

An aerial photograph of a city, likely Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, featuring a large, modern stadium with a white roof and a blue field in the center. The stadium is surrounded by a dense urban landscape with numerous high-rise buildings and residential structures. In the background, there are mountains under a clear sky. The title text is overlaid on the top half of the image.

APPRECIATING THE ARCHITECTURE OF SHAMIYYAH

SPAHC OMER

An aerial, black and white photograph of a city, likely Istanbul, featuring a large mosque with a prominent dome and minarets in the center. The city is densely packed with buildings, and mountains are visible in the background under a clear sky.

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SPAHC OMER



DAR AL WAHI PUBLICATION



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Table of Contents

Introduction	xi
---------------------------	----

Chapters

1. Tradition versus Modernity: Islam's or Muslims' Dilemma	1
---	---

Introduction: The Popularity of the Theme	1
---	---

What is Tradition?	5
--------------------------	---

What is Modernity?	16
--------------------------	----

Islamic Traditional and Modern Architecture.....	26
--	----

2. Lessons from the Pre-Saudi Expansions of al-Masjid al-Haram	39
---	----

Introduction: What is al-Masjid al-Haram?	39
---	----

Al-Masjid al-Haram and its First Two Expansions during the Era of <i>al-Khulafa' al-Rashidun</i> (Rightly-Guided Caliphs).....	40
--	----

Al-Masjid al-Haram from the Era of <i>al-Khulafa' al-Rashidun</i> (Rightly-Guided Caliphs) to the Saudi Expansions.....	56
--	----

3. The Saudi Expansions of al-Masjid al-Haram and the Case of Shamiyyah	98
The Saudis and al-Masjid al-Haram	98
The Case of Shamiyyah	109
4. The Language of the Shamiyyah Architecture	152
The Quintessence of the Language of Islamic Architecture.	152
The Main Elements of the Language of the Shamiyyah Architecture	166
5. The Origins and Significance of the <i>Mashrabiyyahs</i> (<i>Rawashin</i>) of Shamiyyah	274
The Myth of the <i>Mashrabiyyah</i>	274
Islam on Privacy: Implications for Islamic Housing	280
From Mere Screens, ‘ <i>Asakir</i> and <i>Ajniyah</i> to <i>Rawashin</i> and <i>Mashrabiyyahs</i>	288
The Functions of the <i>Mashrabiyyahs</i> (<i>Rawashin</i>) of Shamiyyah.....	302
Towards Contemporary <i>Mashrabiyyahs</i> (<i>Rawashin</i>).....	316
Conclusion	350
Bibliography	357
Index	370

This book provides a comprehensive framework for appreciating the architecture of Shamiyyah, one of the Makkah neighborhoods pulled down to make way for the latest expansion of al-Masjid al-Haram (the Holy Mosque).

The objectives of the book are as follows:

1. To investigate the architectural, artistic, social and religious significance of the architecture of Shamiyyah;
2. To accentuate the importance, as well as sensitivity, of the relationship between tradition and modernity in the Islamic architectural dialectic;
3. To demonstrate a need for better understanding and appreciation of Islamic traditional (vernacular) architecture in Saudi Arabia in particular, which, in turn, could lead to more serious efforts to preserve, revive and “modernize” it.

The book is divided into five chapters. In the first chapter, the relationship between tradition and modernity in Islamic architecture in general is discussed.

In the second chapter, lessons from the pre-Saudi expansions of al-Masjid al-Haram are examined.

The third chapter delves into the Saudi expansions of al-Masjid al-Haram and what impact such projects had on the holy city of Makkah. Special attention is given to the latest expansion as a result of which the Shamiyyah neighborhood had to be completely demolished.

The fourth chapter, which signifies the backbone of the book, investigates the theme of the language of the Shamiyyah architecture. The main issues discussed therein are: the context, building materials and sustainability, architecture and social sustainability, doors and doorways, roofs and parapets, interiors and organization of their spaces, arches and pillars, decoration, the question of origins, calligraphy, windows and *mashrabiyyahs* (*rawashin*), and the spiritual importance of decoration in the Shamiyyah buildings.

Finally, in the fifth chapter, the origins and significance of the *mashrabiyyahs* (*rawashin*) of Shamiyyah, as the neighborhood’s architectural trademark, are analyzed.

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