An analysis of the expansion of the mosque of the prophet by caliph 'Umar b. Al-Khattaab (d. 24 A.H./744 C.E.)

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Abstract

This paper discusses the expansion of the mosque of the Prophet in Madinah by Caliph 'Umar b. Al-Khattaab. The paper concludes that the undertaking was in full conformity both with the spiritual benchmarks of the Islamic message and the emerging sociopolitical traditions and norms of the nascent Muslim community. It demonstrates the synergy and shared critical juncture in the Muslim history that set very high standards for the future development and nurturing of the spiritual as well as human dimensions in the phase of Islamic architecture. The main discussion of the paper focuses on three vital dimensions of the mosque expansion which proved significant for the early development of the authentic identity of Muslim architecture: the role of consultation and mutual agreements, which is tantamount to what is today called public participation in architecture; the significance and impact of the dynamic process of institutionalization of the mosque of the Prophet, myrty workers, educational, social, cultural and political activities, and the austerity, and judicial, views of 'Umar b. Al-Khattaab on architecture which, by and large, reinvigorated the core of the Islamic attitude towards the project of building. The three dimensions are dealt with after the main physical features of the mosque expansion have been appraised. This paper also shows that consultation were at the very core of Muslim architectural identity and the community development process in Islam, that successfully investigating the former without systematically referring to the latter can never be complete. Thus, the role of Muslim architecture, both as a concept and a reality, should always be seen as multidimensional, universal, fluid, vibrant, expressive and as much scientific, technological, and applied, as spiritual, educational and ethical, phenomenon.

Author keywords

Islamic architecture, consultation, Madinah, The mosque of the Prophet

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