

Friday, 15 June  
9.00-11.45

Track: Peripheries  
Room: *National Library, Auditorium 3107*

## **EUROPE'S OWN ISLAMIC ARCHITECTURE: HERITAGE, CONTESTATION, AND NECESSITY**

**Session chair:** Mia Fuller, University of California, Berkeley

In 2009, a majority of the Swiss electorate voted against the construction of minarets on Swiss mosques – implying an acceptance of new mosques and by extension, of Muslims; but denying the buildings (and by extension, their users) their most distinctive and most visible trait. Germany's right-wing Alternative for Germany party, meanwhile, has made it an on-going agenda to halt any new mosque construction altogether. In parts of Spain and Catalonia, despite high proportions of Muslim migrants and generally peaceable Christian-Muslim relations, conflicts over proposed mosques have erupted as well. At the same time, Palermo's Norman-Arab architecture is consistently preserved as a marker of Sicily's Muslim past; Córdoba's La Mezquita Mosque is part of a UNESCO World Heritage Historic Center site and as such, garners very high numbers of appreciative visitors; and Islamic architecture throughout the Balkans, extensive and varied as it is, remains beloved and in some cases, recently restored.

This panel poses the question of how to situate—architecturally speaking—Islam within Europe. Are mosques (the quintessential and most necessary Islamic structures) signs of danger, of possible radicalization within otherwise placid and overwhelmingly Christian cityscapes? Are they indications of distant and long-ago settled conflicts, reassuringly settled in the course of the Crusades, their architectural traces neutralized into heritage or converted into sites of other worship?

We take as our premise that increasing numbers of mosques in Europe are inevitable, and that they present opportunities for meaningful design and simultaneous urban and social integration and differentiation. With that in mind, we are presenting papers addressing histories of European Islamic architecture, principally (although not exclusively) dating no farther back than the late nineteenth century and imperialism's return of 'the colonized' to 'the metropole', as well as prospects for developing and future Islamic architecture in Europe. How will such projects be negotiated, locally and nationally? What architectural forms will they adopt: variations on historic Moorish, Arab, or Ottoman models? Or the currently more common Saudi model, often financed by a Gulf State? Will local syncretisms play a design role? How will funding and oversight shape individual projects? Our ultimate goal is to initiate an overdue, overarching discussion of the place of Islam in the built environment of Europe today and in the future.

### **PAPERS:**

#### **Recovering the Great Mosque of Cordoba: The History of an Idea**

Michele Lamprakos, University of Maryland - College Park

After the expulsion of Jews (1492) and the forced conversion and expulsion of Muslims and their descendants (sixteenth to early seventeenth centuries), Catholicism was strictly enforced on the Iberian peninsula. In the nineteenth century, a national narrative emerged which depicted the 'Moors' as invaders who had left little imprint on Spanish society and culture. Liberals crafted a counternarrative, idealizing the Islamic past as an era when the country was free of Church dominance. This debate played out in archeology and restoration at the country's great Islamic monumental sites: the Alhambra, Madinat al-Zahra, and the Great Mosque of Cordoba.

The Great Mosque had been the city's cathedral for over six centuries, and thus was the most highly charged of the sites—with a massive *crucero* (choir and presbytery)

protruding through the roof. Liberal restoration architects sought to recover the Islamic fabric, a process that shaped the building we see today. This paper will focus on the most radical of these efforts: the proposed removal (*traslado*) of the *crucero* which, in some iterations, would have also opened the building to Muslim worship. This idea—proposed at various moments during the twentieth century, under governments of both left and right—has been virtually erased from the historical record and popular memory. *Traslado* of the *crucero* was influenced by trends in restoration—in particular, the fashion of removing cathedral choirs – and also by regional identity politics and Spain’s shifting interests in the Arab world. This paper traces the idea of *traslado* to the early 1970’s—when preparations were being made to nominate the building to the new World Heritage list—drawing on a newly revealed private archive. Despite gaps in the historical record, we can piece together the remarkable history of this idea, and how it almost became a reality.

### **Mountainous Mosques: Examining Georgia's Tradition of Wooden Islamic Architecture**

Suzanne Harris-Brandts, MIT

Angela Wheeler, Harvard University

The Republic of Georgia’s mountainous western region of Adjara features a wide range of over fifty uniquely decorated and hand constructed small wooden mosques that date back to the turn of the twentieth century. The harsh mountainous climate of the Lesser Caucasus provides opportunities for rendering in wood and paint what architects in other climates would produce in stone and tile. The region thus developed a local vocabulary of mosque design that underscores the diversity of the Muslim experience worldwide. These mosques represent a regional Islamic architectural legacy that flourished along the borders of present-day Georgia and Turkey during the Ottoman era—one that managed to survive Soviet prohibitions on religion, including the mass Soviet removal of minarets. Today, their architecture is again being threatened, albeit from two new fronts. Lack of Georgian state funding and preservation threatens their physical longevity, while Turkish-supported upgrading campaigns have led to either dramatic building renovations or complete mosque replacement. While new mosque construction in urban areas of Georgia has raised concern and even hostility towards local Muslims, the vast presence of these historic mountainous mosques is surprisingly unknown. As such, Adjara’s mosques currently sit outside contemporary Georgian identity narratives that anchor the country to Orthodox Christianity. While Georgia is a predominantly Orthodox nation, the particular local practice of Islam—and its vernacular architectural manifestations—are decidedly also Georgian. These remote structures are architectural testaments to multi-confessionalism in the Caucasus and should be seen as Georgian mosques built under Ottoman influence, rather than Ottoman mosques imposed upon Georgian territory. This paper discusses the historic legacy of Georgia’s wooden mosques, describing the uniqueness of their designs in relation to Georgia’s history, while further addressing issues tied to the contemporary threats facing these buildings.

### **Mosques, Minarets, and Changing Urban Identities in Bosnia-Herzegovina**

Emily G. Makaš, University of North Carolina at Charlotte

Throughout the Ottoman Empire, Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, Royal and Federal Yugoslavia, and independence, mosques have been integral to the visual representation and urban identities of the major cities of Bosnia-Herzegovina, especially Sarajevo and Mostar. In the past century and a half, these mosques and minarets have become a source of both contestation and celebration.

Since the nineteenth century, travelers from Central and Western Europe have described Bosnia as a picturesque and accessible ‘Orient,’ describing Bosnian cities in terms of their concentration of mosques and minarets. In the late Yugoslav period as today, this image is still used to attract attention to Bosnia’s unique tourist value of rich Islamic architecture in the heart of Europe.

Contestations over Bosnian mosques began in the Austro-Hungarian era with the rise of monumental buildings for Christian and Jewish populations. Skyline competition continues today with bell towers and minarets vying for dominance through height and numbers. During the 1990s war in Bosnia-Herzegovina, mosques such as the Ferhadija in Banja Luka and the Aladza in Foca, were targeted in campaigns against signs of past Islamic empires and present Muslim neighbors. Since the war, resilience has been demonstrated through the restoration of damaged historic mosques such as the sixteenth-century Koski Mehmed Pasha Mosque in Mostar. The continuing presence of Muslims has also been emphasized through newly-built mosques. Due to their foreign support and architecture, some of these, such as Sarajevo's Saudi-funded King Fahd and Indonesian-funded Istiqlal Mosques, have been interpreted as threats of the Islamification of Bosnian cityscapes and populations.

Thus Bosnian mosques and minarets have been signs of an accessible Orient, as potential threats, as signs of radicalization, and as neutralized heritage. Drawing on examples from throughout Bosnia-Herzegovina this paper will explore the multiple meanings of mosques and minarets to both outsiders and various local communities.

### **Vulnerable Borders Passing through the Mosque Complex: The Design and Construction of Central Mosque in Cologne**

Ahmet Tozoğlu, Abullah Gul University

While its first stone was laid in 2006, the Central Mosque of Cologne was the premise of establishing new paths between Muslim and Christian societies in the city. Designed by German architect Paul Böhm and financed by DITIB, a branch of the Turkish government's religious affairs authority; it took more than ten years to complete the construction works. It was opened in 2017 and has become one of the remarkable examples of contemporary mosque design. The long construction period coincided with the rising popularity of neo-Nazi movements and disruptive debates on the place of foreigners in European identity during and after the influx of thousands of Syrian refugees to Europe. The mosque also became the target of anti-Muslim arguments during design and construction phases, and it was also criticized by the local Turkish-Muslim society due to its architectural form, choice of designer, and unpredictably high cost.

This paper sheds light on three topics about the presence of Muslim Europeans in the cityscape by elaborating the Central Mosque of Cologne as a case study. First, to understand the role of the mosque in the conceptualization of public space within Turkish-Muslim society. What did they expect from the central mosque complex and in what ways would the image of the Central Mosque meet their expectations. Second, to present the form of the mosque in Turkish-Muslim society and reveal the ideological bridges spanning to the Ottoman past and its historical image. The main frame of the research will be based upon the image of the Ottoman past as it relates to the identity of local, contemporary Turkish-Muslim society. Finally, to focus on the compelling and highly charged controversy between DITIB and the architectural firm about the image and symbolic value of mosque architecture.

### **Religious Austerity: The Lutheran Limits on Mosque Architecture in Sweden**

Jennifer Mack, KTH Royal Institute of Technology / Uppsala University

The results of a 2016 WIN/Gallup survey ranked Sweden as the second least religious country in world (after China), yet the many immigrants arriving there since the mid-twentieth century have modulated this. Even so, Muslim groups have typically been consigned, sometimes for decades, in ad hoc spaces known as 'cellar mosques' (*källarmoskéer*). Recently, new mosques have been constructed or planned in and around major Swedish cities like Stockholm and Gothenburg, yet the design visions of Muslim groups have frequently been challenged: as new centres of power in an increasingly diverse country, but also as assaults on taste.

In the twentieth century, the *folkhem* (people's home, or early welfare state) and *folkkyrka* (people's church, the Church of Sweden) linked Lutheranism and welfare state institutions. Unlike the lavish architecture associated with Catholicism in France and Italy, however, Swedish welfare-state Christianity promoted asceticism in church designs and frowned upon ostentation. The state streamlined these practices in late modernist town centers, where the simple churches were regarded as one space among many in an overall civic infrastructure. Contemporary architects draw on these traditions—explicitly or implicitly—in their work with Muslims, now among the major commissioners of new religious architecture in Sweden.

Focusing on current and future mosques on sites around Stockholm, I draw on archival and ethnographic research to argue that their architects' design tendencies—usually toward modernism—should be read not merely as stylistic preferences but extensions of a tradition of austerity in Swedish Lutheran architecture. For example, architects reduce exterior ornamentation on mosques, even after clients present elaborate designs and inspirations from Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Kuwait, and beyond.

Is there a Lutheran underpinning to Swedish architects' allegedly secular, professional perspective even in the context of the construction of new buildings? How far does such a perspective affect these architects' work on mosques?