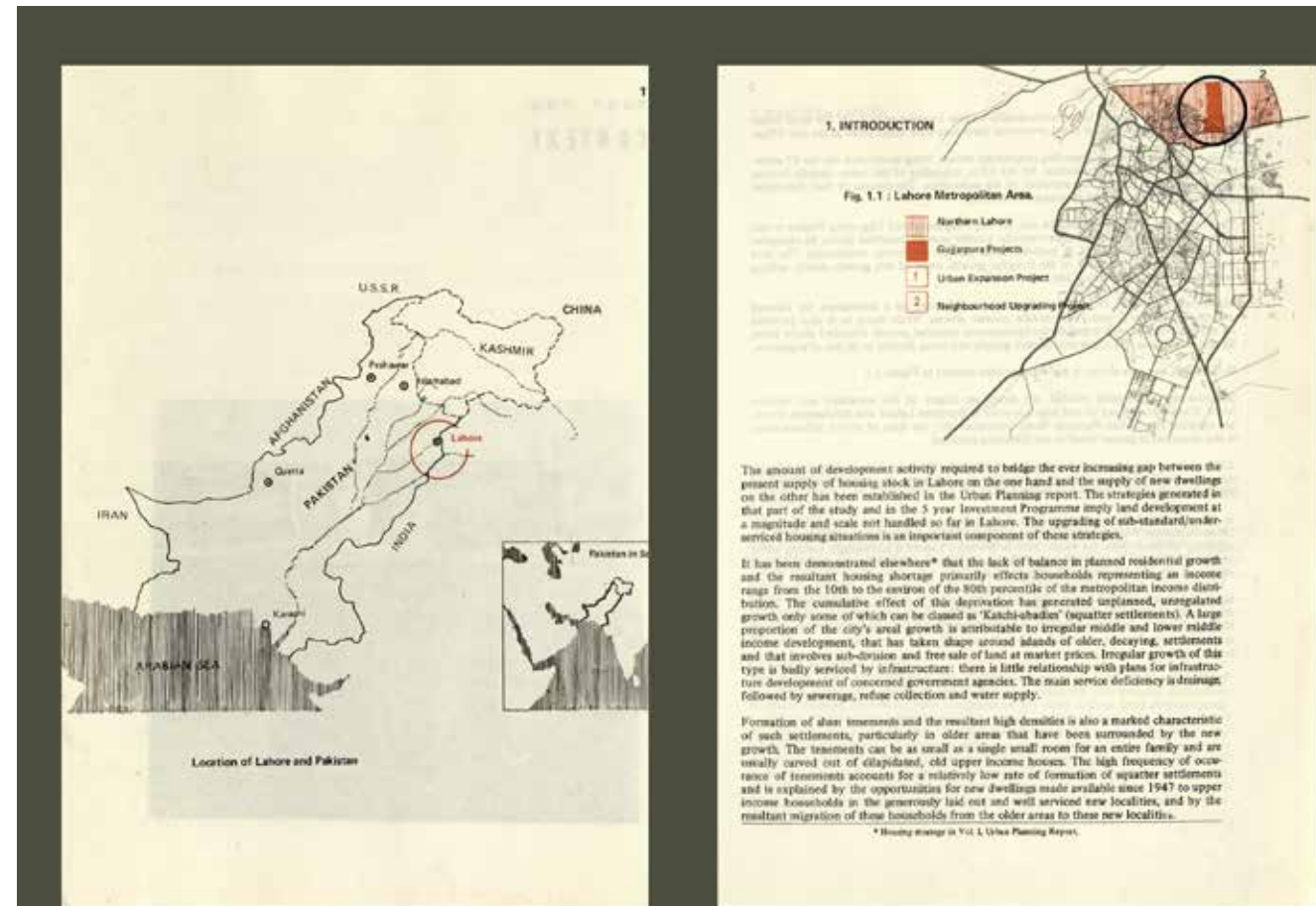
My friend Ijaz and myself, we were both chucked out. And the only reason we could get from them was that we were, I guess you’d call it, “corrupting the youth.”

⁴⁴ Iqbal Hassan trained as an architect as part of the first batch of the NCA’s Department of Architecture, 1958-1963. He was Principal of the NCA from 1975 to 1983.



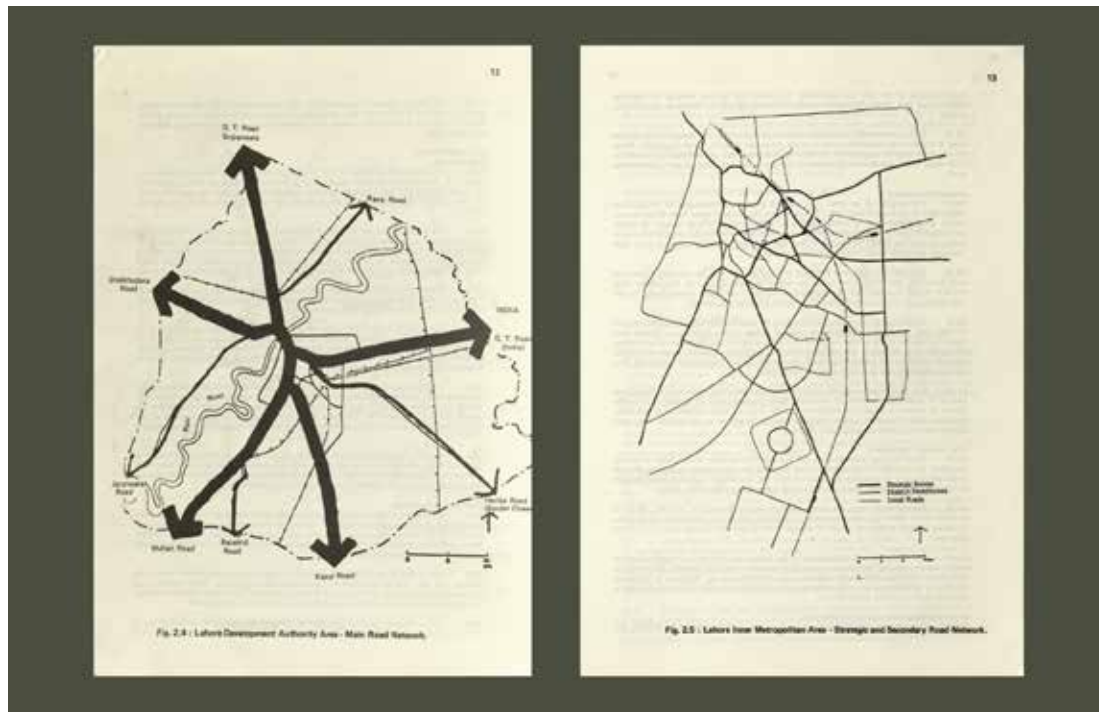
5.1 Cover of the Lahore Urban Development and Traffic Study (LUDTS), Volume 3, 1980.

5.2 Introducing Lahore in LUDTS, 1980.



Well, you had a reputation anyway!

So, there we are! There were all kinds of politics going on. Shakir had left in 1974, retired, and there was some kind of a struggle going on for the top-notch place. I guess we were seen as obstacles in the way of their ambitions. I don't know what it was. I think it was very petty politics. But the upshot was that we were thrown out. As far as I'm concerned, I will be thankful eternally to them for having liberated me! [Laughs] In an ivory tower, you don't realise there's a world out there. So, it was good.



5.3 Mapping Road Networks in LUDTS, 1980.

I want to go back to the Lahore Urban Development and Traffic Study (LUDTS), which was completed over several years between 1977 and 1981. Even though this study was primarily interested in the expansion of roads in Lahore, the growth of vehicle use, and the related development of low-density suburban neighbourhoods in the city, there was also close research completed on historic built environments like Lahore's Walled City.

We were talking earlier about Islamabad and this idea of a 'new city', a new type of living which breaks from history in that radical, modernist way. According to this way of thinking, an area like the Walled City represents all the problems of the past: densely populated, unplanned, congested. But this is not the approach that the LUDTS takes, and in fact the Study recommended a conservation plan for the Walled City. It approached it not as something that needed to be 'modernised' or 'developed' but as a space that we can learn from, and which needs to be protected. Could you say a bit about how that change in thinking took place for you?

This coincided with the time that I had begun to question the modernist position, and I was looking for alternate bases for approaching architecture and urbanism. I was beginning to be aware of the value of our history, culture and past.

Of course, very much at the centre of my thinking in those days was the same issue of development, of how to transform the world, but now I was thinking that the basis, the foundation for this has to be our own past. You can't leapfrog into the future without having any reference to your own history and past.

Regarding the LUDTS project, we had no previous experience with urban planning, but we had an opportunity to work with some very fine planners. I remember Reza Ali.⁴⁵ There was also my brother, Babar.⁴⁶ Both very fine planners.

⁴⁵ Reza H Ali is a Lahore-based Development Consultant, who established his consultancy in 1972.

⁴⁶ Babar Mumtaz is an urban planner and development economist; he was a member of academic staff at the Development Planning Unit (DPU) at University College London from 1973 and its Director from 2003 to 2005.

Out of the four key project areas, I took up the Walled City. I guess, mainly because of a kind of curiosity, a kind of intuitive feeling that there's something important. A basis to reconnect with our own roots and so on.

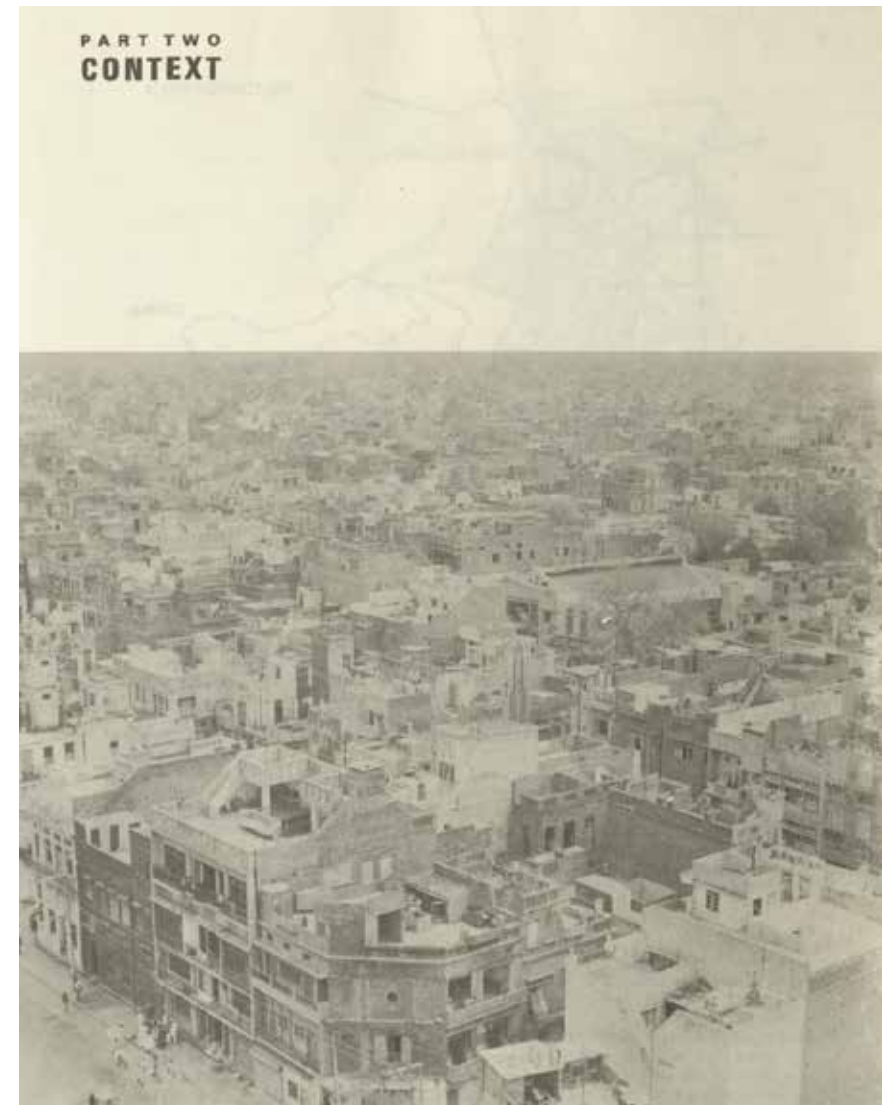
So, Reza Ali and I, we thought we'd take a walk through the Walled City and complete a kind of windscreen survey, just to familiarise ourselves with the project area. Both of us were very much moved and impressed by the richness, the history and culture, the people, of the Walled City. We kept writing, from the first reports on, that whatever else you do, you have to conserve the whole Walled City. It is a heritage treasure.

And, of course, the responses we got from the World Bank team and from our own bureaucratic departments were, "What on earth are you talking about?!" The World Bank's reaction was, "We don't do historic cities," and our own bureaucrats only insisted that we should pull down the whole mess anyway, and build new, modern infrastructure and high-rise buildings, etc.

From day one, we were pushing for keeping the Walled City as a treasure, a heritage property, the whole Walled City. Part of our responsibility was in providing basic services infrastructure. But another colleague who was with us on this was Masood Ahmed Khan, the architect, and we made maps in the project area.⁴⁷ We also recorded the architecturally valuable assets. And I think this was the first attempt to do this systematically.

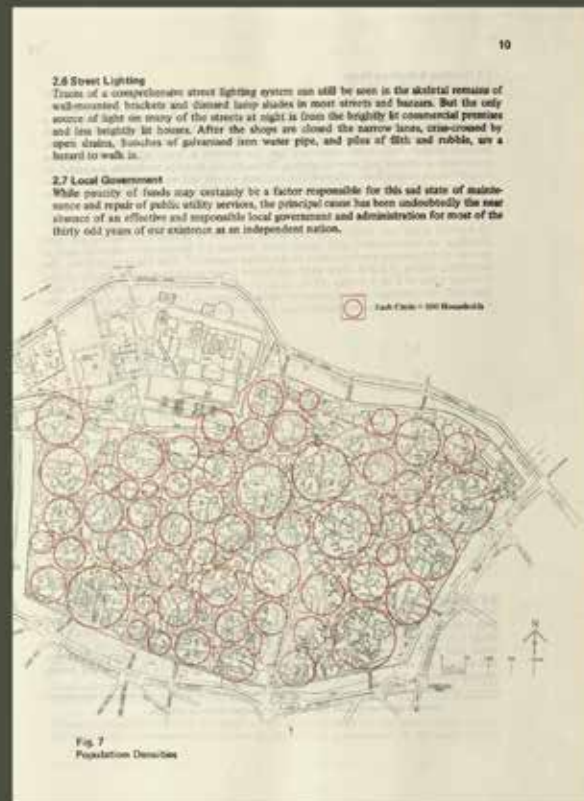
And throughout this study, right to the end, the World Bank refused to include this in the urban development project. But much later, many years later, the World Bank came back – not to us, they went to the government – and said they've got some money unspent from the LUDTS project. By this time, I think internationally opinions and attitudes had changed regarding heritage, and particularly urban conservation, and so they finally agreed for a separate conservation study to be done for

⁴⁷ Masood Ahmed Khan is an architect who trained at the NCA and MIT. He would later lead the Aga Khan Trust for Culture's Lahore Walled City project, part of its Historic Cities Programme.



5.4 Introducing the Walled City in LUDTS, 1980.

5.5 Mapping the Walled City in LUDTS, 1980.



the Walled City. This was given to a government firm, Pakistan Environmental Planning and Architectural Consultants, and at that time Masood was working in PEPAC. So, under his leadership, PEPAC carried out a very good, ground-based study, a conservation plan for the Walled City.

These were the early steps involved in the Walled City, and to this day I firmly believe that there is so much of value in these historic cities. The traditional urban morphology. The urban structuring. For me, the traditional city has now become one of the cornerstones of what I'm constantly propagating and talking about as the basis for the future of urbanism.

We have to learn from traditional cities. It shows us an alternative for all of the things that we've done wrong. The pedestrian environments, the human scale, the integrated functional uses, mixed use, mixed income groups. It has all of the things that the new urbanism is talking about now.

There's a lot that we can still learn. We've lost a tremendous amount, it's very sad to say, in these years. But there are still a lot of valuable lessons to be learnt from our traditional cities.

So, in your view, there is this element of conserving and preserving historic architecture in places like the Walled City. But it's also in large part about taking seriously a different mode of organising urban life: a different scale, different rhythms, different patterns.

Yes. Initially a lot of these things were kind of intuitively sensed, but not connected into any systematic thought. But since then, I find that my current approach to architecture is completely part and parcel with what we need to address in terms of urbanism. As I've said, time and again, it's not a romantic

attachment to the past. It's not some kind of return to a glorious past. There is no choice. It's not a matter of choice anymore.

Just take this Covid experience.⁴⁸ In the first two months, there was a lot of energy in support of a genuine lockdown. Everything came to a standstill. There were no motor cars or aeroplanes. And suddenly Lahore, amongst the world's worst polluted cities, became a healthy zone. It was amazing to see blue skies, chirping birds. Clarity. Suddenly, the quality of light changed.

It's all really part of the same story now. I can see more and more clearly that it's all connected. The way we make our buildings, the way we make our cities, and the way we organise our economies are all connected to the resulting destruction, not only of our climate, our whole planet, but also our society. All these income disparities, unequal concentrations of wealth, all of these problems are completely entangled and integrated and connected with each other. You can't separate them out.

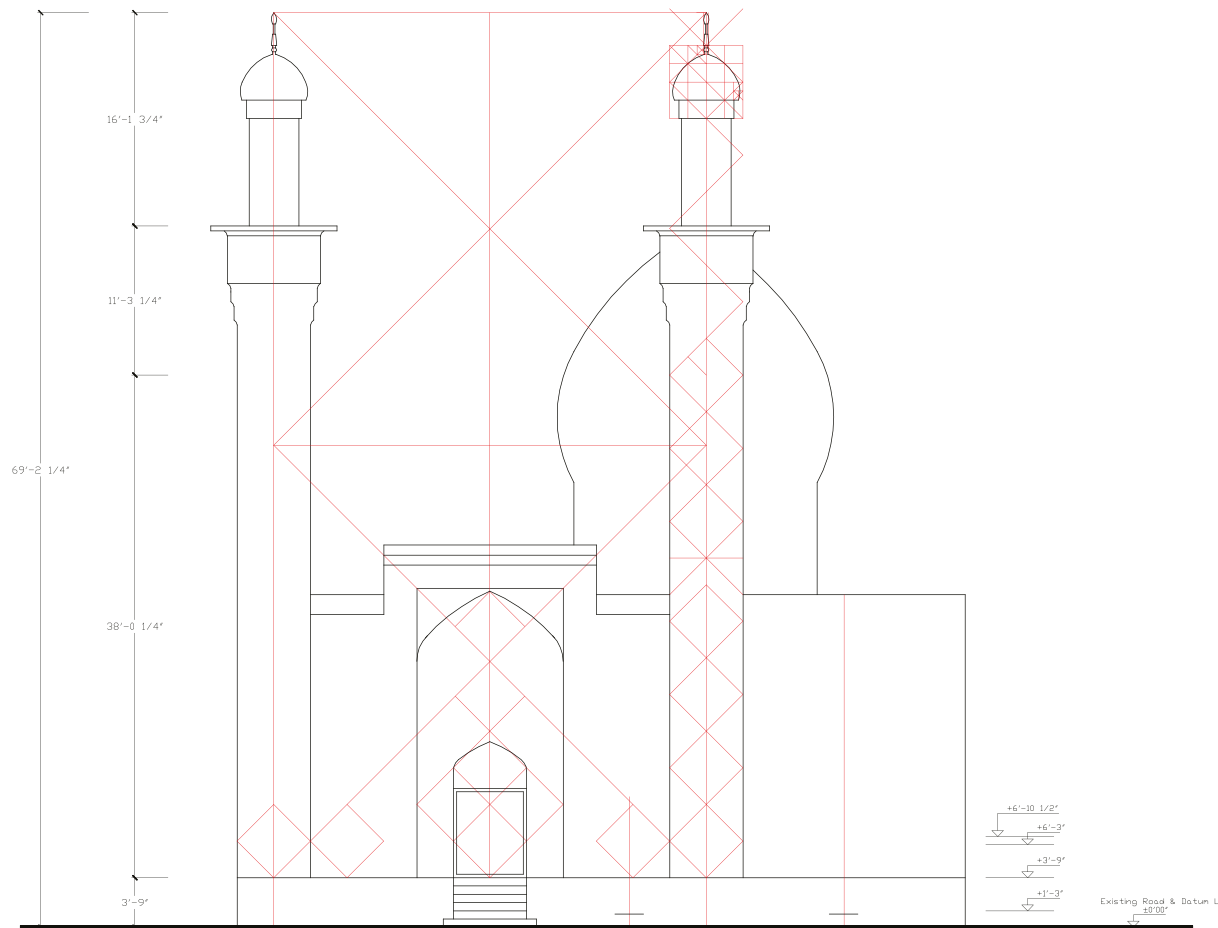
This seems important to underline: that your interest in historic environments like the Walled City was *not* born out of some romantic attachment to the past, some sentimental nostalgia for a lost age, but rather as part of your questioning what, exactly, modernism had obscured or erased in pursuing this 'break' from history. It was about asking what lessons and realities might have been too swiftly discarded.

⁴⁸ The interviews for this book were completed in November 2020.



5.6 Walled City, Lahore, 2019. Image by Chris Moffat.

Chapter 6



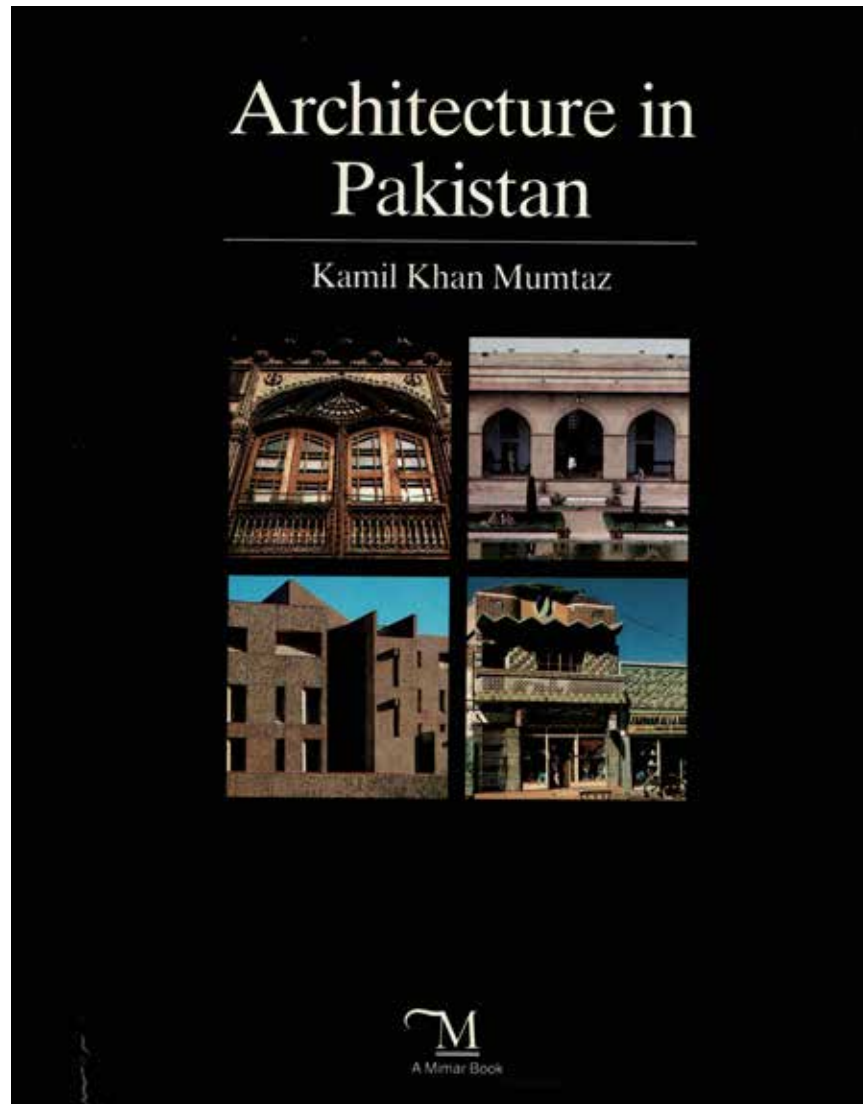
The desire to salvage lessons from the past is readily apparent in your historical writing on ‘traditional’ or ‘vernacular’ architecture in Pakistan. This goes back to when you were still at the NCA, I believe?

Yes. While I was still at the NCA, we were given a big assignment. My friend Ijaz ul Hassan was asked to write a book on art in Pakistan, and I was asked to write a book on architecture in Pakistan, around 1967 - 68.

This was a tremendous opportunity for us both, and particularly myself, to discover my own country, including East Pakistan at that time. And so I learnt a huge amount by travelling and documenting architecture throughout East and West Pakistan. That exposure went a long way in giving me a very firm basis for the subsequent ideological or theoretical construct that I now find myself working with.

The *Architecture in Pakistan* book was an assignment from the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting. By the time I'd collected all the material the country split, we lost East Pakistan, and I lost half my manuscript. So, then it went into abeyance for a long time, and eventually the Aga Khan took it up and helped publish it. It came out in 1985 with Mimar.⁴⁹ The book also included work that I had completed for UNESCO in the mid-1970s, looking at the traditional culture of Cholistan and how it was being impacted by modernism.

⁴⁹ Kamil Khan Mumtaz, *Architecture in Pakistan* (Singapore: Mimar, 1985).



6.1 Cover of *Architecture in Pakistan* by Kamil Khan Mumtaz, published in 1985.

Were there areas that you travelled to that you were particularly inspired by or struck by during this research?

One of the most striking areas for me was East Pakistan. I had no idea of the richness of that history and that past and so on. So, I learnt a lot of things that I had no idea about before. Among the scant literary sources was the work of Ahmad Hasan Dani on the Muslim period, and a few archaeological publications on the Buddhist sites.⁵⁰ So my first port of call was Muzharul Islam with his profound insights into Bengali history and cultural roots. With his guidance and blessings, I stepped into *terra incognita*, all alone, me and my brownie box camera! Travelling by trains, buses, ferries, and on foot, to so many remote sites, some actually straddling the Indian border, with nary a thought to the political storm building up below the surface.

Tracing the history from Lalmai and Paharpur sites, to the monuments at Gaur, to Mughal Dhaka, and the continuities in the terracotta tiles of the temples at Puthia and Dinajpur, running through the Buddhist, Hindu and Muslim architecture, was an eye opener and a valuable education.

But then I was also learning about things in West Pakistan which I'd never experienced before, particularly in the small towns and the villages, a world other than the urban. As you've seen in my book, I included a whole chapter on the rural craft tradition, and also a section on spaces and places beyond the urban fringe.

Other than the mainstream monumental architecture, this kind of fringe activity – both in the cities and in the countryside – became a central, important part of my *Architecture in Pakistan*.

⁵⁰ Ahmad Hasan Dani (1920-2009) was a Pakistani archaeologist, best known for his work on the Indus Valley Civilisation.



- RURAL HABITAT
 The Delta Region
 The Indus Plain
 Foothills and Plateau
 Arid Mountains
 Alpine
 Nomadic
 Cholistan Desert
- SOCIAL PATTERNS AND
 RURAL HABITAT
 Tribal
 Feudal
- URBAN VERNACULAR
 Townhouses
- SWAT MOSQUES
- TRADITIONAL DOORS

VERNACULAR TRADITION

RURAL HABITAT

Modern industrialisation in Pakistan has had little impact beyond a few pockets of urban concentration. Most people continue to live in rural communities, the patterns of their daily lives governed by the herding and grazing economies of tribal people or the backward agricultural practices of feudal societies. Out of the persistence of these patterns have evolved forms of rural housing corresponding to the livelihood of the people, the forms of society, the material resources and climates of each of the regions of Pakistan.

Analysis reveals a number of climatic variations within each of the major topographic regions. For instance, the central plain can be divided into three distinct climatic zones: the humid coastal and delta; the dry Sind and Southern Punjab; and the monsoon plain of the central Punjab. Similarly, the mountains have a narrow humid coastal strip along the Arabian Sea; the arid Baluchistan plateau; the milder North West Frontier and Potwar plateau; the moist and wooded northern valleys; and the drier extreme north. The traditional forms of rural habitat in each of these regions reflect the variations in climatic conditions as much as the variations in available materials within each environment.

The Delta Region

The delta region of the lower Indus has low rainfall but high humidity, with a steady prevailing sea breeze. The scrub vegetation in this region consists of low stunted trees and bushes. These form the basic materials of the two principal forms of construction. In the more common form for rural domestic structures, the slender stems of a local juniper shrub are struck upright into a narrow trench in the ground to form a closely packed hedge. Successive layers of these stems are added to make up the wall and are held together by bundles of reeds tied across the stems at the joints. The result is a wickerwork of a dark vertical texture criss-crossed by a pattern of horizontal and diagonal lines of the lighter coloured reed bundles.

The roofs are thatched with a double slope and central ridge, and the typical house consists of a pair of such roofs over a room and an adjoining shed facing into a courtyard which is

VERNACULAR TRADITION



7.1, 7.2 and 7.3 Townhouses and wind-catchers, Thatta. Thatta presents a rare combination of urban verticality with rustic wattle and dash surfaces. On every roof is perched a wind-catching device, known locally as a "mangh".

screened by the same hedge-like construction of closely packed juniper stems.

This form of construction provides a light-weight structure with a low thermal capacity, essential in a warm humid climate, and permits the constant sea breeze to filter in through the walls.

A second form of construction in the same region employs local timber to make a frame onto which are nailed shorter laths to form a basket-like construction, usually plastered over with a mixture of earth and straw. This also produces light-weight, low-thermal-capacity construction, in which the timber frame permits multi-storey development. Indeed in larger settlements,



The research you were completing for this book connects to developments in the broader, global history of architecture in this period. In the 1970s, there is a resurgent interest in vernacular building methods, and in precisely these sorts of 'fringe forms' that you mention. So, a shift from the great monuments to the everyday, to the 'ordinary'. This was in many ways a response to modernism and its appetite for the 'new' and the 'bold'. Did you feel that you were engaged with these conversations in architectural thought, or was this more of a personal path for you?

I think I was very faintly aware of some sort of ripples in the global discourse, particularly a growing interest in conservation and in historical cities, precincts, that kind of thing. But I thought that, in my including the rural and urban fringe architecture, I was doing something which other architectural historians had not included in their work on architectural history. Somehow these had been left out. They had not been given historical treatment.

I thought this was what architectural historians and architects generally needed to pay more attention to.

Architecture in Pakistan remains, to this day, the only attempt to provide a comprehensive account of building activities in the territory that is now Pakistan. Its ambit is vast, reaching from pre-Harappan cultures of the Indus valley up to Doxiadis' Islamabad, and indeed covering also the work of your own generation of Pakistani architects, including Nayyar Ali Dada, Yasmeen Lari, your old classmate Habib Fida Ali and more.⁵¹ Architects are often acutely aware of their place in history, but rarely do architects endeavour to work as historians! It really is a landmark accomplishment.

⁵¹ Nayyar Ali Dada (1943-) is a Lahore-based architect who trained at the NCA. In 1998, Dada's building for the Alhamra Arts Council in Lahore won the Aga Khan Award for Architecture. Yasmeen Lari (1941-) is a Karachi-based architect, the first accredited woman architect in Pakistan, and founder of the Heritage Foundation of Pakistan.

You mentioned that the book was eventually published with the support of the Aga Khan Foundation, through their Singapore-based imprint Mimar. *Mimar* was also the name of a monthly magazine, subtitled 'Architecture in Development' and edited by the architect Hassan-Uddin Khan.⁵²

I would like for you to say a bit about the effect that institutions like *Mimar* and the Aga Khan Foundation have had on the profession of architecture in Pakistan. I know you also spent some time on the Steering Committee for the Aga Khan Award for Architecture. Did these new networks for architects, forged largely across the Islamic world, help to open new conversations in Pakistan? Or did they simply reflect developments in architecture that were already ongoing in educational institutions and professional bodies?

I think you have to put it in context. This was a time when interest in the Islamic world had been growing, and I think this had to do with much larger global politics. The awakening for the developed world was with the use of oil as a weapon, the oil crisis in 1967 and again in 1973, and the realisation that, unless we sort this thing out, there's a problem area.⁵³

And so, from the seventies, there was a sprouting up of centres for studying Islamic culture all over the world, in Europe and also in American universities. That was partially the context, where there was a growing awareness of a separate kind of cultural entity.

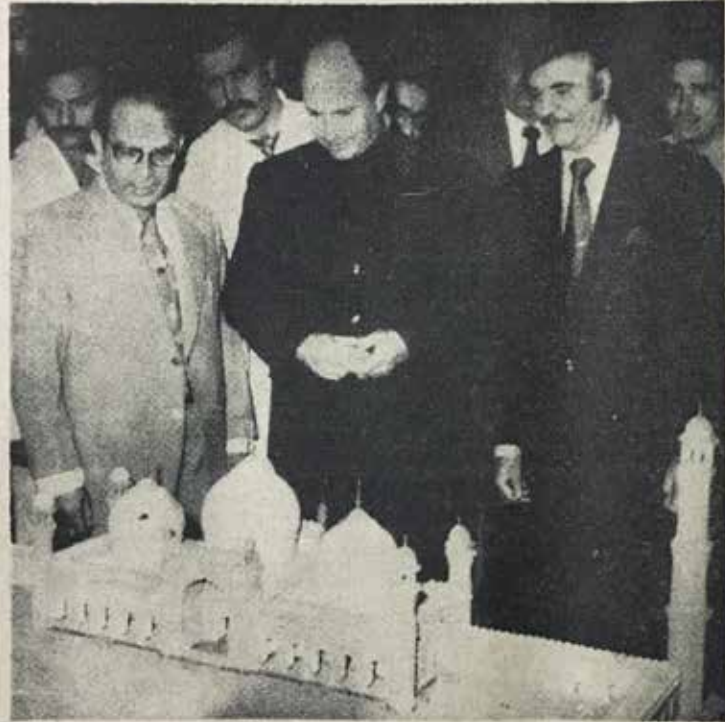
And I think that, quite possibly, setting up the Aga Khan Award for Architecture was kind of in that spirit, or at least partially.

But then there was the Aga Khan himself, as a person with his interests and visions.⁵⁴ For him, the main agenda was to catch

⁵² Hassan-Uddin Khan (1947-) is an architect and historian who was born in Hyderabad, India, and trained at the AA in London. He has been closely involved with the Aga Khan Trust for Culture since the 1970s.

⁵³ The 1967 Oil Embargo coincided with the Six-Day War and was an attempt by several Arab countries to disrupt international support for Israel. The 1973 Oil Crisis was a similar effort sparked by the Yom Kippur War.

⁵⁴ Prince Shah Karim al-Husseini, Aga Khan IV, (1936-) is the Imam of the Ismaili community and patron of the Aga Khan Development Network.



His Highness Prince Karim Aga Khan seeing a model of Badshahi Mosque at an exhibition on the architectural drawings, model and photographs of Muslim monuments in Pakistan, which he inaugurated in Lahore Museum on Wednesday.—P.T.

6.3 The Aga Khan in Lahore, as reported in the *Pakistan Times*, 23 October 1980.

6.4 The Aga Khan Award Ceremony in Lahore, as reported in the *Pakistan Times*, 24 October 1980.



President Mohammad Zia-ul-Haq giving away Aga Khan Award for Architecture at presentation ceremony held at Shalimar Gardens, Lahore, on Thursday (right). Prince Karim Aga Khan giving Chairman's Award for Architecture to 86-year-old Egyptian architect, Mr. Hassan Fathy.—P.T.

up. The Muslim *ummah* has been left behind in the development process, and to catch up we have to modernise. Modern education, modern technology and so on.

So, there were several intentions behind why this was set up. But like so many things, there are unintended consequences. I think that the Aga Khan Award, which was connected with the Mimar publications and seminars, had a very profound effect, particularly within the Muslim world. I don't think other people were much concerned, but for Muslim architects it was a kind of wake-up call to look at the heritage and wealth that we have, which we have ignored.

An interest therefore did emerge. And the first Aga Khan Award ceremony took place in Lahore, in the Shalimar Gardens, in 1980. By way of preparing for that event the Aga Khan had sent the Iranian architect Nader Ardalan to Lahore to make the necessary arrangements.⁵⁵ And I was kind of attached to Nader as the local resource person.

I knew Ardalan had been a great influence on your thinking. I didn't realise that that is how you came into contact.

Yes, I was assigned to help him out with the local logistics.

We became friendly, and between work we would sit and chat. And in one of these coffee or tea sittings, he produced his book and gave it to me.⁵⁶ And I don't know if I looked at it then. Even the cover, and flipping through it, I thought, "Oh yeah, this is traditional Iranian architecture, who cares!" [Laughs]

I was totally uninterested. And then the other thing I thought was, "obviously this guy can't sell this book!"

⁵⁵ Nader Ardalan (1939-) is an Iranian architect and urban planner. Ardalan trained at the Carnegie Institute of Technology, Pittsburgh (BA, 1961) and Harvard University (MArch, 1962).

⁵⁶ Nader Ardalan and Laleh Bakhtiar, *The Sense of Unity: The Sufi Tradition in Persian Architecture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1973).

Giving it away!

If an author has to give out copies of his own book!

So, I didn't pay much attention to it, I just put it on my shelves. I thought this is not something I want to get into.

But at the same time, there were things happening in my own work, and in particular I had this growing, nagging fear that I wasn't communicating with my audience, as a visual artist or as an architect. This grew on me, almost like an obsession. I needed to find out what it was that I wasn't getting. There was something missing, something I wasn't understanding. And I needed to understand, because I wanted to communicate, I wanted to get my message across. That was my only interest.

I decided that it was a question of language. Art is a language, and it speaks and it communicates. And I didn't know the language of my own people. So I made a conscious effort to educate myself. And when I decided to do that, there was nothing to turn to, and the only thing that I thought might be useful was Nader's book! I just picked it up, and I started reading it seriously. And from page one, it was mind-blowing. Absolutely. I thought, "My god, what have I been looking for? This is what I've been missing!" That is, there is a fundamental world view. It's not just a question of pointed arches versus Roman arches, or concrete and glass versus bricks and lime. It's not materials, it's not form, and indeed it's not even a question of time. It's not a question of the past versus the present.

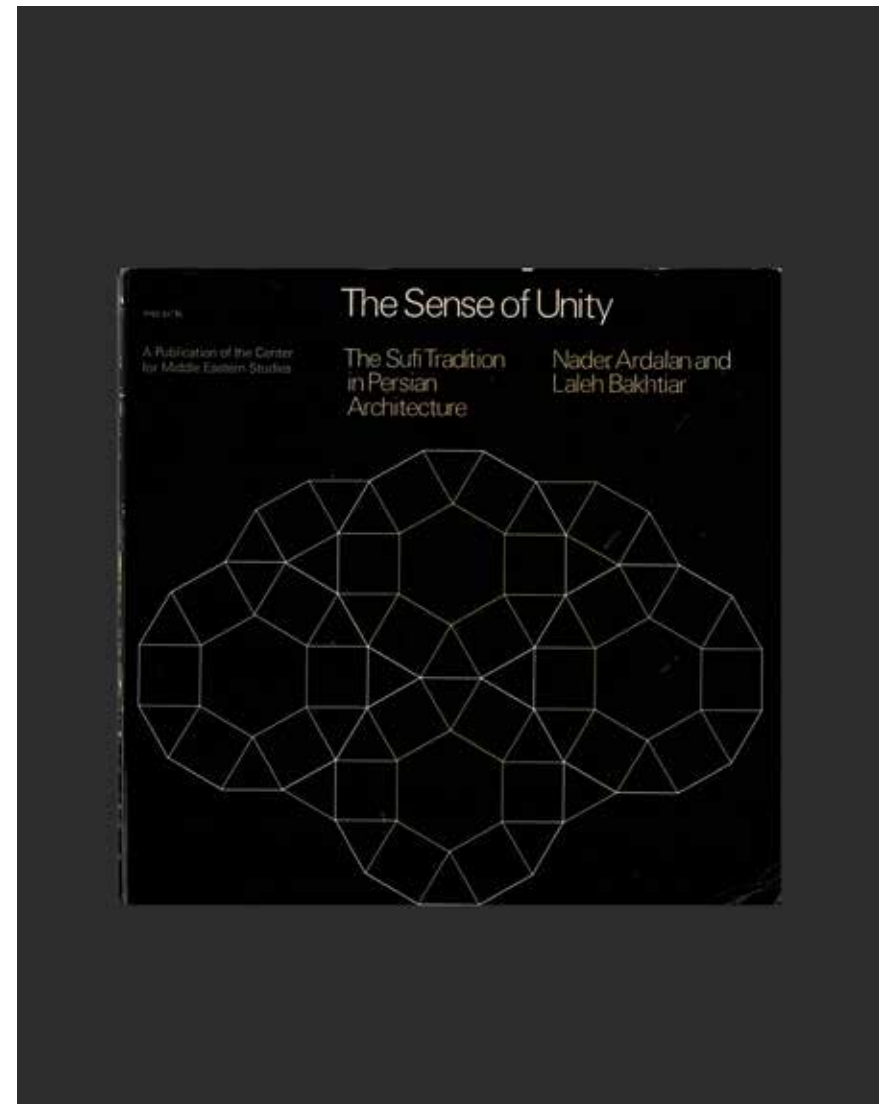
This was like a window opening into my mind. I realised that it was not only the difference between what I have been trained in and what is deeply rooted in our culture, but that this radically different world view *is* the truth.

That was shattering. It shattered all of the beliefs I had, being a Marxist, a materialist, an atheist, a modernist. To realise that this modernist world view is fundamentally flawed, and that the principled truth has been around in traditional societies forever.

And so *The Sense of Unity* – alongside Laleh Bakhtiar’s book *Sufi: Expressions of the Mystic Quest* [New York: Avon Books, 1976] – got me curious, and I started reading, and the more I read, the more I became convinced, and so that started a turn in my entire mind, personality, work, everything. It transformed my life.

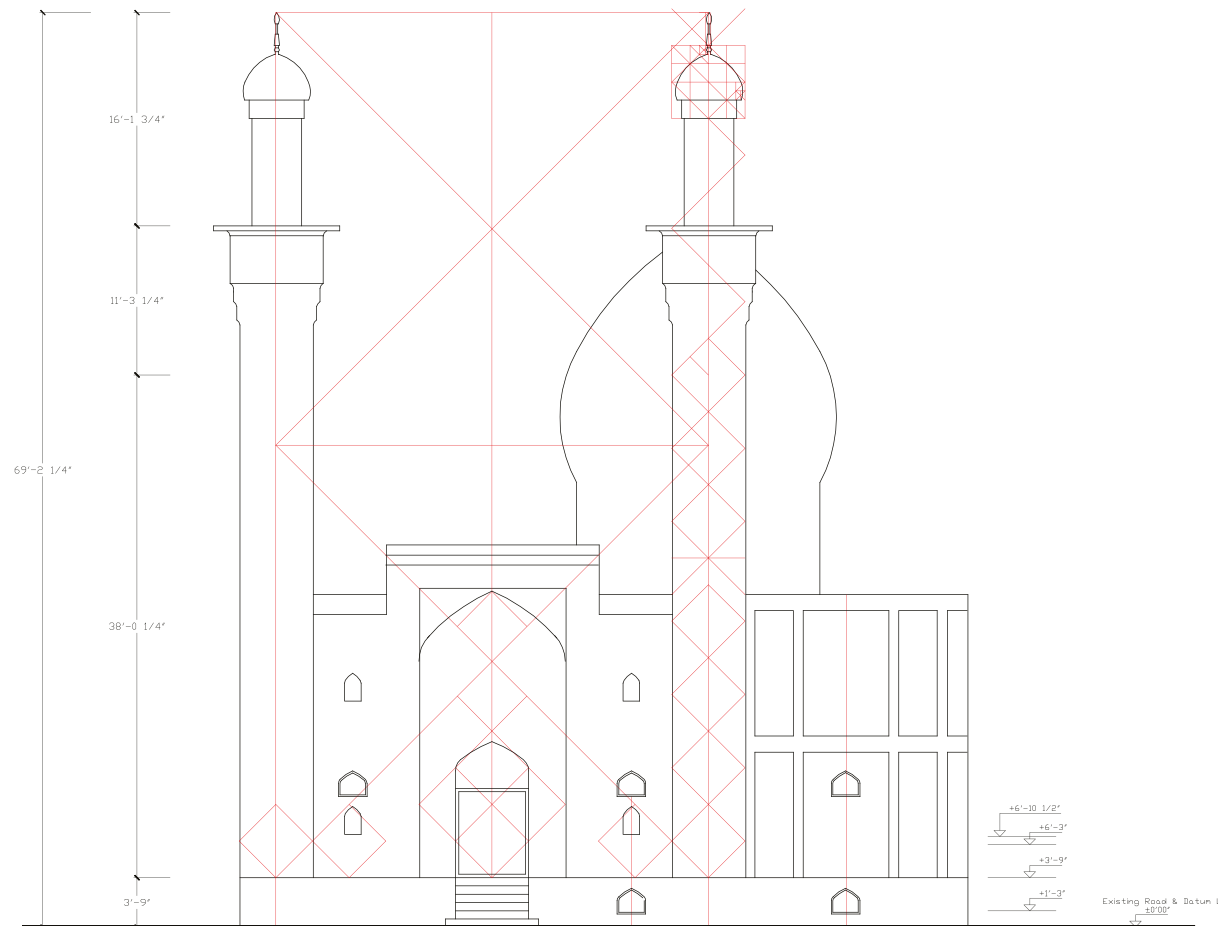
This account of your ‘epiphany’, if I may put it that way, is interesting in light of what you earlier described about your training as an architect: the way the modernist world view was presented as uncontested ‘fact’. It was simply the only way forward. You might need to adjust it to context, take into account differences of climate or materials, but essentially it expressed a truth. What you are saying now is not simply that there were flaws with this perspective, but that it could actually be replaced entirely by a different perspective: that you could organise your approach to building and designing and working around a radically different ‘truth’.

Yes, absolutely. Up to that point one was critiquing modernism, but only to find the weakness and how to get it across stronger. To mitigate.



6.5 Cover of *The Sense of Unity* by Nader Ardalan and Laleh Bakhtiar, published in 1973.

Chapter 7

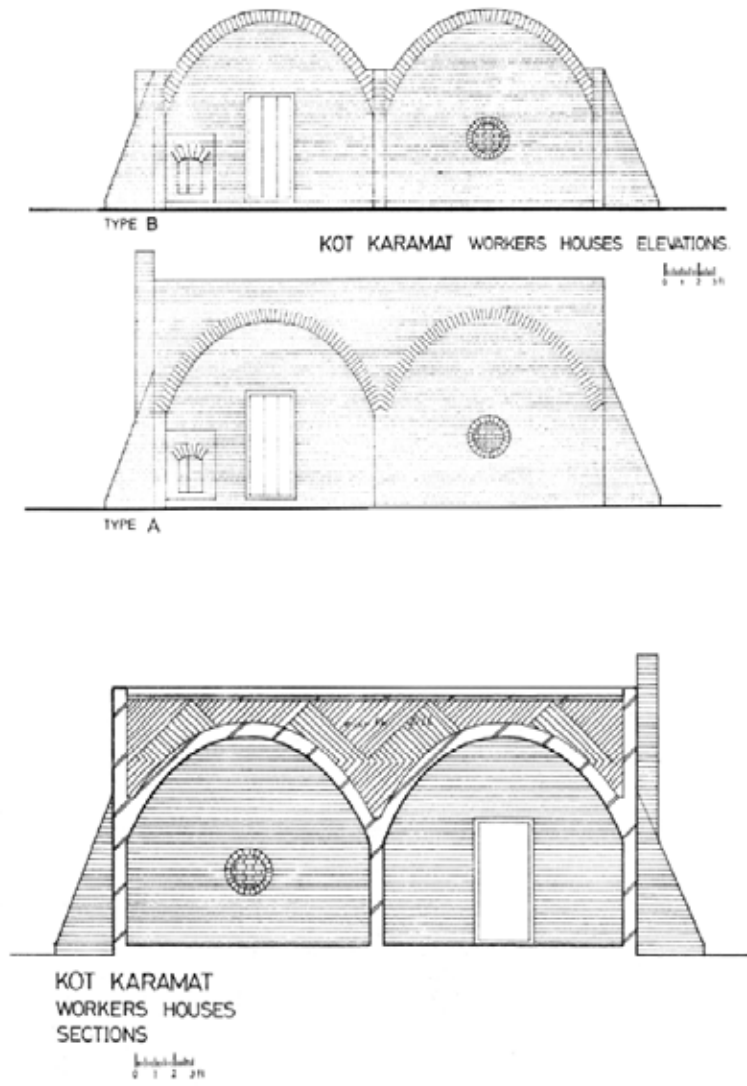


You have suggested that part of the reason Nader Ardalan and Laleh Bakhtiar's books appealed to you was because you were facing limitations in your own work, problems of communication.

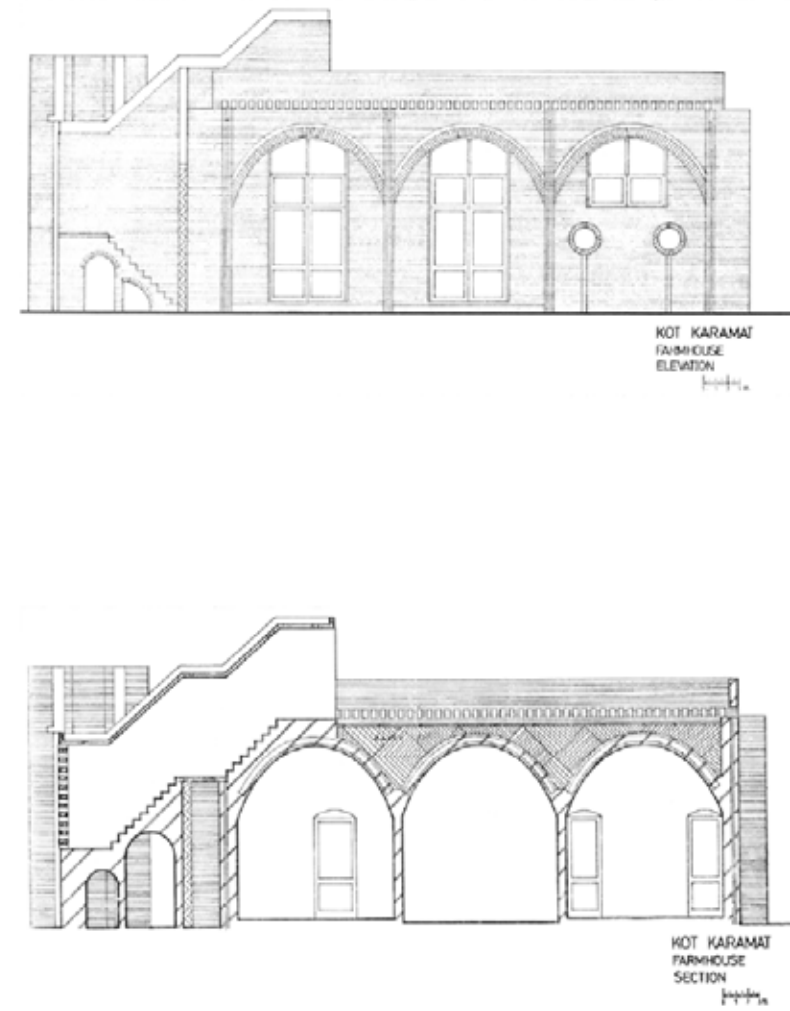
In the reading that I've done around your career, the Kot Karamat project is often referenced as an important moment with regard to forcing you to confront these limitations. You designed a farmhouse and workers' residences in a village not far from Lahore, but the people living there did not take to the buildings in the way you hoped, raising some critiques of the work. I wonder if this was indeed a key experience for you, which informed the later 'crisis of confidence', if I can put it that way?

Kot Karamat, that experience, was very early on. I mean, 1966, 1967. And yes, you might say that was the beginning of the realisation that there are aspects of our own lifestyles, beliefs, culture, which I'm missing. The catenary vaults of my "workers' houses" were rejected because they could not be used to sleep on in the summer nights, or to dry the red chillies in the winter sun. There was also the question of, "if they are so good, why don't you live in such a house yourself?"

At that point, however, it was simply a question of, "I've got to understand this, so that I can make modernism acceptable to the culture!" But yes, that was a start, and these kinds of things kept hitting me, with my drawings, posters, buildings, the feedback I got. That led eventually to this change.



7.1 Design for Workers Houses at Kot Karamat, 1970.



7.2 Design for Farmhouse at Kot Karamat, 1970.



7.3 Kot Karamat photographed in 1980.

Could I take you back a little bit, then, to talk about those early years? I am interested in your engagements with housing. I know a lot of your early projects were residences, and residences have been a site for you to experiment with your changing approach over the years.

Well, actually, as far as housing, that's a totally different issue. Mass housing, public housing. As a modernist trained in the post-war European ethos, housing was a big thing; there was a general interest in housing as such.

But in terms of personal residences, which you mentioned, there was no conscious approach. It was at the start of my practice, and I guess this is how things happen for most architects. It's your friends and relatives who give you the first commissions.

It was simply that: just another project. I brought all of my modernist, functionalist thinking to bear, and took the whole challenge – what is it that is needed, the climate, materials, all of those things – purely as a modernist. And they could have been any other project. I would not have approached it in any different way. There was nothing special from that, it just happens that these were the kind of clients that I got.

Do you see value in those projects – your father's house in Karachi, for instance, or Dr Farrukh's residence in Lahore – as someone who has changed so much as an architect since they were built? Or put more simply, what is it like for you to look at those buildings now? Are there qualities you would still hold on to, or does it feel like a different person designed them?

Well, yes, there is a clear difference between the houses that I did as a modernist and the work I do now. I think that, in their time and their context, and particularly with reference to the rationale that they were rooted in, I'm very satisfied that they



7.4 House for Dr Farrukh, Lahore, 1976.

were pretty okay! They're not bad at all. I mean, if I were an outside critic, I would look at them appreciatively.

The problem was not as architecture, aesthetics, design, reasoning, functioning – that was not the problem. It's just that the basis on which this work was founded – the direction in which I wanted to take myself, the world – was, I later discovered, flawed. It's a fundamental shift.

In this new direction, the kind of projects that I happened to get were again a number of private residences. And there were schools. Darul Hikmat was, for me, a very big project at that time – it was constructed between 1991 and 1994. It was a primary school teachers' training institution, then it became a place for vocational training, and then there was a chain of small schools.

There was the Chand Bagh School – that was also at the turning point. Sometime around 1993, I was taking a group of visiting architecture students, from the Bartlett School at University College London, to the Wazir Khan Masjid in Lahore. I was explaining the geometric principles of traditional designs when one of them, who must have been West Indian, asked if I knew about 'fractal' geometry. I had not heard the term. He said he could see a connection with these patterns. He promised to send me more reading, which he did, and I was fascinated and tried to apply this geometry to the layout plan for our competition design for the Chand Bagh School in Muridke.⁵⁷ But more importantly, this project provided the opportunity to explore larger issues not only of education and planning, but also community, sustainability, and landscaping. These were examples where I had begun to rediscover, to re-educate myself, and intellectually I was becoming clearer about how one should approach architecture, and how one should design.

But in many of these buildings, like Darul Hikmat or Chand Bagh School, I found that the indoctrination of the modernist attitudes

⁵⁷ The Chand Bagh School is an independent boarding school for boys, located in the Sheikhpura District of Punjab, just outside of Lahore. It was established in 1998 on the model of the Doon School in Dehradun, Uttarakhand, India.



7.5 House for Zakauallah Khan, Karachi, 1967.

7.6 House for Zakaullah Khan, Karachi, 1967.



– this compulsion, obsession, to be innovative, creative, not to copy, not to repeat – was so strong. It was like the hand just refused to do what the mind knew it should be doing. It was a big struggle for me.

So, the Darul Hikmat commission comes when you're starting to reassess your practice, starting to design and build with a different relationship to time and tradition. It would be interesting to know how you approach a site, how you approach a project like Darul Hikmat, taking into account the things you've been learning from your research into traditional architecture in Pakistan and from writers like Ardan and Bakhtiar. Where, as an architect, do you start?

At one level, there is absolutely no difference. You have a brief, which gives a sense of what the client needs. You have a site. You have a set of rules, building regulations. You have economic parameters, a given climate, all of those things.

Now, there are those practical issues, and the whole question of analysing, doing the relationship diagrams, orientations. It's absolutely no different whether you're coming at it as a modernist or a traditionalist, because a traditionalist also faced these varied problems and solved them beautifully.

To that extent, there was no difference in my approach to building, to architecture, that is to say in the fundamental, materialist, rationalist, functionalist aspects of it.

The real difference comes when the architect asks, "What is it I'm trying to say?". As a modernist the message was in the material, the construction, the process – that was the message. The traditional approach is essentially the realisation that the *physical* reality is not the only reality. There are domains and dimensions beyond the physical, and physically manifested

phenomena are at the lowest level. Above are the metaphysical, the spiritual, the angelic. These are domains, or spiritual and ideal planes, of archetypes and forms that are manifested in the physical world. The function of all traditional art and architecture is to make us aware of that higher reality, that universal truth, which lies beyond the apparent phenomenon manifested in the physical world.

In any design, there comes a moment where you have to decide, “*what is it?*” Take, for example, brick. We work with brick, I had been working with brick before, but as a modernist the intention was always to highlight and draw attention to the materiality of the brick wall, the way that one does recessed mortar joints, or dissolves them with the flush pointing.

Are you making your audience conscious of the materiality of the brick, the *brick-ness* of the brick, and the structure, how it is carrying forces, all of those physical things? Or are you using this material, like everything else in life, as a vehicle or a touchstone through which you penetrate into a deeper reality?

It is just a different approach. Everything – and yes, even questions of design, symmetry, proportion, aesthetics – has a real purpose, a meaning. Planning, surface treatments, materials, all of those things have now got a different central message to communicate.

Do you find that this approach also affects how you define the differences between types of buildings? If architecture and building is about reflecting or approaching a deeper reality or truth, is the same approach required for a residence versus a school versus a mosque or a mausoleum? Are such typologies useful, or are they superseded by other concerns?



7.7 Administrative Block, Chand Bagh School, Muridke, 1994.

7.8 Darul Hikmat, Lahore, 1994.



There is no difference. Whether one is designing a school or the shrine of a Sufi saint or a private residence, after you've dealt with the function and the physical constraints and all of those things, beyond that, it's the same message. Whether it's the school or a house or a mosque, the message is exactly the same. There is this motivation that is constantly there, and it doesn't matter what the "functional" typology is. However, "formal" typologies, in the sense of plan forms and massing typologies, do play a central role, as ideal forms with embedded meanings, as symbols and references in the formal vocabulary.

I would like to set this reorientation of your approach in its historical context. Earlier, when we were discussing the initiatives of the Aga Khan Foundation, we noted the importance of the oil crisis in 1973 for pushing a broader reorientation of global power. The 1970s and 1980s saw the rise of a new geopolitical oil bloc, centred around the Gulf countries, who also became major importers of Pakistani labour. Pakistan's relationship with countries like Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates would have several implications for its politics, culture and economy. Can I ask what impact the period of General Zia-ul-Haq in Pakistan had on your work as an architect, and particularly how you responded to state-led engagements with Islam during the 1980s?

Well, I had been very actively involved in politics from the time I came back to Pakistan. Originally it was the Ayub era, and indeed in the Bhutto period, and then the Zia-ul-Haq era.

The change in perspective that I am talking about also allows you to see the question of politics in a different light. One can see through all the lies. So, one is equally critical of someone like Zia, who you can see is using religion and religious sentiment for his own political ends. And you can see that with mullahs, and

you see that also in the liberal mullahs, there is a bigotry and a blind spot. And so much prejudice.

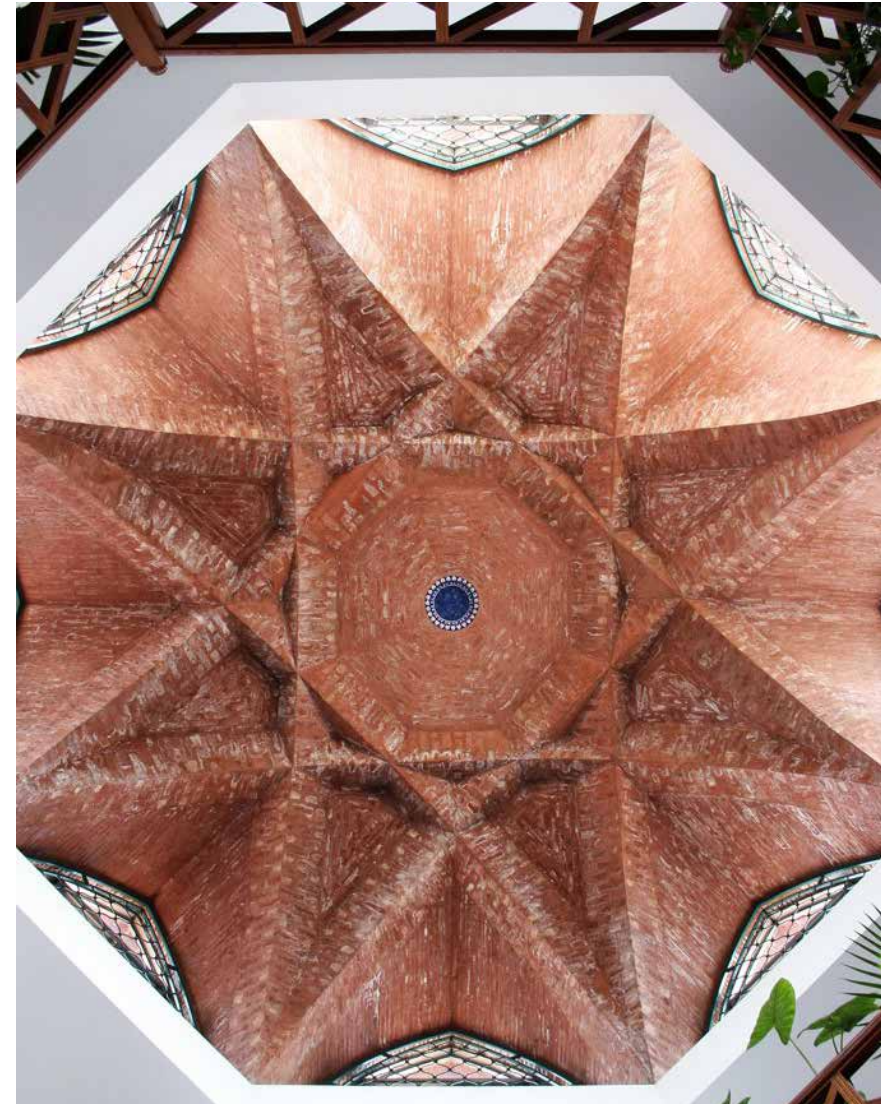
In science, I can see the same. There is also scientific bigotry and blindness. The refusal of science to recognise any reality beyond the physical is like a religion. There are people now calling it 'physicalism' – that's the new religion. It's a religion that science holds on to, and they put up walls, all kinds of things.

So, one sees bigotry and narrow-mindedness in the religious dogmatist as much as in the scientific dogmatist. One has to struggle equally against both.

I was just curious if there was a part of your reorientation – this turn to an understanding of religious meaning invested in architecture and art and beyond – that was responding to these opportunistic, elite-level political engagements with religion.

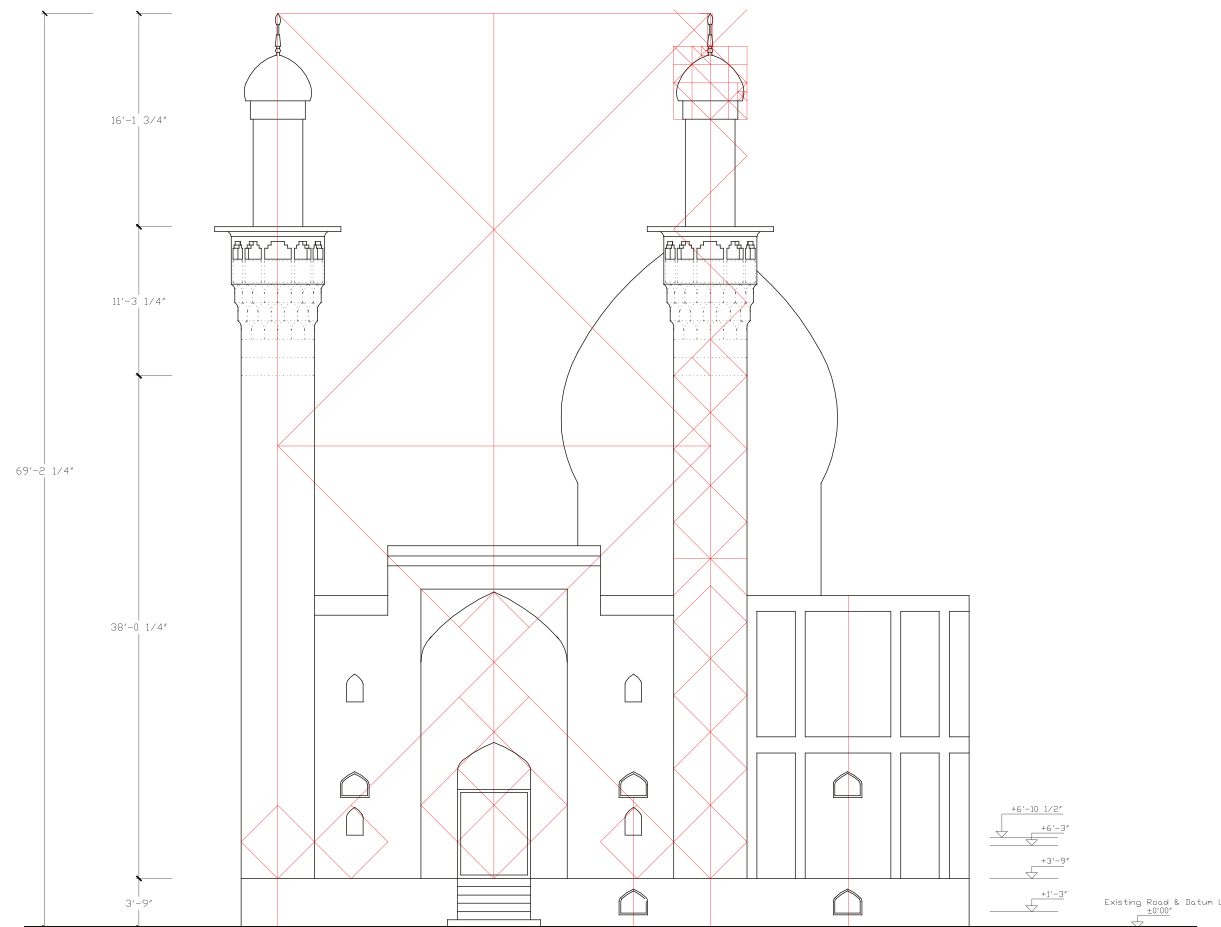
But as you say, such instrumentalism is not something specific to the Zia period. That's something that has been a consistent feature in this dialogue.

Speaking of the 1980s, it would be interesting to hear a little bit about the Anjuman Mimaran, and how that connects to the story you're telling here.



7.9 Private House, Nisar Road, Lahore, 2001.

Chapter 8



Although architects in Pakistan had been organized much earlier through professional groups like the Institute of Architects of Pakistan [founded in 1957], the Anjuman Mimaran, which you helped establish in 1987, was a very different sort of group, with a distinct philosophy of history and a very particular approach to the built environment. What brought you and your peers together in this forum? Was it born out of frustration with the status quo, or a sense of optimism in how architecture as a field might develop in Pakistan?

Anjuman Mimaran was created with the understanding of the traditional position, and then the need to connect that also with the global realities that were emerging around that time.⁵⁸

The need for a more relevant approach to architecture in countries like ours was clear. This was also part of the rejection and critique of modernism, the way it was being misunderstood as a style, the international style, a Western style. There was a need really to rethink education and create systems of knowledge and training that are more relevant to our own circumstances.

This was also coinciding with the Aga Khan activities and an awareness of our own traditions. There was a group, less than a dozen or so, who were open to these ideas and very interested. So, we got together to try and set up an alternative school, based on our own indigenous, traditional methods of teaching and practicing architecture.

⁵⁸ The founding members of Anjuman Mimaran were as follows: Nayyar Ali Dada, Javed Najam, Masood Ahmed Khan, Kamil Khan Mumtaz, Hashim Khan, Zahir-ud Deen Khwaja, Fuad Ali Butt, Raza Ali, Yasmeen Cheema, Tanveer Zehra Hassan, Rizwan Azaem, Sajjad Kausar, Abdur Rahman, Masood Akhtar, and Iqbal Awan.

Having decided that this is what we needed to do, then came the problem of finding the relevant teachers and the material to teach from. We realised that there was nothing available, and that there were huge gaps in our understanding of history and the history of architecture in our own country.

We decided there's only one thing to do: we just have to produce this literature. And so we put the school on the backburner, and decided to go out into the field, to document, to study, to bring back the material, host seminars and create publications and exhibitions.⁵⁹ The whole Anjuman Mimaran activity was really a wonderful, positive, productive effort for a lot of us.

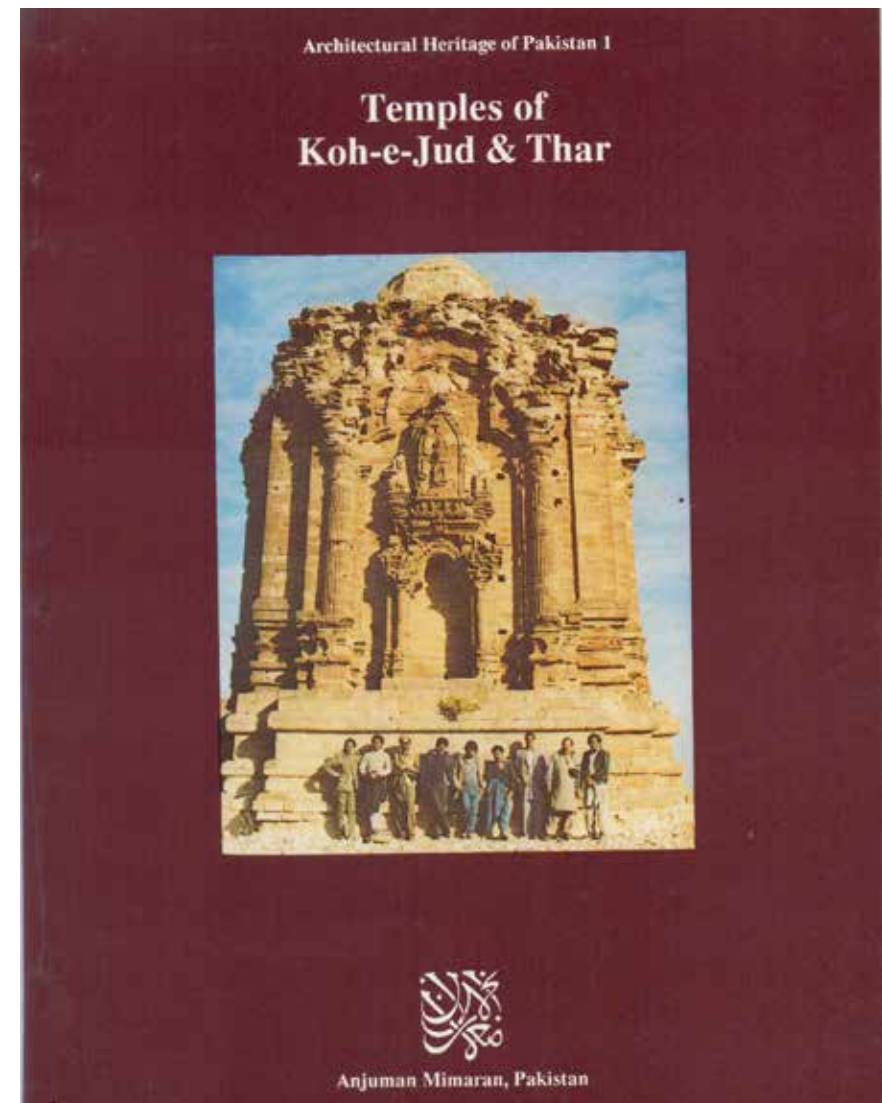
But I guess we were not very good at managing things – the business and money and how you do these sorts of things! In any case, we just could not get around to actually getting the school going. There were limits in how much you can do on a purely voluntary basis.

Then my son, Taimoor, after his graduation, he took on the responsibility of running the Anjuman for a while.⁶⁰ Gradually, as interest kind of faded and professional work demands became more pressing, the Anjuman just died out around 2000. But what we had set out to do, my son Taimoor and his wife and some of his friends have taken forward in a different way. They have set up another institution, called *Hast-o-Neest*, and this is a kind of trust, an institution dedicated to tradition, design, philosophy, the arts, all of that.

So, in a way, they are taking what the Anjuman started out to do to another level altogether, in terms of its breadth. They're doing architecture and design but also philosophy, poetry, music, and literature. All kinds of things. Classes and courses, going into depth. They've managed to set up networks with some wonderful scholars all around the world. That's the advantage of the Internet and so on. That's very satisfying.

⁵⁹ Selected Anjuman Mimaran events and seminars included: 'Hindu Shahiya Temples of the Salt Range' (June 1989); 'Sultanate Period Architecture in Pakistan' (1990); 'Historic Towns of Pakistan' (1991); 'Urban Domestic Architectural Traditions in Pakistan' (1992).

⁶⁰ Taimoor Khan Mumtaz (b.1969) is an architect who trained at the NCA in Lahore. He is the founder of *Hast-o-Neest* Institute of Traditional Studies & Arts.



8.1 *Temples of Koh-e-Jud & Thar*, proceedings of an Anjuman Mimaran seminar, 1989.

Yes, it must be satisfying to see a project like that not only *continue* but also expand and take new forms, to have that sort of creative legacy. Did you have artists or craftspeople or teachers involved with Anjuman Mimaran, too? Or was it primarily architects?

Anjuman Mimaran was almost entirely architects. I guess one exception was the very fine traditional master builder, an *Ustad*, Haji Abdul Aziz, who was part of the group.⁶¹ But mainly they were architects.

I think a lot of them were teachers [in architectural schools] and frustrated in the sense of having a desire to teach, for instance, our own history and our own architecture, and finding no space in any of the institutions. That was perhaps their motivation.



8.2 Group with Haji Abdul Aziz (second from left) in Huzuri Bagh, Lahore, 2001.

⁶¹ Haji Abdul Aziz (1917-2002) was a master mason who migrated to Kasur, Pakistan, from Ferozepur, India at the time of partition. He was a pupil of *Ustad Ahmedyar*, another master mason, and trained in the vernacular tradition and style of the Mughal period.

And no resources, as you say.

I would like to ask you a little bit about conservation, because I think there is something in this process of repair, of repetition, of copying and imitation that relates to what you have been saying about engaging history and tradition in architecture. What can architects learn through processes of restoration that is different from conventional sorts of architectural education, and particularly the 'pursuit of the new' that informs much training in the profession?

Yes. We're not trained as conservationists, but just the fact that we've become acquainted with and gained some expertise regarding historic architecture, or have a network with craftsmen who know the traditional practices, there's a kind of assumption that, "These people would be good, they can do conservation!" [laughs]

It's almost by default. And there are not – or at least, there were not – many professionally-trained conservationists in Pakistan. And of course, there was one's own interest to conserve these treasures. So, any opportunity, we took up enthusiastically.⁶²

There was a lot of application of some of the things we learned, [but] also in doing the conservation one learns so much. In a way, these are very different activities, but kind of like Siamese twins they are joined and connected in some way. Often the question comes up, they say, "Oh, you've done so much for conservation..." And I have to explain that what we're conserving is *not* the structures: we are conserving the *tradition* itself. The knowledge, the wisdom – all of that. It's a very different thing. One doesn't think about conservation as conserving the *practice* and the *theory*.

⁶² Selected conservation work carried out by members of the Anjuman Mimaran included: restoration of Sayyida Mubarak Begum Haveli (1991) and Khwaja Bihari Tomb (1998), Lahore; restoration of Kotla Mohsin Khan Gateway, Peshawar (1997).

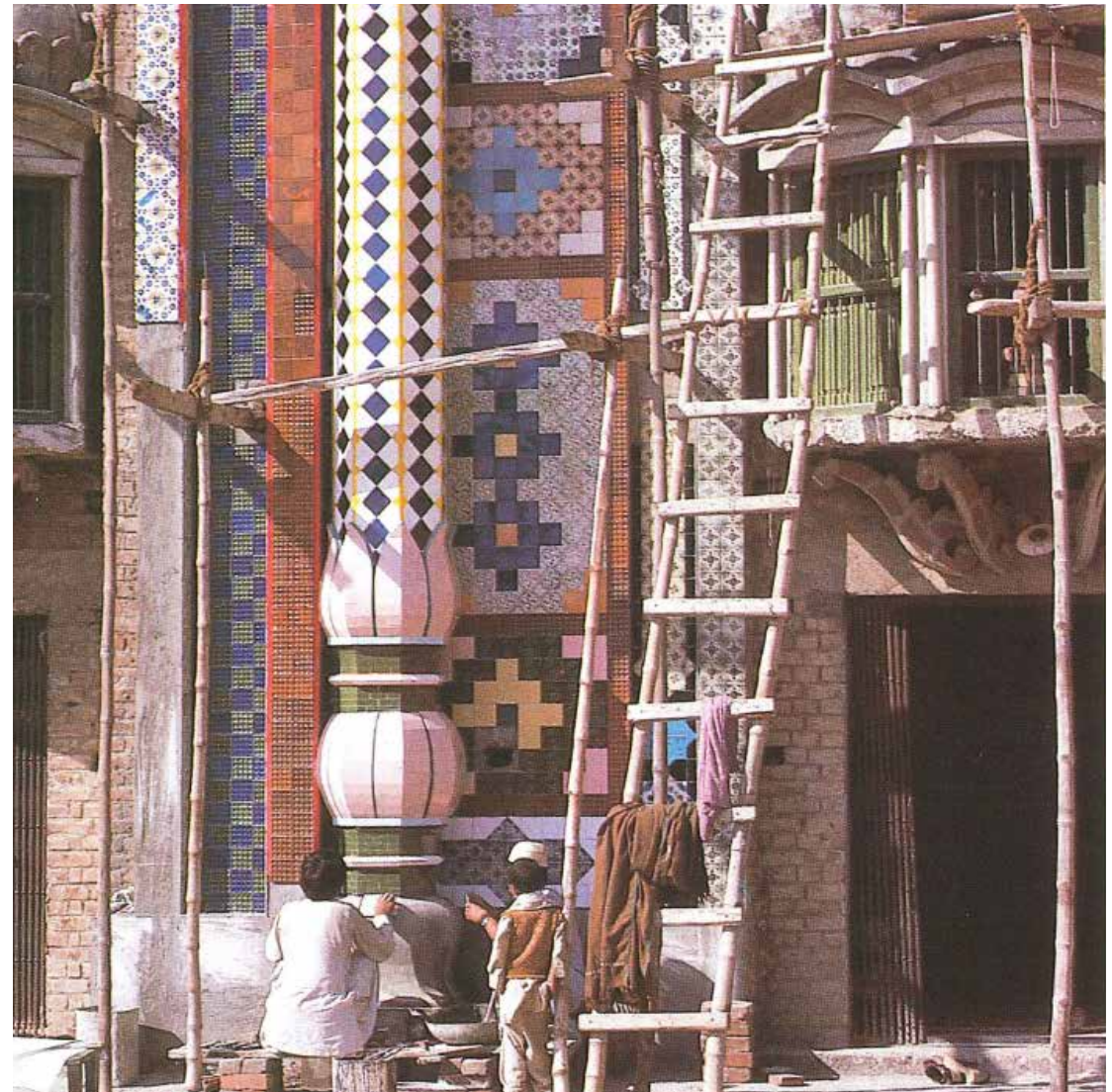
It is thought of as protecting a building, as a static thing, but for you it's about protecting the process and the knowledge itself.

Yes. A term I often use is 'continuing tradition'. So, it's something that you continue as a practice today. It's not about the past or history. It is a valid and important way to do things, in the traditional manner, and many reasons why one should be working in that way.

I was curious about how you conceive of colonial architecture in this story of tradition, recovery and repair. A large part of Lahore owes its shape and form to the British colonial period. You have been involved in restoration work at the Governor's House in Lahore, as well as in the Lahore High Court. You've also written about this period in your book *Architecture in Pakistan*, describing the Indo-Saracenic style as part of a process whereby European influence marginalises certain sorts of building knowledge but also retains other elements.

How do you approach a building like the Lahore High Court, versus something like the Haveli Sayyida Mubarak Begum or the Khwaja Bihari Tomb?

In both cases, they are straightforward conservation projects. There is nothing more than that. It's purely conserving an old building which needs attention, repair, restoration. These are purely conservation exercises. The typology has nothing to do with it at all. As I said, for me personally, a far more valuable, important conservation that we're doing is continuing the practice.



8.3 Mistri Ghulam Hussain at work in Dina, Punjab, 1983.

8.4 Lohari Gate, Lahore, 2019. Image by Chris Moffat.



And that practice is not something that's part of the history of these colonial buildings, in a meaningful sense for you?

No, it's just that by having to look at all of these issues – not least of which is the very history of our encounter with modernism, and the need to recognise the problem and the destructive impact of modernism, not only on our country but all over the world – it is imperative that we understand what happened. How did this happen?

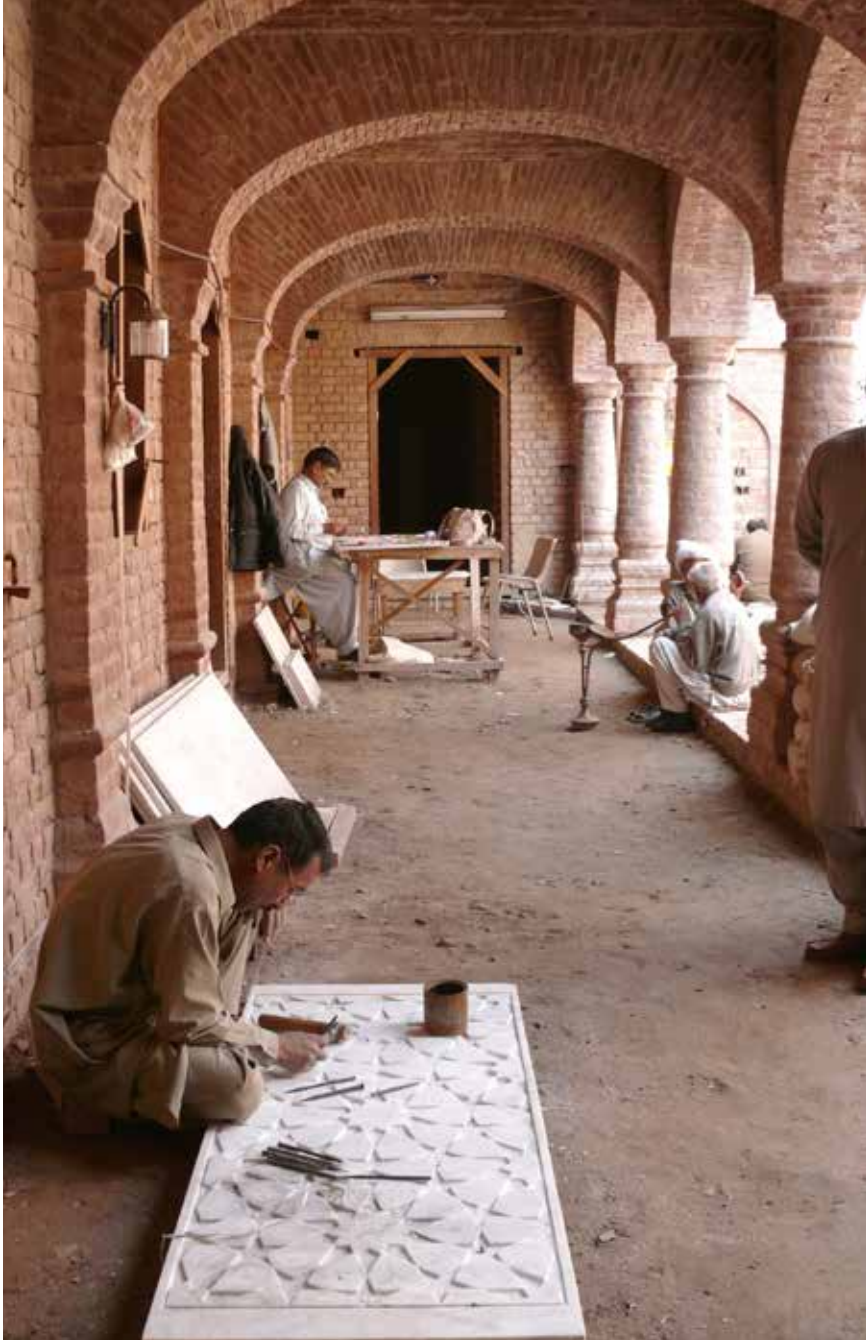
We need to understand modernism, and now even more postmodernism. If you're going to really combat it or do something about it or to redress the destruction, the damage that it is causing, then you have to understand where it's coming from, what is its grounding, what principle, what is it based on.

So, I found myself equally devoted to understanding postmodernism as modernism, as no less than understanding tradition. All need to be understood in order for one to know exactly what not to do and what to do and why.

Lahore is a really interesting city in Pakistan in that sense: it is home to a wide variety of architectural styles, and there is a rich history of building available on its streets. I would say it is quite unique amongst major Pakistani cities in that way.

Yes. Lahore is a wonderful museum for understanding and studying and teaching the story about that transition. We've got the old Walled City still, whatever little bit is left of it, and there are still living memories.

We have roots in tradition, and we have the evidence of how modernity transplanted this one world with another. It's right



8.5 Construction at Baba Hassan Din, Lahore, 2002. Courtesy: Mehdi Abidi.

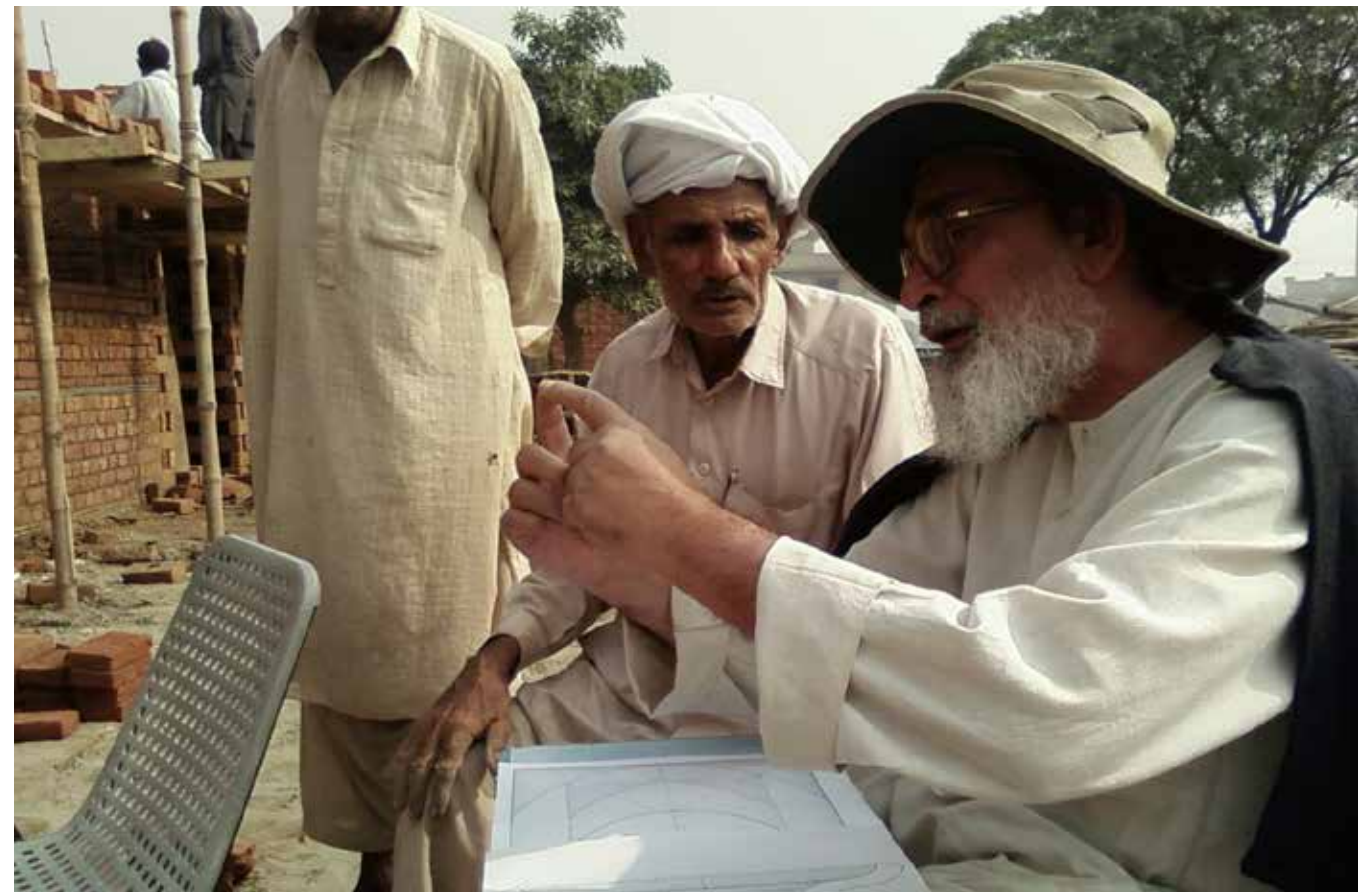
there. It's a living laboratory, a living museum, a textbook. So much to read and understand.

I certainly feel that just going down the Mall Road, moving from Anarkali to the High Court, past WAPDA House and the Alhamra. So many shifts in the built environment.

This might be a good time to move on to the figure of the master builder or the traditional craftsman, who becomes very important to you as you develop your interest in 'continuing tradition' in design and building work.

Could you say a little bit about how you started engaging with master builders and traditional craftsmen in your architectural practice, and how those sorts of collaborations informed your career?

8.6 Kamil Khan Mumtaz (right) with Ustad Jafar (left), Sally Town Mosque, Lahore, 2007.



This began simply through the fact that one was looking for craftsmen who knew anything about the traditional methods and materials. Immediately, you come into contact with very small remnants of these families, hereditary craftsmen, and so the relationship grows.

The kind of buildings we are doing, we can only do it with the help of the people who have some experience and knowledge about the old traditions, methods, design, and vocabularies. All of those things. It's just natural that we have to dig. Whenever we hear of somebody, we try and contact them. By now, all through the grapevine, they already know what kind of work we do!

And yeah, how did it start? I remember two brothers who had been working mainly with the Punjab Archaeology Department. When they learnt that we're interested in doing this kind of work, they came to me almost in tears, and it was like, "Please save us from these [government] departments!"

They said that the contracting system is such that, even though they know what good workmanship and principles are, the contractor insists on violating those principles. They were so upset about this. They were made to do horrible things.

They said that the contracting system is such that, even though they know what good workmanship and principles are, the contractor insists on violating those principles. They were so upset about this. They were made to do horrible things.

The good craftsmen recognise the difference between good and bad. They want to do the best. There's a pride in their work. So, they're very happy to work with us, and we're very happy to work with them. Very fortunate. We learn a lot from each other, and I'm sure I have learnt much more than I could teach them.

8.7 Kamil Khan Mumtaz (left) with Ustad Rafaqat (right) at Ata Tanseer residence in Gulberg, Lahore, 2016.





8.8 Pak Wigah Mosque, Mandi Bahauddin, Punjab, 2022. Courtesy: RK Studios.

Together we have been able to rediscover a number of the practices that had become lost. Certain types of brickwork, the flat dome, the muqarnas, many things like this that hadn't been done. As they tell me, "This has not been done for 300 years!" So, it was a great experience, a voyage of discovery, so much that we learnt from each other.

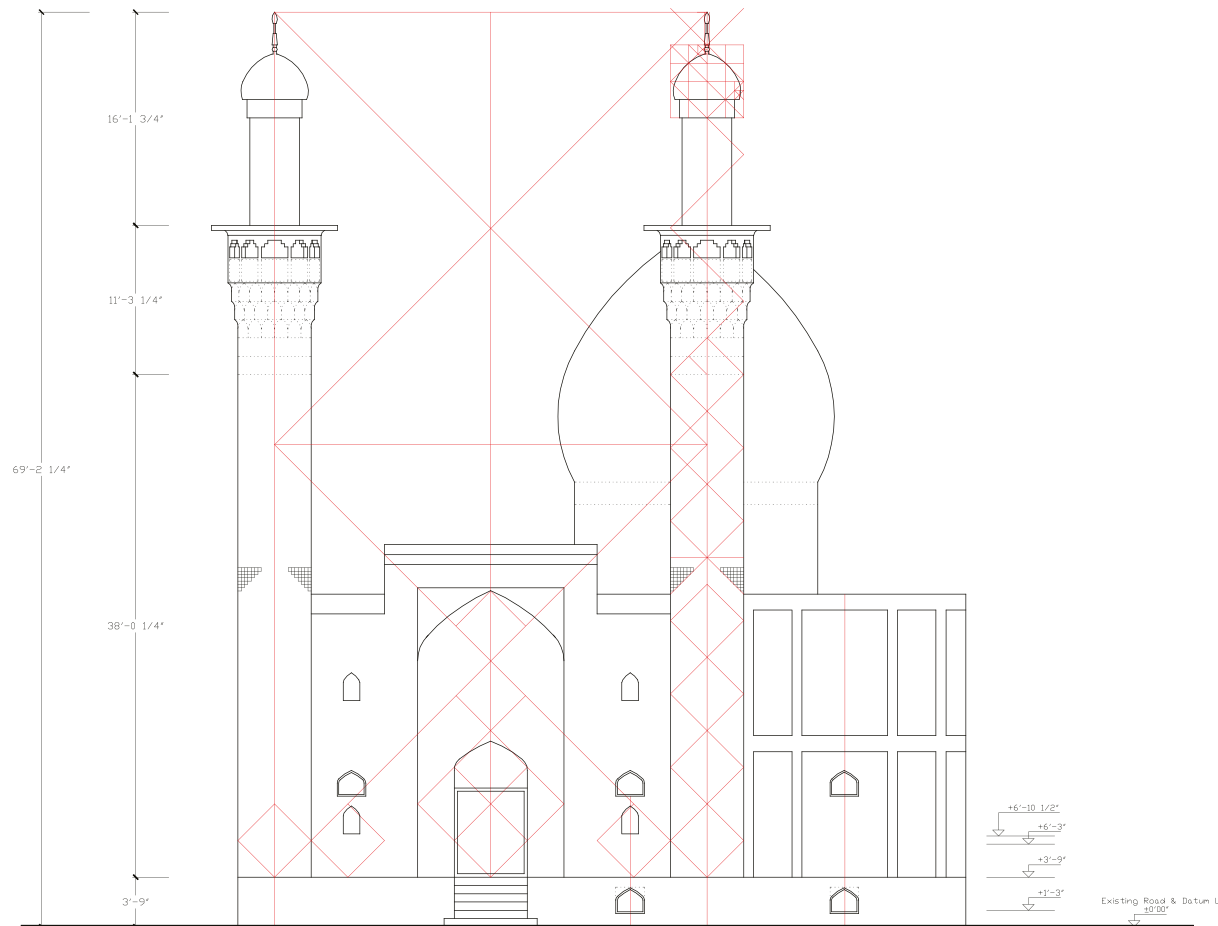
Am I correct in understanding that you are using the research you've done, the documentation work you have done for instance with Anjuman Mimaran, and engaging with craftsmen in a way that allows them to combine their skills with this research to rediscover old practices? Is that how it works?

Yes. We use the documentation that's been done by us and by other architecture students, etcetera. We try and keep track of it, keep records of that, and we refer to those studies. We encourage students to do them, we guide them.

That kind of academic research and documentation, we use a lot. But then there are times where we encounter a problem, and we have to go and visit the old monuments. We've been working on a number of projects with two young engineers, who went into contracting as a business, and the last twenty years we've had a growing relationship working with them.

The advantage is that they've become very interested in traditional materials and the structures and, being engineers, they can analyse it scientifically. So, for them, it's a completely new area. They keep studying all the time: researching, laboratory work, chemical analysis, all kinds of things. This is constant, ongoing work that we have to keep doing.

Chapter 9



I have two questions that follow on from our discussion above. First, I would be interested to know how you organise your collaborations with craftsmen. I remember speaking with a craftsman at the Baba Hassan Din shrine in 2019; he was a mirror-worker building a Sheesh Mahal in one section of the building. He told me that you gave him quite a lot of freedom in his work. I'd be interested to hear more about this, about how you avoid 'imposing' your ideas as an architect. But I'd also like to know a bit about how you pitch this collaborative approach to clients. How do you explain this fluid, evolving work to clients who might have an end goal in mind?

Yes, the clientele... I've found that there is a huge reservoir of desire, sympathy, and love for our traditional values, forms, architecture, and culture, altogether. But there's a general kind of impression that, "These things can't be done any more, there are no craftsmen who can do this." Even if there were craftsmen, "There's no architect who can design this."

So, despite passionately wanting a traditional building, they just say, "Ah, but that's not possible. Let's go the conventional way."

There is a kind of market – a niche, if you like – which is hungry for the kind of work that we're doing. It's very small, of course, and getting smaller. But those who are sympathetic to what we're doing actually are very passionately devoted to this.

There have been examples where a client, for instance, came to us, and he is a thoroughly modernist kind of person, but with

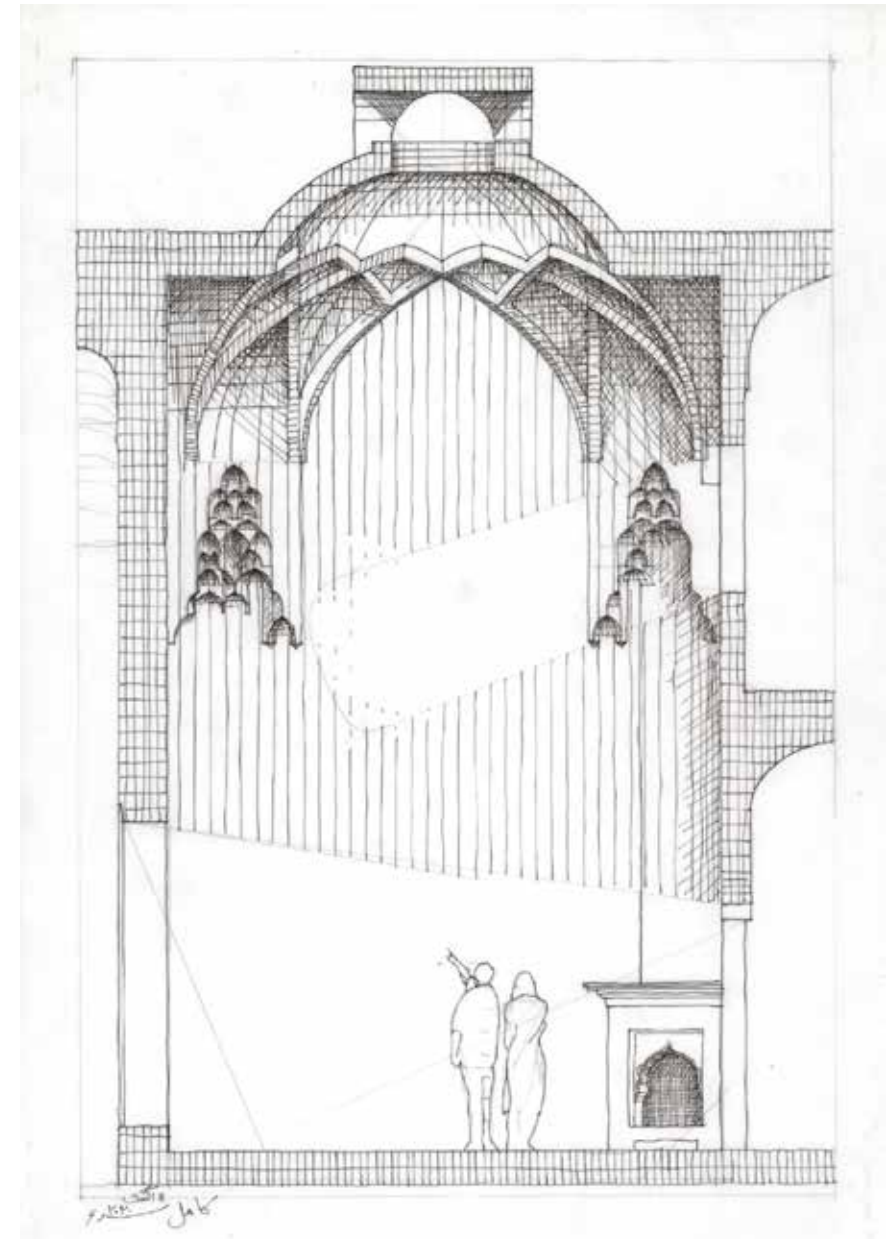
an interest in our glorious history, our past, Islam and all that. So, he came to us as he would to any architect, and he said, "I just want that it should have some reference to our traditional forms. But don't copy. I don't want to repeat. We must create something new." And every time we would give him a classical form, let's say an arch, he would say, "No, no, no. This is copying, this is repeating. I want something that's never been done before!"

With so many of our clients, we spend literally years educating them. And this particular example – and there are many like that – by the time his building was constructed, to this day, after about ten years or so, he's never handed it over. He has not taken possession. Because all the time he wants to do a fresco here, an inlay here, a traditional ceiling. You can't hold him back now!

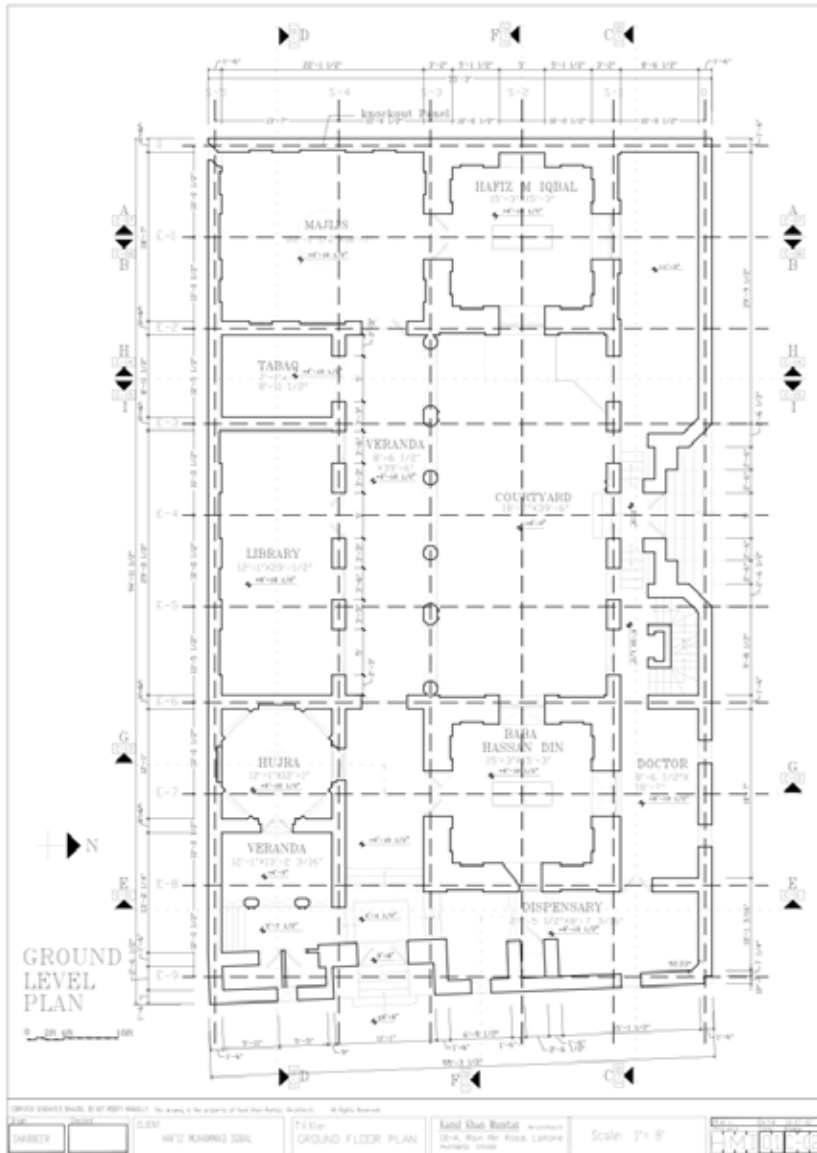
And this has happened. A Dutch physicist, Pieter Born, came to us.⁶³ He was an educator who had been teaching all his life, and he wanted to set up this training institution, Darul Hikmat, which started out as a teacher training institute, but went on to become a laboratory school, and ended up with a series of village schools. He came to us and said, "Well, look, I've worked it all out. I've got everything planned, but I need an architect to draft it properly." By the end of it, he was found in the Sheesh Mahal [at Lahore Fort] taking measurements of the court! And after his retirement, he sent us back computer printouts. We were very happy that he'd worked out the mathematics of it. He was just off on a journey like that.

There are so many examples of how these works have actually transformed and changed people's lives.

⁶³ Pieter Born is a Dutch physicist and missionary who, along with his wife Elsa Born and the Pakistani educationist FS Khairullah, established Darul Hikmat as a school for deprived children in Pakistan.



9.1 'Study for Aamer Malik', by Kamil Khan Mumtaz, 2020.



9.2 Ground Floor plan, Mazar Baba Hassan Din, Lahore.

They become enthusiasts for the process, as much as for the end product, right? And that is a very particular sort of client, with a specific sort of sympathy for the work. Because these projects, these collaborations, take time! They are a lot slower than newer methods where buildings can be thrown up quickly and the architect swiftly moves on.

I think that's quite an interesting element of this emphasis on craft: the way it subverts that modern desire for speed, efficiency and results. Craftsmanship is so much about the dignity and value of work, and as such allows you, as an architect, to underline the importance of the process of building itself.

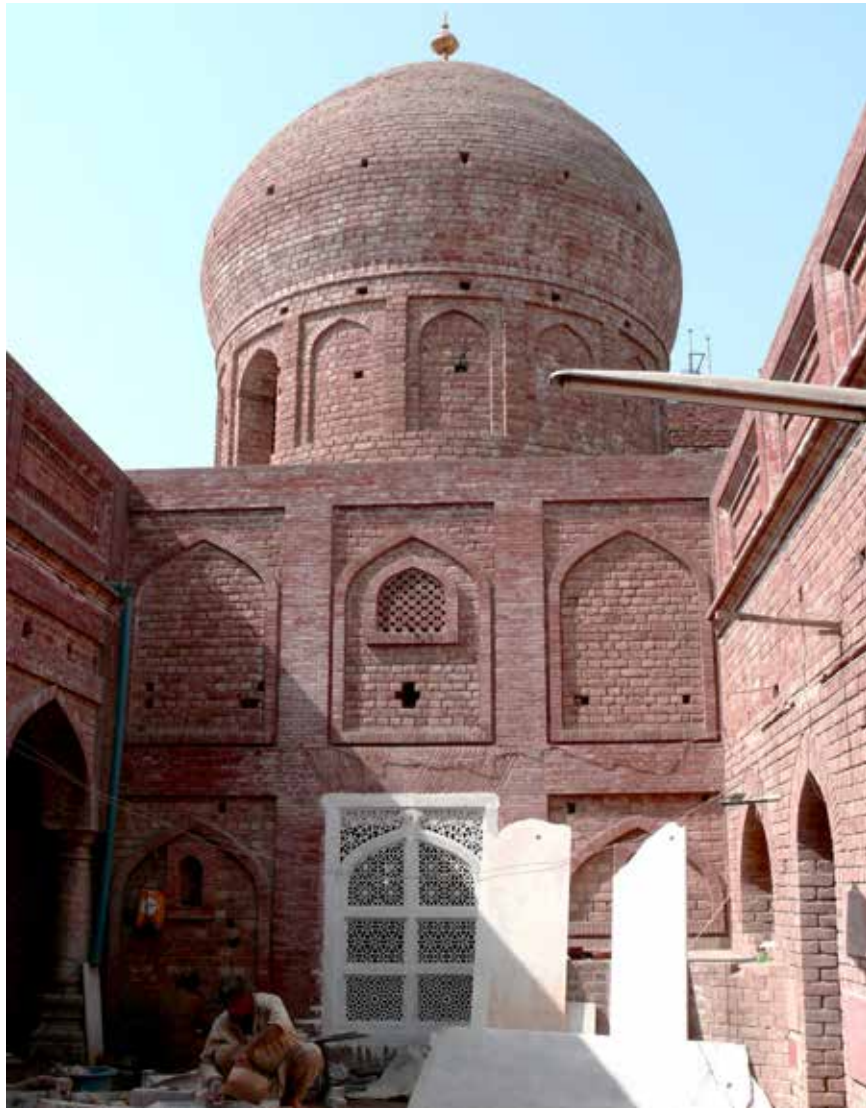
Yes, absolutely right. The process is so valuable, and we all learn so much in this interaction.

I'd like for you to say a little bit about the challenge of imitation. Baba Hassan Din's shrine in Lahore, which has been under construction for many years now, is modelled on Imam Ali's shrine in Najaf, in Iraq.⁶⁴ It has been re-scaled and repurposed for a much smaller site in the Baghbanpura neighbourhood.

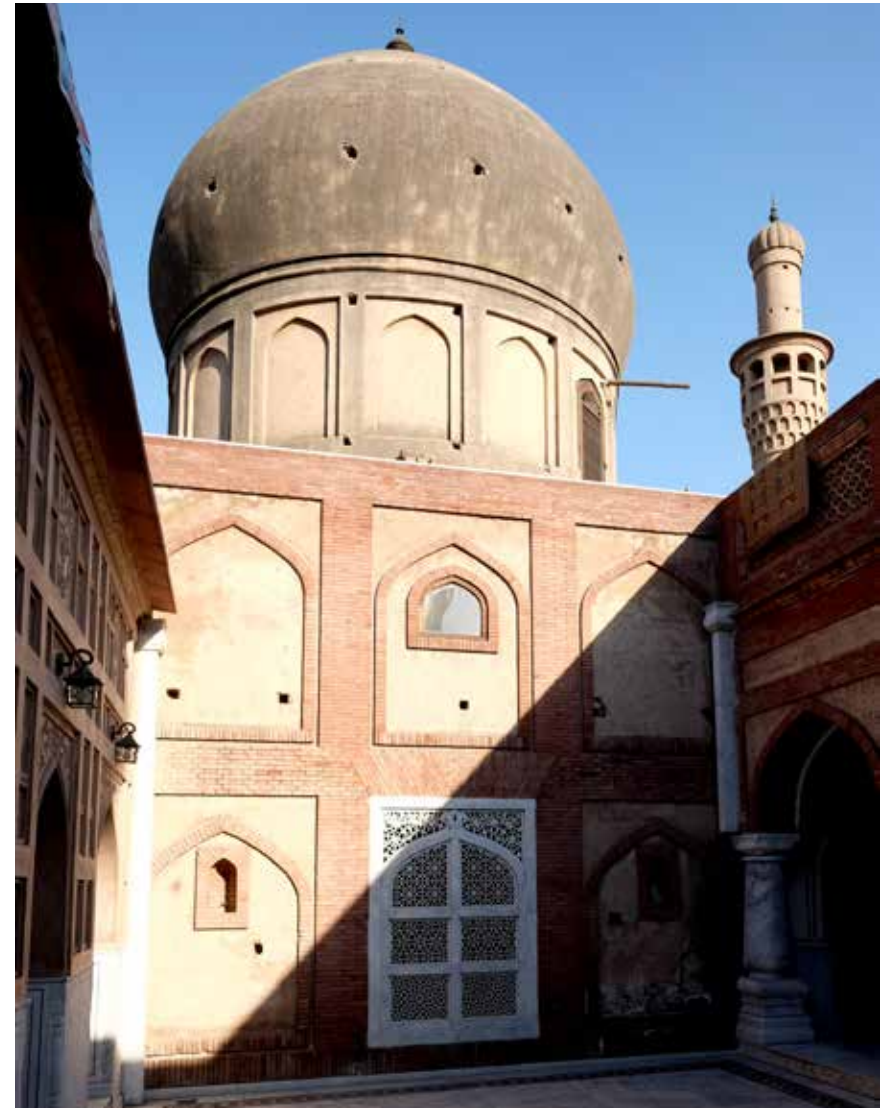
You have reflected before on your struggle to break away from the modernist impulse towards originality and novelty in your design work. This seems a clear example of how you have attempted to allude to or 'activate' a deeper reality through the realisation of pre-existing forms. Could you say something about that journey as an architect, and the way you now think about imitation in your practice?

Well, it's really part of a single package, isn't it? With the traditional perspective and understanding, it's not just about architecture or painting or some material or some technique. It is essentially a different understanding of what life is all about,

⁶⁴ Haram al-Imam Ali, also known as Masjid Ali, is located in Najaf, Iraq. It houses the tomb of Ali ibn Abi Talib, regarded by Shia Muslims as the first Imam and rightful successor to the Prophet Muhammad. Though there has been a building on the site since the 8th Century, the current form dates to 17th century Safavid-era restoration and expansions.



9.3 Interior courtyard, Mazar Baba Hassan Din, Lahore, 2009. Courtesy: Mehdi Abidi.



9.4 Interior courtyard, Mazar Baba Hassan Din, Lahore, 2018. Image by Chris Moffat.

in this world. This colours and changes and directs everything one does, and the manner in which you do it.

It also gives you a perspective on things. You can take a more distant view and understand what is happening – the way in which people, cultures, and whole societies are going and what is motivating them.

Part of this understanding is the question of, what is the function of art? What is the function of architecture as art? There is one set of functions as a building, but beyond building there is architecture. Architecture as the art of building, and all the arts in the traditional world, have a very profound function, and that is to make us aware of the universal truths. These are expressed through the harmonies, the proportions, the rhythms and the symmetries, and whether it's music or dance or architecture, it's really the same story.

In this perspective, it is not our job to continuously invent and innovate and create something new all the time. Why do you want to do that? That's not your function as human in this world. You're not the creator, but you do have a function: that of reflecting the truth, and of helping people and yourself in realising that truth.

That truth is not something that I have invented or discovered. It has always been there and known to human societies as far as man has been around. I cannot create or innovate or invent beauty. Beauty already exists. My function is to realise that, to reflect that, to make people aware of that which is already there.

This understanding produces a very different attitude towards your work. You're not trying to prove your greatness, your status as the prima donna, the greatest architect. It's a much more humbling position.

How do we reflect these realities, which by definition are not accessible to our biological senses? Here, we turn to the masters. How did the masters solve this problem? How did they do it? We find that there are masterpieces. I mean, in each art there are forms which are reflected in infinite ways, but every now and then, there's a masterpiece, a pinnacle, a high point.

What is it that makes it stand out? It is that it reflects that truth, which was hazily reflected in so many examples, but suddenly appears with so much clarity and perfection. It's there immediately. I've heard even of committed atheists walking into the Taj Mahal, and without knowing it the tears start flowing from their eyes. You can't explain that. This is the power.

Copying and imitation is a method of learning, of discovery, and of doing. It has a very central position in traditional pedagogic method and practice. Very different from our modernist and postmodernist approach to who we are, what the world is and what life is all about.

I understand that the Sally Town Mosque in Lahore is also an exercise in repetition, in terms of recovering the forms and spaces of the now-demolished seventeenth century Chinnianwali Mosque, from Lahore's Walled City.

When we are commissioned to do something like the Sally Town Mosque, we start with the question, "What is a mosque? What should it be? What are the examples in history?" You look around. You have to do that research. What kind of mosques were built in this region? And which are the best? You are searching to find the best examples which have come closest to realising the ideal form. These are the masterpieces. You know every time you are confronted by them: they hit you, bang! In the solar plexus. That becomes a template, an exemplar, and we study these and try

9.5 Sally Town Mosque, Lahore, 2009. Courtesy: Mehdi Abidi.



9.6 Sally Town Mosque, Lahore, 2021.

to understand the design. We analyse geometrically: what is it that is essential in this, and what has to be changed because the conditions [i.e. the context of building] are different?

So, it's not blind copying for the sake of copying. It is finding the best reflection or realisation of the ideal form for that programme that we are now being asked to find a solution to. So, that's why we turn to the historical examples, the masterpieces, the past. It's like teasing out the problem. What does it want to be? For that, you look at the programme, you look at the site, you look at all those other conditions, and gradually, it begins to suggest itself. Does it want to have an inward-looking, central focus? Does it want to be a cluster? And then you start looking for the best examples of that typology, and then you try to learn what the principles are and how it is done.

And for you, the best examples of that typology don't necessarily need to be 'local', as we see with Baba Hassan Din's shrine in Lahore and the model of Imam Ali's shrine in Najaf?

For us, we're always looking for the best local examples. But every now and then we get a client, as in Baba Hassan Din – and also at the mosque in Pak Wigah, which is another fantastic project – we get a client coming to us and saying, "We're looking for a traditional building, but it should be based on Imam Ali's tomb," or the Moti Masjid in Delhi or something like that.⁶⁵

Is that what Pak Wigah is based on, Moti Masjid?

That's Pak Wigah. The client came to us. He actually was shown a vision of the mosque that he had to build. So, he was going around looking for some architect who could do this for him! And all the signs kept pointing to us. Eventually he came in to the

⁶⁵ Moti Masjid is a white marble mosque inside the Red Fort Complex, Delhi, India. It was built for the Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb in 1660.

9.7 Pak Wigah Mosque, Mandi Bahauddin, Punjab, 2022. Courtesy: RK Studios.





9.8 Interior, Mazar Baba Hassan Din, Lahore, 2018. Image by Chris Moffat.

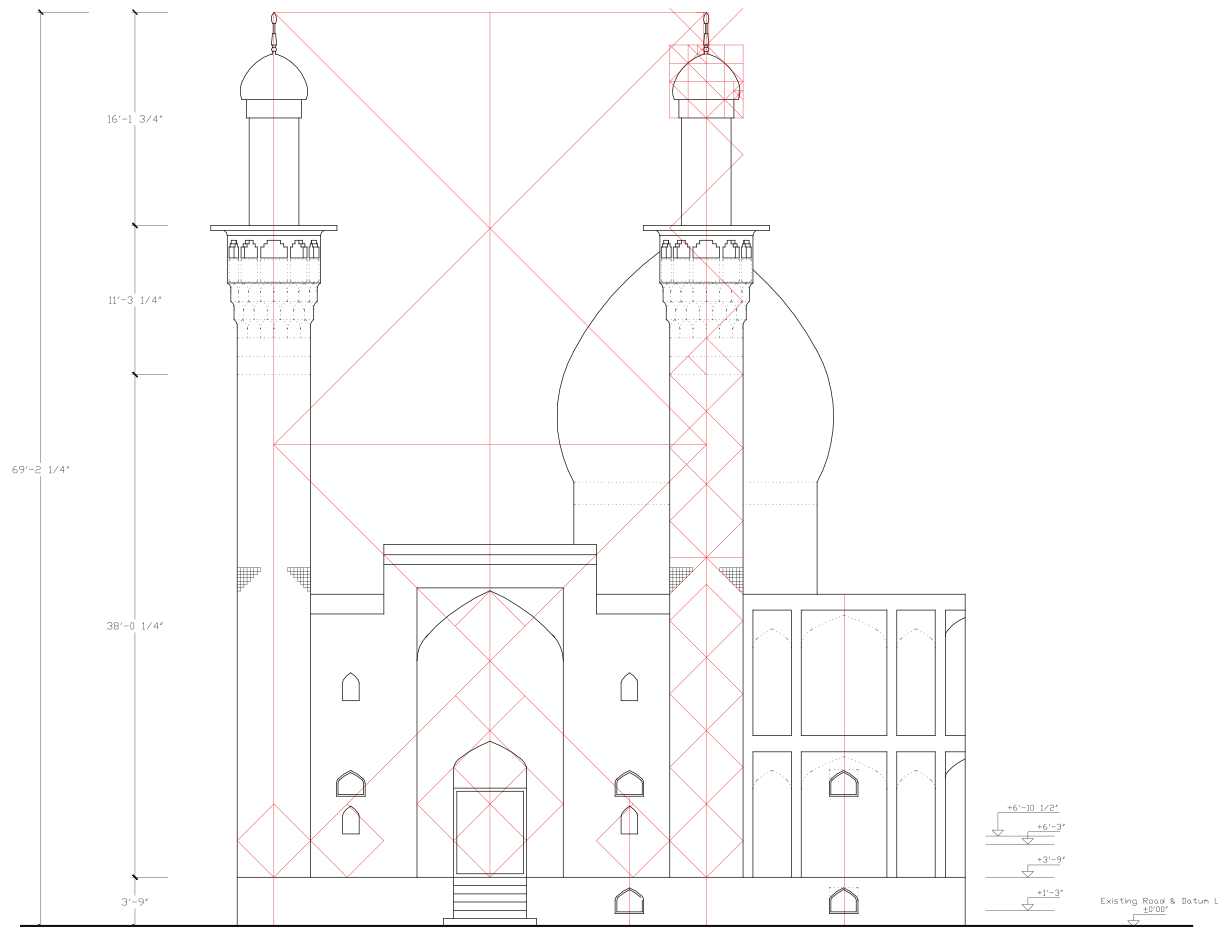
office and he said, "I just took one look in your office and I was satisfied I had arrived at the right place. You didn't have to say anything!"

In the case of Baba Hassan Din, Hafiz Muhammad Iqbal, who was the disciple of Baba Hassan Din, was very attached to the person of Imam Ali. Therefore, everything connected with him. After his death, when a group of his followers came to us – and incidentally this group included the two engineers I mentioned – they came to us, and they said that the shrine has to be based on Imam Ali's complex.

So, if not for our own understanding of traditional methods, we would have shown them the door straight away! "What the hell do you mean? Are you trying to insult me? Can I not design something myself?"

But understanding what traditional architecture is about, it seemed perfectly natural and normal that there should be a model, an ideal, on which we have to base this building on. That just becomes a touchstone, a springboard, a point of reference. It can never be a direct imitation or a copy. I'm not saying that there's any great desire not to imitate, but you can't. The actual conditions are such that the scale is different, the programme is different, the timing is different, etcetera. So, you cannot really. Each building is unique.

Chapter 10



I know the category of 'tradition' is important to you, but I wanted to ask if you think it is, in some ways, limited in capturing what you do, and especially that element of improvisation in your practice. The idea of craftsmanship – which is very much about process, approach, mentality – includes space for improvisation and adaptation, even if it is dispensing with what you describe as egotistical pursuits of novelty and innovation familiar from the history of modern architecture.

I expect that, as an architect, the category of 'tradition' invites a lot of misreading. People often understand tradition as informed by nostalgia, as connected to the desire for a lost world, even though that older world was structured around certain hierarchies and inequalities between peoples. It has reactionary connotations. I would like to hear your thoughts on this. Is the category limiting, and if so, why use it?

Yes, you're right. The term tradition has its problems, and there is a common understanding of tradition that is just superficial. Certain forms, certain materials, certain products are identified as 'tradition'.

This is a big problem. What people identify our work with, what they expect us to do. When I say there's a lot of educating to be done, we spend a lot of time explaining what tradition is *really* about.

Many times people will come to us for all the wrong reasons. I mean, this has happened just recently. We had somebody come

to us and say we want to design a building after the Diwan-i-Aam in Delhi's Red Fort.⁶⁶

And we just kind of dismissed it. We said, "What do you mean? You want to rebuild that? Recreate that? Or something that just references it? Exactly what do you want?" To the extent that she gave up, and we gave up, and this person went to some normal architect, and he designed something for her.

They actually built the foundations, and it's only then that she realised this guy, the new architect, doesn't know what she's talking about. He just cannot deliver. And so, she came back to us. We had an interesting session. Very quickly we understood each other. I think we helped her to understand herself. She had not been able to articulate what she really wanted.

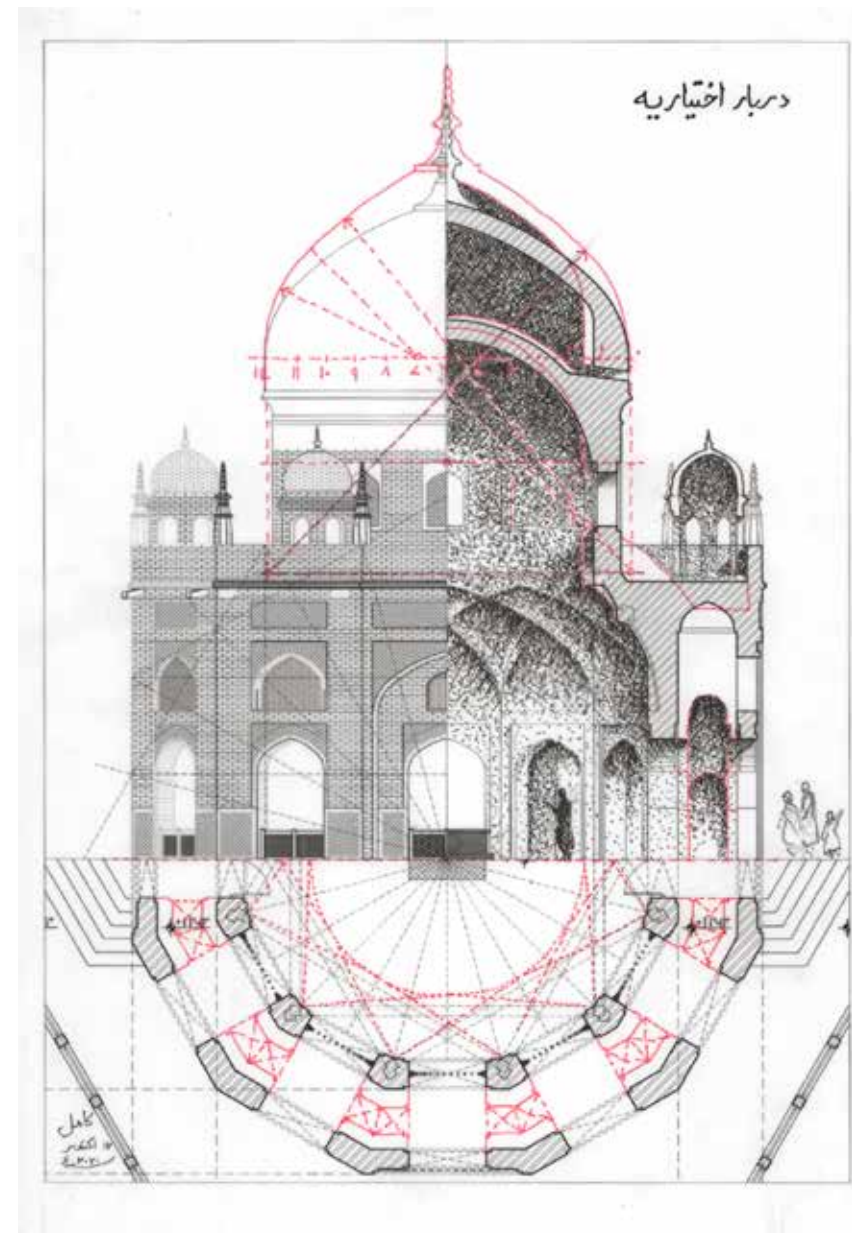
This kind of thing happens all the time. She suddenly discovered that actually what was intuitively spontaneous, what she was feeling inside, was something that was really valuable and valid. She couldn't put her finger on why and what.

So, 'tradition' is a very tricky term. We get misunderstood and wrongly labelled, and of course criticised and hated. Not allowed in the studios! It's this conventional understanding of what tradition is about: "it's copying, imitating, killing."

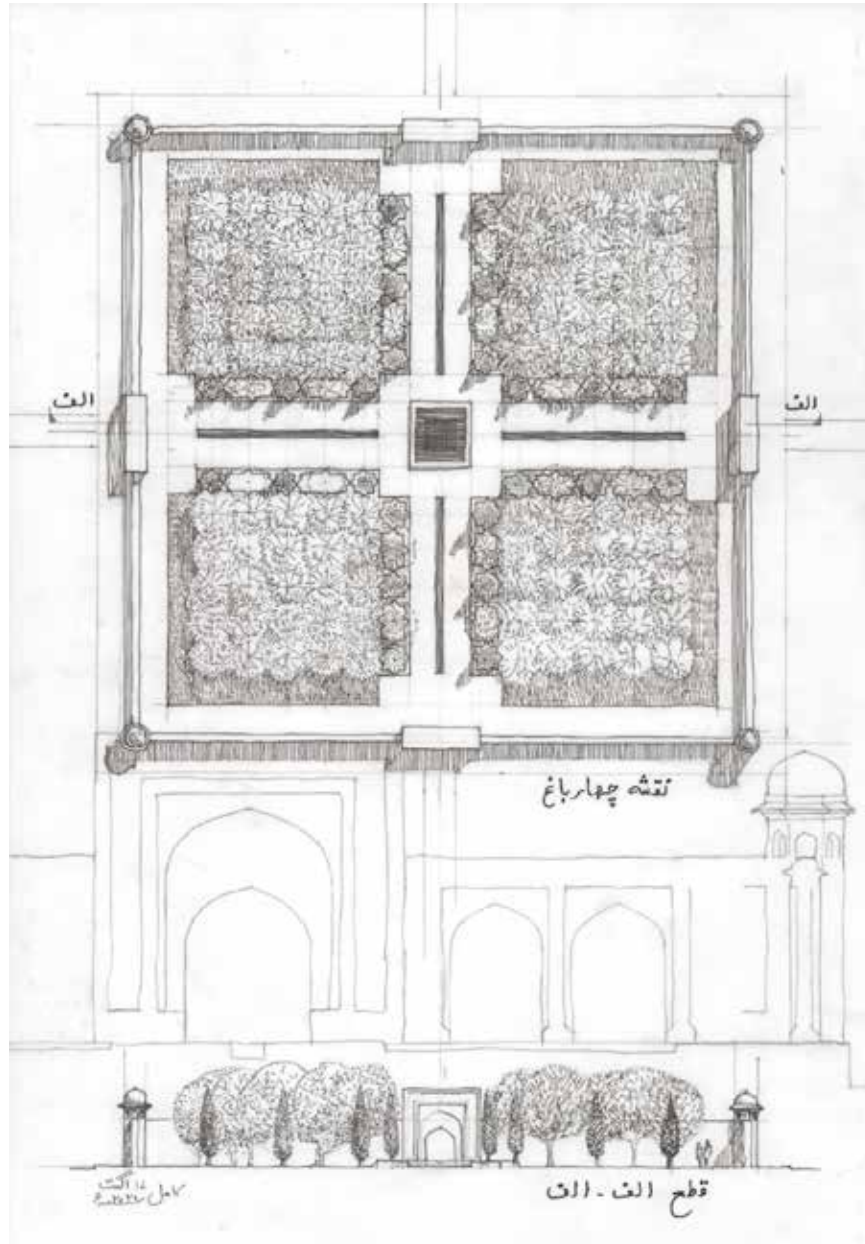
Yes, that it's regressive, or in some ways or conservative.

It's very difficult. But the moment you start explaining what you really mean, then it becomes very clear that this approach is not just about architectural form or material. It must be contextualised as a response to climate change, global warming, income inequalities, all of these things are part and parcel of the same challenge: the existential crisis of our time. The survival of our humanity and our environment.

⁶⁶ The Diwan-i-Aam, or Public Audience Hall, was a space used for public functions by the Mughal rulers of Delhi. It was built for Emperor Shah Jahan in the 1640s.



10.1 'Darbar Ikhtiyaria', by Kamil Khan Mumtaz, 2020.



10.2 'Chahar Bagh', by Kamil Khan Mumtaz, 2020.

INTERLUDE | During the revision process of this book, CM asked KKM to expand on his point here about the 'existential crisis of our time'. KKM's response is included below here in full.

"Our time" has been called the Age of Man, the Anthropocene Age, because the most significant changes in the geosphere in this epoch are caused by human activity – or, more precisely, economic activity, particularly industrial production and consumption. The exploitation of the earth's resources has continued to increase to the point that by 1970, consumption exceeded the annual productive capacity of the planet. By 2008 it was 50% more than capacity, and now it is 75% more than capacity.⁶⁷

So, how did we get here? In the natural economy, man's transactions with nature were based on need, and there was no damage to the ecosystem. In the agrarian economy, civilised man took possession of these resources – land, plants, animals – to produce more than his needs, but without exceeding nature's productive capacity. However, surplus wealth did result in contestations, conflicts and inequalities.

With industrialisation, modern man achieved remarkable increases in production, but at the cost of extracting more than the planet's productive capacity. Now, to generate still more wealth, our present consumerist economy, based on desire rather than need, has not only exceeded the limits of nature's resources but also increased waste and pollution far beyond sustainable limits.

Today, this amazing increase in production is regarded as man's success. In fact, endless progress and evolution is regarded as the normative state, the defining nature and destiny of man. But we forget that we have been in this so-called normative state

⁶⁷ This information is derived from the Global Footprint Network website, footprintnetwork.org.



10.3 Construction of Orange Line by Chauburji, Lahore, 2019. Image by Chris Moffat.



10.4 Construction of Orange Line, Lahore, 2019. Image by Chris Moffat.

for less than two hundred years. While man has been on earth for three hundred thousand years. For most of this time he has been sustained by natural economies of hunting and gathering. Civilisations based on agrarian economies started about five to ten thousand years ago; the industrial revolution started about 250 years ago, and the post-industrial period has been around for about 60 to 70 years.

Imagine if man had lived for only one day, the 'natural' stage would have lasted more than 23 hours, the agricultural stage would have started in the last hour, the industrial in the last minute, and the post-industrial in the last 20 seconds.

The history of man has not been one of continuous progress, change and evolution, but rather, for the most part, a history of sustainability, balance, and harmony with nature. This is what I refer to as the "natural" or "normative" state of man, in which the land, air and waters, and the animals and plants were not held as possessions or property, and man was free to roam the earth. With agriculture, animal husbandry and commodity production, "civilised" man gained dominion and possession of nature's means of production – land, animals, plants – but, becoming tied and bound by his possessions, he lost his own freedom. With industrialization, "modern man" acquired the means for apparently limitless growth and expansion of production, and the means to global access, domination and control. Now, with the accumulation of wealth and the development of information technologies, "post-industrial" man acquired the means to access, dominate and control the hearts and minds of a globalized humanity, and to expand production and consumption beyond the resources of the planet.

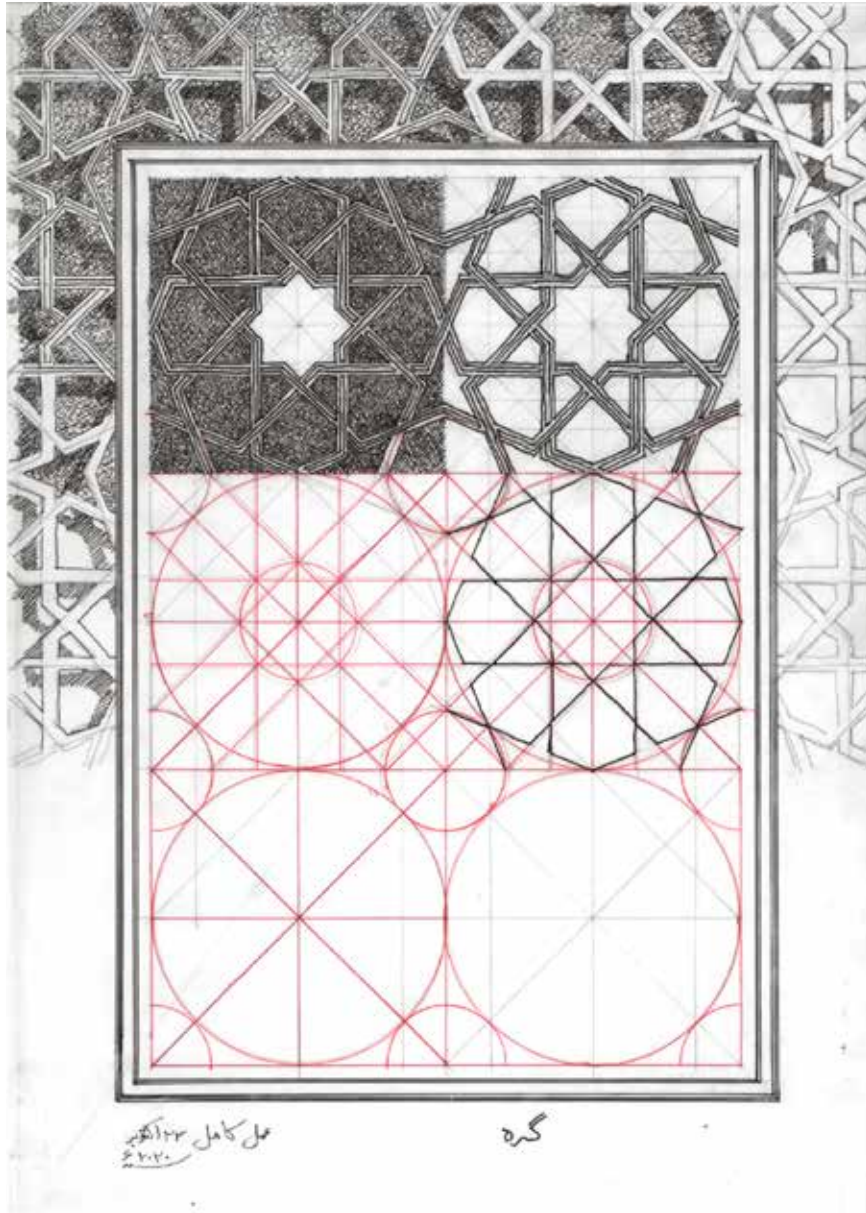
Every deliberate act is preceded by an awareness of one's self and the world, a "narrative" of *who* I am, *where* I am, where I

am coming from, and where am I going. Thus "natural" man was aware of the unity of body and spirit. He was aware of the presence of a Divine Reality within himself, and in all natural phenomena. "Civilised" man became aware of the psyche or soul within himself as the interface between the body and the spirit, and recognized the 'imaginal' or 'ideal' plane as the domain between the physical world of matter and the metaphysical world of the Spirit. "Modern" man found within himself nothing but animated particles. For him the metaphysical was a creation of the mind, which in its turn was the product of the brain, and the phenomenal world was governed not by a Divine Spirit but by universal, absolute laws of nature. Now "post-industrial" or "post-modern" man finds no universal, absolute truth, either in the heavens or on earth, and recognizes his own subjective world as the only, albeit relative truth.

So, what has been the role of the arts in these epochs? The function of art – that is the "fine arts" – is to elucidate the dominant "narrative" of each community. Thus for "natural" man the fine arts were a celebration of the Spirit and a mode of ritual worship and prayer in the presence of the Divine. For "civilised" man, the arts shone light on the dangers of deviation from the "norm" and provided road maps for returning to the ideal or normative state. This is what I refer to as the narrative of all "traditional" civilisations. For modern man, the arts celebrated phenomena, supporting his quest for domination and control of the material world. Now, post-modern art celebrates the subjective, and is used as the most effective means to access the psychic domain, to acquire domination and control of our hearts and minds.

The impact of buildings, as physical acts and material objects, on the environment is well documented.⁶⁸ But the role of architecture, the 'art' of building, seldom appears in 'scientific'

⁶⁸ In 2009, the United Nations Environmental Programme published its *Buildings and Climate Change* report, which noted present estimates that "buildings contribute as much as one third of total global greenhouse gas emissions, primarily through the use of fossil fuels during their operational phase" (3).



10.5 'Girah', by Kamil Khan Mumtaz, 2020.

discourse. In addition to their physical function, buildings also operate as symbol, sign, image, metaphor or simile, representing or conveying concepts, ideas, or information about something other than their own material and form. The dazzling and exciting forms of post-modern buildings not only create a marketing hype for global corporate capital, their alluring images create shimmering mirages, driving us inexorably towards the promise of a consumerist paradise.

Today, as we pass one tipping point after another on the route to irreversible climate change, the extinction of species, and the depletion of resources, the need to revert to the traditional paradigms has never been greater. The traditional narratives of all civilisations recognise the primordial, natural state of hunting and gathering as the “normative” state of man, the Golden Age, in harmony and balance with nature. Secondly, they recognise the transition to agriculture and commodity production, to settled communities and villages, to market towns and city states, as deviations from the norm. These arrangements provide material benefits no doubt, but also opportunities for excesses, of transgressing normative limits and disrupting the harmony and balance with nature. Third, and most importantly, they provide guidance for desisting from excessive desires – passions of lust, greed, possession, power, wealth, domination and control over fellow humans. The goal, to quote the Lahore Conservation Society’s approach to urban strategy, is “conservation of our humanity and our environment and the realization of our highest human potential. Our humanity is defined by the universal set of qualities and values that define what it means to be human – qualities such as love, compassion, justice and beauty – not by quantities such as gross national product, monetary wealth and material possessions.”

Speaking to architects in Pakistan and elsewhere, one gets the sense that accountability to the client, to the person paying the bills, often infringes on the architect's vision, on the direction of their work. So, to be able to build a relationship with a client that is centred on education and exchange is probably quite rare. It seems that this is a quality that your son, Taimoor, has carried on as well. But I get the impression that such a sympathetic relationship with clients is uncommon.

Well, talking about what has become standard, common practice in architectural studios, I find I am increasingly very disturbed – I would almost say I'm shocked – at what the profession is doing.

As I tell anyone who cares to listen, look, architecture has gone bankrupt. There is no basis for form-making anymore. Even up to the modern movement, there was a very clear, strong basis for design. OK, it was function, efficiency. But now there is nothing. You end up being purely subjective, whimsical, just to shock and awe and create... It's so horrible what's going on.

It's not just about personal whims. It's a part and parcel of the other package, and that is the power of global, corporate capital. The shameless manner in which the profession has allowed itself to be used. It's just like the medical profession. We still remember the old family doctors who would come around with their black suitcase, but now these pharmaceutical companies, their reps go around calling on the doctors, and it's just salesmanship. They've changed the whole medical profession. The medical profession is now just a marketing platform for the pharmaceuticals.

Exactly the same has now happened right in front of our eyes, within this last five or ten years, where the architectural profession has degraded and debased itself to become just a marketing platform for the products of global corporate capital.

It's so shameless. And all the same old tricks: invitations, free tickets to Europe, conferences, commissions.

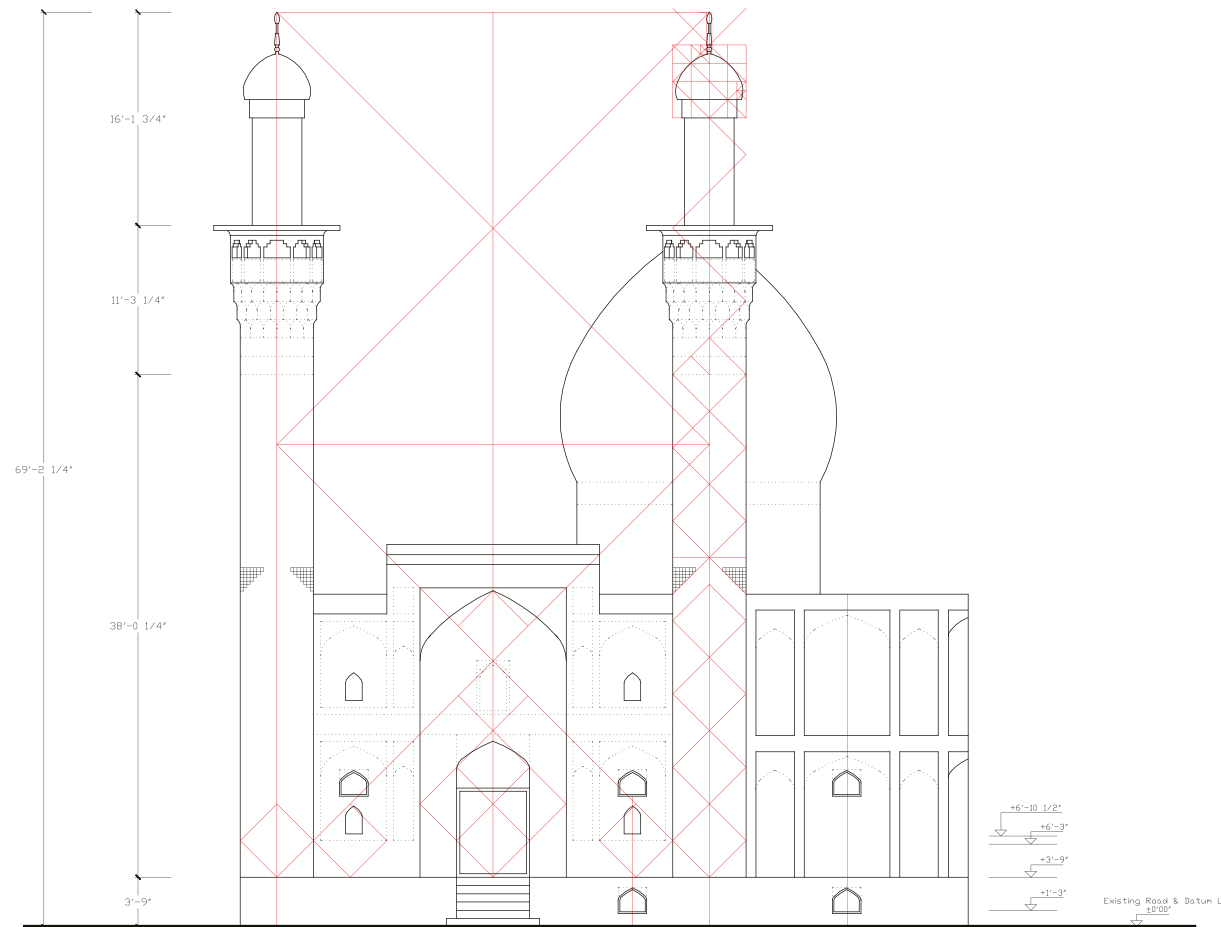
They actually ring us up, telemarketing, "We provide such and such products or services, and if we can partner [with you] we will..." Come on! I get so angry with this. But this is what has happened to the profession.

To cut through this, and to get people to see that architecture is *not* about this, that it's a much nobler profession, it's very difficult to convince people. It is very shocking, very depressing, very sad to see.

10.6 House and Office of Kamil Khan Mumtaz, Lahore, 2018. Image by Chris Moffat.



Chapter 11



The story of architectural modernism in the twentieth century is entangled with the story of European and American power on the world stage. For a place like Pakistan, it is connected to Cold War geopolitics but also global discourses of 'development' emanating out of Washington, London and other centres. I have been interested in how twenty-first century architecture in Pakistan similarly reflects changing global dynamics. Of course, the influence of America is still there, and we can talk about China's increasing involvement in Pakistan separately. But I wondered what you thought about the influence of the Gulf states, and the way urban environments in places like the United Arab Emirates have been taken up in Pakistan as a new model. Is that a fair reading?

Absolutely, it is. These Dubais, Abu Dhabis, are bandied around and shown as models. There is some marketing slogan somewhere: "Dubai Chalo", Let's go to Dubai.

It is the model. In public, these politicians, they actually say, "We want to make Lahore into a Kuwait," or something like that. And I just... For god's sake, why do you want to follow the worst examples, that are destroying this planet? The worst offenders. Why do you set that up? But these [statements] are appearing in official government policy statements. That's where we want to go, that's what we want to imitate.

These are horrible examples. They suck you in, they're so alluring, fascinating, everyone wants to be like that. It's terrible. A very powerful force.

Speaking of government policy statements, you mentioned in our correspondence that you have been involved in discussions around the Lahore Master Plan of 2040.⁶⁹ I would be interested to hear a bit about that. How did you come to get involved with this process?

This is an amazing thing that has happened. I still can't get over the shellshock. I still can't believe it has actually happened.

In September 2019, I got a call from the Lahore Development Authority asking for the telephone number of a colleague of ours – she's in the Conservation Society.

So, I just gave them the number, and then I thought, "Why did they want her number?" So, I asked her what they wanted, and she said this is about the master plan for Lahore. I said, "I've got to go to this myself!" Because I'm not at all confident what my friend is going to say, what position she will take, etcetera. I just felt very worried about that. I thought that I've got to be there myself to see that the Conservation Society's position is accurately represented.

So, I kind of gate-crashed that meeting. It was a fish market; huge. The hall was filled with all kinds of people: developers, planners, architects, all kinds. And everyone wanted to have their say. It was a very typical sort of public meeting.

But gradually, after the noise died down, those who were excited but not really serious dropped off. These meetings went on for months. Now, in one of the meetings, the earliest meetings, we started by looking at the master plans that had been done previously for Lahore. The LDA presented them, saying that, "This is what has been done in the past, and these are the problems, these are the failures..."

⁶⁹ In January 2021, the Lahore Development Authority expanded its plan by ten years to become the Lahore Master Plan 2050.

11.1 Construction in Bahria Town, Lahore, 2018. Image by Chris Moffat.





11.2 Mumtaz at a meeting, Nairang Gallery, Lahore, 2016. Courtesy: Lahore Conservation Society.

There were enough plans, but none of them had successfully been implemented. The question was, why did they fail? And it was quickly agreed that they had failed because nobody owned them.

We complain about the hawkers taking over public space, setting up shop, expanding illegally, and I said, “But did you ask them what kind of city they want?”

All the plans have been made by consultants, behind their closed doors. They come out with a plan and it’s officially accepted, and then we’re all very surprised nobody wants to follow it.

The surprise was that, this time round, the LDA – and the LDA is the worst example of these big bureaucracies, that has everything wrong with them – this much-hated monster, instead of once again advertising for consultants to prepare a plan, called a meeting of citizens. Just a cross section of people, all kinds of professions. And they said, “What kind of city do you want?”

I thought, “What’s going on?” But we took it seriously, some of us did. The rest fell off; they lost interest. After several months of this discussion, the Vice Chairman of the Lahore Development Authority, a young person, SM Imran, he said, “OK, you’ve done enough talking. Now go home and each one of you, could you please send me one paragraph – but not more than a page, I don’t want long – just a brief statement of your vision for Lahore.”⁷⁰

That meeting was then dissolved, and then a new committee was convened, and this time they handpicked from those who had been found to have something important to say. So, it was a much smaller, committed group, and I was part of it.

At the first meeting of this group, this Vice Chairman said, “Look, the last committee formulated this as the vision for Lahore. It’s

⁷⁰ Shaikh Muhammad Imran is a Pakistani entrepreneur who was appointed Vice-Chairman of the LDA by the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf government in 2018. He resigned for personal reasons in August 2021 and is now Spokesperson for the Ravi Urban Development Authority.

not my vision, I did not formulate this. It's your vision. All I've done is looked through all of the statements and found which are the common threads, and I've just taken these five common threads and put them together. This is your vision for Lahore."

I was amazed. Now, the Conservation Society had earlier produced 'The Lahore Project', which came out of our urban activism. We spent more than a year or two debating, deliberating on urban issues, and came out with a set of principles, policies, and objectives. Lo and behold, the vision that the LDA Vice Chairman presented to us was literally verbatim our vision.

He said, "OK, now go. Your job is to write the terms of reference that will facilitate this vision to be realised. And now I'm leaving you, I will not join your deliberations, I will not sit in your meetings. You discuss it amongst yourselves. When you have come to a result, let me know and I will see that it is implemented."

So, we actually did that. We spent another several months, and we drew up the terms of reference. Amazing things are happening, Chris, this is unbelievable.

Why do you think the LDA took this approach? What would have led to this attitude?

I don't know. I think it's really this gentleman.

So, he is able to take that sort of personal initiative in this intensely bureaucratic organisation?

Yeah, he's young, he's not a bureaucrat, he is not a politician. He's from a business family. He said, "I'm just trained to solve problems. This is how I do it."

For the first time, instead of inviting a consultant to make the plan, they invited a cross section of the citizenry, and asked them to formulate the vision.

Then we were given a draft that the LDA had prepared, based on the standard World Bank-type terms of reference. We looked at this and said, "Look, there were five principles that were enumerated. Amongst them was citizens' participatory planning. The drafts that you're giving us are in English. So that means that 90% of the citizenry is ruled out!"



11.3 Logo for the Conservation Society's Lahore Project, designed by Mumtaz.



11.4 Poster for #RastaBadlo ('Change the Route') Campaign to protect heritage buildings threatened by the Orange Line Metro Train. The slogan reads 'The Future Alongside the Past'. Courtesy: Lahore Conservation Society.

We decided that the plan will be done in Punjabi for the Lahoris, and Urdu for the national audience. Then, if you want, you can translate it into English or any other language.

This is unprecedented. We were asked to write the terms of reference for the Lahore Master Plan 2040. And these terms of reference said, "There will be no Master Plan Lahore 2040." Enough of megacities and showcases. No city is sustainable. It's a parasite. It cannot survive without the region. What we will do is prepare a *regional plan*. And in this region there is not just one Lahore, there are 49 urban settlements. There will be two steps: a regional plan for the six districts comprising the 'Division' of Lahore, and 49 master plans.

And it just went on like this. I'm still waiting for the other shoe to drop! This can't be! A nightmare, a dream, what's going on?! [Laughs] But, so far, the Vice Chairman has stuck to his word. He said, "Look, I'm not a planner, I don't know any of this, you decide. My job is to ensure that you are legally protected. Whatever the terms of reference you write, they cannot be changed at will by anyone."

Maybe this is an optimistic reading, but do you think that perhaps some lessons were learned from the Orange Line Metro debacle?⁷¹ The criticisms and controversies over that project? Do you think the LDA is responding in some way to that?

I think in some small way, yes. There is this realisation that you can't make projects and designs without consulting the stakeholders. There has been that consciousness as well. But I think we were just lucky to have this person in charge.

⁷¹ The construction of Lahore's Orange Line Metro, which opened in October 2020, generated much controversy in the city due to its displacement of residents on the train's path and the proximity of the overground track to many heritage buildings. In 2016, Mumtaz filed a petition to the Lahore High Court on behalf of some twenty citizen organisations, which was successful in suspending construction while impact assessments were carried out.

Right. So, it is very contingent, and thus very important that you do get those terms of reference legally enshrined.

And these terms of reference do not set out to build a more efficient engine of economic development. The vision is “Lahore as a centre of urbanity and civilisation”. A city which we are going to design not for motorcars but for people. The focus priority will be pedestrians. The criterion will be ecological footprint. The things that we’ve been fighting for, suddenly...

Is it mostly civil society organisations who have been involved in this process? Who is part of the group?

As I said, the first round was just a rabble of people that the LDA thought represented a cross section of the citizenry. The second round, I think, was filtered out, consisting of those individuals who they found had something serious to say, and were not just there for the noise.

So, this is going on. I don’t know how long this will go on. Sooner or later, it’s going to explode!

It does sound encouraging. Many of the new developments I’ve been reading about in Lahore seem to be of the megaproject variety – the plan to build sprawling new settlements along the Ravi riverbed, for example. And then there is the Naya Pakistan Housing Programme, replete with Imran Khan’s vision of mass high-rise dwellings across the country. So, I am interested to hear that this sort of careful thinking is being encouraged by the LDA.

I attended a lecture you gave in Lahore in 2019, and you finished with a slide that read: “This is not about romanticist traditionalism or celebrating the past. It is simply about

survival, about doing the right thing.” I find this interesting, since ‘survival’ is often associated with a condition of desperation, leading perhaps to moral compromise. But for you, ‘survival’ demands an embrace of complexity, of recognizing the dense webs that connect humans and societies across time and space. It suggests architects – and everyone, really – need to accept a robust sense of responsibility in order to survive. Especially when faced with climate crisis and ecological destruction.

Perhaps this is a reality that can no longer be denied even by those who have historically subscribed to ideas of endless growth and progression. We are now at a turning point where, as you say, even the LDA’s Master Plan needs to be about survival, rather than growth and expansion.

That’s right.

Can you say a bit about the Lahore Conservation Society as an organisation? How did it come together and acquire such a position of influence in the city?

The Conservation Society was formed a long time ago, in the eighties, by Zahir-ud-Deen Khwaja and a number of us, mostly architects, but others too – lawyers, etcetera. And we had very good intentions, of course, but it quickly came to be known as the Lahore *Conversation* Society! [Laughs]

Well-meaning, nice people, but... Things began to change with the Canal Road widening in June 2006. A lot of people got agitated by what they saw. Something mysterious was going on, trees were being marked with red crosses, etcetera.

I remember we were sitting in a Conservation Society meeting at the Nairang Gallery and Café near the Canal, a regular thing,

and we start getting these messages: “What the hell are you guys doing? Come out, see what’s happening. They are cutting the trees.”

We got sucked into this, immediately concentrated, and this was true, something horrible was happening. So, we got active, and in fact took a lead role in forming the Lahore Bachao Tehreek as an activist movement. That brought together a lot of civil society organisations, individuals, institutions, and we fought tooth and nail through the court system, right up to the supreme court etcetera, to stop the Canal Road widening.

In the process we learnt a lot. For instance, we realised that there is a lot of confusion regarding urbanism, development and sustainability. We thought this has to be taken seriously, because we found that ordinary people on the streets would come up to us and say, “What’s wrong with you guys? Don’t you want development? What’s the problem? The city has to expand! So what if there’s more traffic? That’s progress. A few trees have to be cut, but you can’t stop development.”

We said we have to look at this very carefully. What is it that these things mean? And so, the Lahore Project evolved into a group within the Conservation Society, formed of serious, concerned people in planning, in conservation, in environmental studies, economists, etcetera.

We asked, “what is a city? What is sustainability? What is development?” And having understood this, then how should one approach planning? We even did some case studies, took up some areas. A lot of work went into that. It ended with a set of urban policies, goals, and a vision statement, produced in 2011.

Essentially this whole statement was adopted by another exercise in Islamabad, the Ministry of Climate Change, with



11.5 Mumtaz speaking at a meeting, Nairang Gallery, Lahore, 2016. Courtesy: Lahore Conservation Society.

11.6 Street Hawker outside of Mazaar Baba Hassan Din, Lahore, 2019. Image by Chris Moffat.



the support of the UNDP. They initiated the dialogue to arrive at a national urban policy. And after about a year, a whole year of debates on that, the conclusion was finally reached that the Lahore Project's stated principles, policies, strategies, the whole document, should be adopted verbatim.

But it didn't go any further. The intention was that this would then become part of the national plan. Nothing happened. It was shelved.

And then, as I said, in this recent exercise with the LDA, having all of that already thought out, I think I was probably more articulate and convincing. I had all the figures and everything. Our point of view prevailed, and there was very little that one could object to around what we were saying. So, this is how it has happened.

So, even though there are obviously a number of reasons to be pessimistic about contemporary urban environments – globally, but also specifically in Pakistan – it does feel like you've set these foundations for an alternative approach. How the national government, or municipal governments, follow through, is yet to be seen.

I'm just keeping my fingers crossed! No idea what will happen.

I think that is a nice way for us to end, with this sense that some expanded notion of responsibility toward our built environments, their wider ecologies, and toward the people who live in them is being appreciated not just by activists and architects but potentially by those in power.

To whatever little extent, I think one has to be grateful, and this is something to be thankful and happy about.

Afterword

Amen Jaffer

In the summer of 1997, my family moved in to a house designed by Kamil Khan Mumtaz in the locality of Model Town, Lahore. Even though the distance between our previous home, which was also in Model Town, and this new abode was a mere kilometre and a half, it felt as if we had travelled quite some way, socially speaking, in moving to this new residence. Our old place, the only home I had known until that point, was located at the very end of a narrow, dead-end lane or *gali*, as we called it in Urdu. Containing six houses, five of which were identical townhouses built in a modern style, our *gali* had a distinctly middle-class feel to it. Most of the households did not own a car for most of the time that we lived there, and some did not even have a telephone connection. I recall the excitement of receiving a phone call from our neighbour's son, who was living somewhere abroad, and hurrying over to fetch his mother who lived two houses down. She would drop everything and rush over to our place, just in time for her son to call again.

In my early teenage years, my parents moved me to an expensive, private school in Gulberg and suddenly I became very conscious of the location of my house. I eventually discovered that most of my new classmates shared a similar class background to my own, but in the beginning, I felt certain that they would look down on me for living in a *gali*. When one of my new school friends offered to have his parents give me a ride home after spending the day at his place, I was too ashamed to let them see my house in the *gali*. So I had them drop me off



12.1 Life in the Gali, Model Town, Lahore, 1988.

outside a large house on the main street of our neighbourhood and I walked the few hundred remaining metres to my home.

Over the next three years, these feelings of inadequacy gave way to a sense of comfort with those classmates who had quickly become close friends. They started to regularly visit my *gali* and even hanging out with my friends in the neighbourhood. The central location of my house made it a popular choice for hangouts and a place for our group of friends to gather before heading out somewhere in the city. After finishing my O-Levels, I moved to yet another private school but this pattern of socializing in my *gali* continued. I barely noticed that, while all this was happening, my family was rapidly moving up the class ladder. My father had quit his low-paying job as an Assistant Professor in a public university in 1989 and, along with my mother, set up a consultancy in the booming non-profit/development sector. They had become much sought-after. My family's income had increased considerably as a result of these changes, but I noticed little perceptible difference in our lifestyles except that my sister and I were now attending expensive private schools. We were surrounded by the same neighbours and friends, consumed the same food and shopped at the same places that we always had. Most importantly, we still drove around in our old 1978 Datsun 120Y. For my teenage self, a family's automobile remained the ultimate marker of class.

At some point in 1996, I learnt that my parents had purchased a sizeable plot of land in Model Town and were planning to build a house on it. I reacted to this news with considerable annoyance. Why did we need to move anywhere when we had a perfectly fine house? If we had money to spend on property, why did we not buy a new car or a dish antenna to connect us to all those amazing satellite channels? What about all my friends in our *gali* and the surrounding neighbourhood? As the construction of the new house moved ahead, I found little reason to get excited about it. In fact, my only contribution was to reluctantly pick out

the paint colours for what was meant to be my new bedroom and the bath attached to it. The only redeeming feature of this new house, as far as I was concerned, was its expansive and easily accessible roof, which received plenty of wind and was ideally located in the middle of a serious kite-flying neighbourhood.

Sometime around this period, I began to hear the name of Kamil Khan Mumtaz repeatedly surfacing in conversations between my parents. I was already dimly aware of his reputation as an architect in the city and some of my more 'enlightened' friends spoke glowingly of him as a progressive figure in Lahore's cultural scene. My parents had been acquainted with Mumtaz for a while and were utterly convinced that he should be the person to design our new home. In retrospect, this was arguably one of the easiest decisions for them in the entire process of building a new home. Unlike the doubts that seemed to surround every little design or financial decision once the process was underway, they seemed absolutely sure of him. Many years later, when I became better acquainted with Mumtaz's work, I began to see why this was the case. In fact, learning about Mumtaz's architectural design and philosophy became a way for me to understand and appreciate my parents' aesthetic sensibilities, but more on that later.

As our house was being constructed, problems inevitably arose. My parents' stress levels were permanently shooting through the roof. Mumtaz's presence hung over my life in a different way. There was constant discussion of the architectural plans and drawings that we had received from his office, the changes to the layout that had to be approved by him and so on. Despite so many mentions of the architect in our home, my sister and I never actually met Mumtaz at this time, which made this persona all the more mysterious. Strangely, rather than visualizing him as a person, the image that began to take shape in my head was that of the building of our new house as it steadily rose from the ground. In particular, the six arches – three on the ground floor

12.2 The House in Model Town. Image by Amen Jaffer.



and three above them – adorning the home’s front elevation came, for me, to embody Mumtaz.

When we finally moved in to this new house in the middle of the summer in 1997, I predictably felt conflicted about our new abode. There was, of course, the pain of leaving my old neighbourhood and especially the group of friends that I had grown up with. This was tempered somewhat by the realization that our lives were already heading in different directions and there was a sense of inevitability to our disbanding. But there was something else that was far more troubling. A few years earlier, I had felt shame at my ‘house in the *gali*’. Now I had to justify a 2 *kanal* (9000 square feet) property to my friends but also to myself. How could such a home fit with my sense of who I was and how I portrayed myself to others? My school friends, who had suffered through my recently discovered love for invoking Marx in our moralistic debates on the purpose of life, were quick to pounce on the hypocrisy of it all.

There was, however, something about the architecture of this house – its unassuming style, the modesty of its scale and, most importantly, its curious temporality – that introduced ambiguities into my relationship with it. Despite its size, the house could not be read as the abode of a wealthy family in Model Town, which is among the more upscale housing societies of Lahore. The architectural fashion for houses in Lahore during the 1990s was dominated by two styles. One was characterised by the use of tall, round, white cement pillars and the other distinguished by red brick exteriors. Our new house seemed to belong the latter style, but it did not quite fit the mould. Most of the fashionable red brick homes of this era used *gutka*, a thin, decorative clay tile with a neat finish, that was layered on to a plastered surface. My parents had opted for *awal special*, a basic but high-quality brick, that was integral to our home’s structure rather than a decorative, additional layer. Rather than appearing slick and fashionable, our house’s exterior conveyed more of a worn,

‘antique’ feel. The arches further highlighted this sense of a house from another era. This bygone look seemed to go with other signifiers of my family’s material situation. Our solitary, twenty-year old car sitting by its lonesome in a two-car garage at the end of a long driveway complemented the sense of a faded dwelling. Inside the house, our aging, old-fashioned furniture and other time-tested possessions barely filled the interior space, since it was more than twice the size of the dwelling we had just left behind. It would be some time before we had enough possessions to fully furnish this new space. At the time, there was neither the money nor much energy to make any significant purchases.

Despite all of this, I did not think of this new house as a modest structure. With Mumtaz’s signature interpretation of South Asian architectural traditions embellishing the elevation of the building, especially his characterful arches, the house certainly had a distinct look to it. Mumtaz had struck a delicate balance in the red brick facade between the symmetry of the design and the natural, earthy nature of the bricks themselves. Their pinkish hues, varying colours and visible roughness were all framed within a careful composition. I was struck by a sense of incompleteness when I studied this exterior, a feeling that this was something in the making, perhaps always in the making. Along with the ‘natural’ bricks, the grey cement *jaali* (lattice screen) that had been left unpainted and the evergreen creepers that my mother had planted at the base of the short pillars that supported the arches furthered this impression. Perhaps, this was an attempt to imitate nature’s ever-changing tapestries, or at least a gesture of some relation to them.

Over the years, my mother put her stamp on this property, especially its outdoor areas. She filled it with many local plants, creepers, flowers and trees. She set up a vegetable garden in the front lawn and a composting system in the backyard. But even at the dawn of our relationship with this house, I could



12.3 The House in Model Town. Image by Amen Jaffer.

sense that this was a building in my parents' own image. It wed together their understanding of traditional flair with simplicity and rootedness. Its openness to nature reflected their own sensibilities of sustainable and modest living. Even more importantly, its curious temporality, a sense of being out of step with the times, enabled them to reconcile their social values with the material transformations in their own lives. Always uncomfortable with demonstrating their new economic status and committed to holding on to their middle-class roots, the temporal ambiguities of this new abode suited their sense of self. It was thus in a house that appeared rooted in the past that they set upon carving a new future for themselves.

Kamil Khan Mumtaz is one of Pakistan's most celebrated architects and continues to run his private practice in Lahore. In 2019, he was awarded the Sitara-e-Imtiaz by the Government of Pakistan. He is the author of *Architecture in Pakistan* (1985).

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Kamil Khan Mumtaz with his son, Taimoor, in Lahore, 1969.

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Kamil Khan Mumtaz is one of Pakistan's most celebrated architects. The approach to building he has refined over a sixty-year career represents a radical challenge to how architecture is practised in the contemporary world.

The Time of Building brings together Mumtaz's reflections on architecture and history with rare photographs, drawings and archival documents. Moving from the precision of the stonemason's chisel to the expansive imagination of the urban planner in an era of climate change, Mumtaz offers critical insights into architecture's relationship to time, politics, craft and the sacred. His words and buildings provide a powerful example of South Asia's vitality as a site for rethinking modern architectural thought. They bear critical lessons for the present and the future – the question of what architecture could and should be in a world shaped increasingly by inequality, environmental crisis and scarcity.

Portrait of Mumtaz by Arif Ali.

