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Tradition, Identity and Adaptation

Mosque Architecture in South-East Queensland

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Among the many layers of the Australian built environment exists the often invisible constructs of a diasporic and multinational Muslim population. These additions essentially contribute to the diversity of a multicultural modern Australia and its architecture. Of the most distinctive facets of Muslim religious and cultural identity is the figuring, appearance and status of the mosque within a community—both for an Islamic population for which this building serves as the centre of a cohesive religious community; and for the multicultural society into which the Muslim community is integrated. This paper examines the translation of Islamic identity through a study of the mosque architecture of South-East Queensland and the place of these buildings within the discourse of Australian architecture. A firsthand survey of the mosques of South-East Queensland offers insights into the broader relationship between Islamic and Australian architecture. The paper will offer a deeper and more nuanced understanding of the history and dynamics governing the place of Islam in Australian society through the study of what would otherwise be considered architecture that is neither iconic nor noteworthy.

Each building examined in this paper is the result of a negotiation between maintaining a sense of collective Islamic identity, ethnic traditions, as well as the contextual adaptation to local norms using available resources. For the most part, Muslims in Australia look to conventional architectural elements, theologically informed programme, and traditional building forms in order to reaffirm a familiar Islamic identity. Ultimately the cultural diversity represented in these buildings enriches the cultural landscape and reflects the migratory history of multicultural Australia. Through the study of a discrete set of buildings, this paper considers how Queensland's contemporary Muslim community addresses the debates and



possibilities of contemporary architecture. It positions mosque architecture as a potent site of intercultural exchange that fosters and extends the role and appearance of a traditional and transnational building type in an Australian context.

While the links between architecture, culture, and society are deep and well-recognised, the community and religious buildings of Australia's Muslim community has served actively to forge the identity of this part of the Australian population over more than a century and in many ways.¹ Responding to a complex array of pressures and negotiations, the mosque, in particular, is a highly significant moment in providing a means for self-identification, both for recent migrants and for communities with deep historical roots in Australia as a largely non-Muslim country.² Through a contextualised account of four community mosques in South-East Queensland, this paper addresses the dynamics governing the place of Islam in Australian society, its architectural expression, and as well as the architectural sensibilities that result from the multiform requirements of a multinational diasporic community. It points to each case as an instance balancing architecture, spirituality, religion and tradition, as well as the adaptation of Islamic architectural practices to a Western social context using the resources at hand.

The mosques of Holland Park, of the Islamic Society of Darra and of Kuraby (Masjid Al Farooq), each on the periphery of Brisbane, and, further south, the mosque of the Islamic Society of Gold Coast, are here presented by way of reflecting on the way that the mosque type constitutes a “multicultural Australian architecture in the making.”³ Given that the forms, functions and symbolism of mosque architecture are by no means static,⁴ it is important to consider how the mosques realised here in Queensland reflect and represent specific traditional forms that are nonetheless grounded in diverse philosophical, cultural and social circumstances not always aligned with Western concepts of progression and modernity.⁵

Building for Muslim Communities in Australia

Each Muslim community in Australia is distinct, and settlement patterns in South-East Queensland ensure the diversity of those communities in that region. Between 1860 and 1900 Afghan and Indian cameleers established freight routes and played an essential role in the exploration of arid desert starting westward from Queensland.⁶ Few architectural traces of “Afghan” authority in

1. David Beynon, “Architecture, Identity and Cultural Sustainability in Contemporary Southeast Asian cities,” *Review of Indonesian and Malaysian Affairs* 44 (2010), 180.

2. Anthony H. Johns and Abdullah Saeed, “Muslims in Australia: The Building of a Community,” in *Muslim Minorities in the West: Visible and Invisible*, ed. Yvonne Yazbeck Haddad and Jane I. Smith (Walnut Creek, Calif.: Altamira Press, 2002), 202.

3. David Beynon, “Centres on the Edge: Multicultural Built Environments in Melbourne,” in *Proceedings of the Everyday Multiculturalism Conference of the CRSI*, ed. Selvaraj Velayutham and Amanda Wise (Sydney: Centre for Research and Social Inclusion, Macquarie University, 2006), 5.

4. Mohammed Arkoun, “The Metamorphosis of the Sacred,” in *The Mosque: History, Architectural Development & Regional Diversity*, ed. Martin Frishman and Hasan-Uddin Khan (London: Thames and Hudson, 1994), 268.

5. David Beynon, “Tradition as Past is a Modernist Idea,” in *Progress: Proceedings of the 20th Annual Conference of the Society of Architectural Historians, Australia and New Zealand*, ed. Maryam Gusheh and Naomi Stead (Sydney: SAHANZ, 2002), 28.

6. Goolam Vahed, “Adaptation and Integration of Indian Migrants in Brisbane, Australia,” in *Indian Diaspora – The Twenty First Century – Migration, Change and Adaptation*, ed. Anand Singh (Delhi: Kamla Raj Enterprises, 2007), 38.

7. Peter Scriver, "Mosques, Ghantowns and Cameleers in the Settlement History of Colonial Australia," *Fabrications* 13, no. 2 (2004), 29.

8. Nahid Kabir, "Mackay Revisited: The Case of the Javanese-Australian Muslims, 1880-1999," *Asian and Pacific Migration Journal* 16 (2007), 411.

9. Jane Simpson, "Camels as Pidgin-carriers: Afghan cameleers as a Vector for the spread of features of Australian Aboriginal Pidgins and Creoles," in *Processes of Language Contact: Studies from Australia and the South Pacific*, ed. Jeff Siegel (Montreal: Fides, 2000), 198.

10. Department of Immigration and Citizenship, *The Australian Journey: Muslim communities* (Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia, 2009), 5.

11. Bilal Cleland, "The History of Muslims in Australia," in *Muslim Communities in Australia*, ed. Abdullah Saeed and Shahram Akbarzadeh (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2001), 12-26; Vahed, "Adaptation and Integration of Indian Migrants in Brisbane, Australia," 37.

12. Bilal Cleland, "The History of Muslims in Australia," in *Muslim Communities in Australia*, ed. Abdullah Saeed and Shahram Akbarzadeh (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2001), 20.

colonial Australia remain, yet their impact is noteworthy. Peter Scriver summarises its cultural legacy by observing that the remaining built traces "are a scant but telling motif of the radical differences that were interwoven into colonial Australia's cultural fabric."⁷ In the state's north, several hundred Javanese Muslims settled in Mackay during the 1880s and assisted with the cultivation of sugar cane in the area. Although their efforts were later undone by fire, that Muslim community built a Javanese style mosque out of grass and bamboo to serve their religious and cultural needs.⁸ During the early part of the twentieth century the copper boom in the northwest Queensland town of Cloncurry saw the establishment of one of Queensland's largest Ghantown settlements and the first documented mosque in the state.⁹ Smaller waves of migration occurred throughout the twentieth century, each adding a new layer of complexity to the idea of an Australian (or a Queensland) Muslim community. During the 1920s, to offer one of many possible examples, Albanian Muslims assisted with the cultivation of sugar cane, tobacco and cotton, providing much needed labour in support of these agricultural industries.¹⁰

With the advent of the Colombo Plan and the sharp increase into the 1960s of Asian students in Australian universities, migrants (both temporary and permanent) from such countries as Pakistan, India, Malaysia and Indonesia fostered a demand for buildings and spaces both to support religious observance and to cultivate religiously cohesive communities. The late twentieth century witnessed waves of Muslim immigration from every continent—from Fiji, Sri Lanka, Malaysia, Singapore and South and East Africa—occasioning Islam as one of the most ethnically diverse religious groups in Australia, and in Queensland no less.¹¹

The mosque has not, however, always been such a prominent symbol of a Muslim community in Australia. In the early twentieth century, especially, this reflected a perceived racial and cultural insignificance of Muslim Australians. With reference to Queensland, Bilal Cleland reports:

In June 1910, the Department of External Affairs sent a memo to all Collectors of Customs around Australia to determine the number of "Mohammedan priests" in the country. In 1909 there was one permanent mosque and one "priest" in Brisbane . . . The Queensland office explained that no official records were kept on such priests or mosques because these religious leaders "are not recognised by the Registrar General's Department".¹²



Much has changed over the last century, but still little is known of the Islamic architecture of Queensland—or the architecture of Queensland’s Muslim communities, to put it another way.

There is no imperative style prescribed in the Qur’an dictating that the mosque be anything more than a place for prayer.¹³ The word *masjid* (mosque) translates to “a place of prostrations.” The mosque as a built typology therefore has various degrees of opulence, as form (as opposed to function) is not a primary consideration of the type’s obligations to Islam.¹⁴ Since its inception, however, the mosque has over time developed elements that now constitute its essential features. A large congregational prayer space typically comprises the principal area of the mosque. Associated with Islam and the complete submission to God is the *qiblah* wall (the ontological axis) with which a worshipper is orientated towards Mecca; for Australian mosques the *qiblah* wall is oriented toward the north of due west.¹⁵ The *qiblah* wall is distinguished by a prayer niche known as *mihrab* and a set of stairs called a *minbar* upon which the *Imam* (prayer leader) stands to deliver readings of the Qur’an.¹⁶ These are the mosque’s core programmatic elements. Formally, or symbolically, such elements as domes, minarets, and arches—developed over many centuries and often adapted from other architectural types—have become closely associated with Islamic architecture.¹⁷ These formal elements clearly signal a mosque as being such, even if they do not follow a prescription for an “Islamic architecture.”

The mosques considered in this paper have each been realised under quite different circumstances, but each nonetheless represents a negotiation between the various ethnic identities constituting each community and the Islamic traditions that bind them. In each case, the function of the mosque is of great significance as it serves both to anchor and to symbolise a community.¹⁸ Just as the spread of Islam across a broad geography guaranteed regional variations in Islamic architecture over time, so too are different geographical and symbolic references at play in the mosques realised in South-East Queensland—in their architecture no less than in the communities they serve.¹⁹

Holland Park Mosque

The Holland Park Mosque is Queensland’s longest standing mosque. Its land was purchased for five pounds on October 29, 1909, for the purpose of establishing a mosque to serve the

13. Akel Kahera, Latif Abdulmalik and Craig Anz, *Design Criteria for Mosques and Islamic Centers: Art, Architecture and Worship* (Burlington: Elsevier Architectural Press, 2009), vii.

14. Kahera, Abdulmalik and Anz, *Design Criteria for Mosques and Islamic Centers*, viii.

15. Kahera, Abdulmalik and Anz, *Design Criteria for Mosques and Islamic Centers*, vii.

16. Kahera, Abdulmalik and Anz, *Design Criteria for Mosques and Islamic Centers*, vii.

17. Oleg Grabar, “The Mosque in Islamic Society Today,” in *The Mosque: History, Architectural Development & Regional Diversity*, ed. Martin Frishman and Hasan-Uddin Khan (London: Thames and Hudson, 1994), 243. Compare Mohamad Tajuddin Mohamad Rasdi, *Architecture, Society & Nation Building: Multiculturalism, Democracy and Islam* (Johor Bahru: Pustaka Global Resources, 2012).

18. Johns and Saeed, “Muslims in Australia: The Building of a Community,” 202. Compare Katharine Bartsch and Selen B. Morkoc, “Interpreting the Architectural Visibility of Islam: Mosques in South Australia,” in *Panorama to Paradise: Proceedings of the 24th International Conference of the Society of Architectural Historians, Australia and New Zealand* (Adelaide: SAHANZ, 2007), 5.

19. Martin Frishman and Hasan-Uddin Khan, eds., *The Mosque: History, Architectural Development & Regional Diversity* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1994), 12.

20. Mustapha A. Alley, *100 Years of History: Holland Park Mosque 1908-2008* (Holland Park, Qld.: Islamic Society of Holland Park, 2008), 11.

21. Alley, *100 Years of History*, 26.

22. Donald Roderick, "The Origins of the Elevated Queensland House," Ph.D. diss., University of Queensland, 2004, 276.

23. Roderick, "The Origins of the Elevated Queensland House," 282.

24. Alley, *100 Years of History*, 40.

needs of not only the local Muslim population, who had settled predominantly from Afghanistan and India, but also for the larger Muslim population that had settled across the east coast of Australia.²⁰ The original mosque was purpose-built and speaks to the Queensland vernacular of the early twentieth century. It was constructed predominantly of timber, clad in weatherboard with roofing of corrugated iron. In the 1950s the building was raised off the ground and a set of decorative columns on the veranda were subsequently added in the following decade.²¹ One might safely assume that the mosque's constructional relationship to the Queensland house was largely a matter of pragmatism; to depart from building habits and to favour an unfamiliar design would potentially have made the building more difficult and more expensive to realise.²² This was doubtless compounded by the relative invisibility of Islam in Australia and the need, potentially, to protect the community against a lack of knowledge and acceptance on the part of its predominately Christian neighbours.

By 1966, however, that community had grown substantially in number and the original Holland Park Mosque was to be replaced by a new building in a more heroic, modernist fashion (fig.1). Designed by a Pakistani student at the University of Queensland, the construction once again reflects the local architectural mores of Queensland, which at this moment favoured concrete construction for public and community buildings. The new double-storied mosque was built as a concrete slab on-ground placed on a levelled site with a masonry veneer.²³ It was constructed entirely under the direction of the local community, utilising mostly unskilled labour, and was completely funded by donations made from across Australia and the South Pacific.²⁴

Its appearance and organisation is informed by the intersection of site constraint considerations and religious requirements. The primary axis of the building is aligned with the site boundaries, with the main area of the prayer hall, featuring the *qibla* wall, rotated off this plan toward the north-west to achieve the necessary axis for prayer toward Mecca. The entire second story, approximately 300 square metres in area, is dedicated to the prayer hall, with an additional prayer space the size of the rotated section of the main prayer hall located on the ground level below. The rotated section of the main prayer hall is topped with a white onion dome and four twelve-metre-high concrete cast minarets projected off of each corner. Besides the dome and minarets, other symbolic elements confirm the building as a mosque: the



green awnings covering the windows on the upper level of the building—tailored into an imitation of an ogee arch—and the exterior elevation of the *qibla* wall, which is set apart by a white rendered façade, two lines of script in both Arabic and English and a projected *mihrab* niche flanked by stone inset archways.

Both the original Holland Park Mosque and its 1960s replacement engage with materials and construction techniques common in South-East Queensland at their respective moments, demonstrating the general shift from timber construction to masonry structures across those decades. Of interest here, though, is the introduction of what we have come to regard as universal elements of Islamic architecture—the dome and the minaret—which serves not only the religious needs of the mosque’s community but also projects an Islamic identity into the increasingly multicultural Australian landscape of the 1960s.²⁵

25. Beynon, “Centres on the Edge: Multicultural Built Environments in Melbourne,” 1.

The Islamic Society of Gold Coast and the Islamic Society of Darra

The mosque of the Islamic Society of Gold Coast (Fig 2) was completed in 1996, thirty years after the consecration of the Holland Park Mosque. It was largely the work of a non-Muslim builder named Keith Henry, who became immersed in Islamic faith and culture as he engaged in a collaborative design process with members of the founding Islamic community.²⁶ The mosque sits on a large block of land within a community precinct that also accommodates for a range of Christian denominations as well as non-religious community organisations. Consistent with other arrangements in the community precinct, the land was granted to the Islamic Society of Gold Coast under a 99-year lease agreement with the Gold Coast City Council.²⁷

26. Russell Deiley, “Man Behind the Mosque,” *Gold Coast Bulletin*, April 29, 1996.

27. Interview with Habib Jamal, Treasurer of the Islamic Society of Gold Coast, June 11, 2013.

The most prominent element of the design is a highly visible green dome of 7.8 metres in diameter, topped by a crescent moon. According to the Treasurer of the Islamic Society of Gold Coast, Habib Jamal, the dome was directly and substantially influenced by the centrepiece of the highly revered Al-Masjid an-Nabawi, the Prophet’s mosque in Medina, which covers the burial site of the Prophet Mohammed. The double story building is constructed of block work rendered in white, with columnated archways at the front and rear of the building. The prayer hall measures approximately 269 square metres in area with a mezzanine level, added in



Figure 1. Holland Park Mosque.

2009, of 167 square metres to the rear. A separate room adjoining the main prayer hall is set aside for separation of female worshippers. In plan the building is divided into two parts, one containing the prayer hall encompassed by the dome and four minarets which stand tall at each corner, with another longer element of the same width enclosed by a green tiled gable roof containing the ancillary spaces of the mosque. Inside the prayer hall, the internal expression of the high dome, replete with a chandelier hanging from its centre, conveys its transcendental symbolism. Worshippers are orientated toward the *qiblah* wall, which features a projected double-height arched *mihrab* niche and timber *minbar* beside. The simplicity of the prayer hall space and the consistency of such internal features as the *minbar* and *mihrab* remains a common thread through each of the mosques considered here.

The mosque of the Islamic Society of Darra, founded by Muslims of Fijian descent, is located in an expansive car park in the southwest Brisbane suburb of Oxley (fig 3). Fijian Muslims remain the



dominant participant ethnicity of the community, which now also includes members originating from (or descending from migrants from) Pakistan, India, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka, as well, to a lesser extent, from the Middle East, Turkey, Africa and, indeed, Australia.²⁸ In November 1984 the Society purchased a property in Ducie Street, Darra, the building originally a weatherboard house, later converted to a church, which was then to be adapted to the religious needs of the Society. As the area's Muslim population grew, the Society was impelled to search out much larger premises and set to the design of a generous mosque on a large block of land in an industrial area of Oxley. Initially designed by architect Graham Stokes, the building as realised was again the work of builder Keith Henry, who redesigned and built the project from 1999 on the back of his experience with the Islamic Society of Gold Coast. Once again, the mosque (completed in December 2003) was the outcome of much diligence in the form of volunteers, donations and labour both skilled and unskilled, drawn from the local Muslim community.²⁹

28. Mohammed Sharif, e-mail message to author, April 10, 2013.

29. Mohammed Sharif, e-mail message to author, April 10, 2013.



Figure 2. Mosque of the Islamic Society of Gold Coast.

The Darra mosque is the most substantial of those addressed in this paper. It presents an imposing double story brick veneer construction with an interesting internal arrangement, once again derived from the theologically informed alignment to Mecca. The floor plan is a skewed rectangle inside of the larger rectangular exterior boundary with the prayer hall located on the first story and ancillary community spaces and offices at ground level. On the upper level, the angular residual spaces resulting from the internal arrangement are adapted into the male and female ablution areas and a library space. The prayer hall (shown in fig. 4) measures approximately 425 square metres and is largely rectan-

gular shape with the back section of the room angled to suit the alignment of the exterior plan; this angled section is partitioned for the separation of female worshippers. Externally, an ordered set of seven double-height arches dominates the front and side facades, forming the exterior of a covered veranda. The borrowing from ethnically diverse forms is most evident in the seven-metre-diameter centralised green fibreglass onion dome, alluding to a characteristically Indian form of pointed dome, although it difficult to determine if the inferences we might make in this regard were intentioned decisions on the part of the community or the designer-builder.³⁰

30. Martin Frishman, "Islam and the Form of the Mosque," in *The Mosque*, ed. Frishman and Khan, 31.

Kuraby Mosque

Kuraby Mosque (fig. 5) is our final example. Originally founded in the early 1990s by the southern African community of that area, the mosque adapted a former Anglican church to suit the requirements of Muslim worship. The mosque that stands on this same site today was reconstructed after an arson attack on the original mosque building on September 21, 2001, just ten days after the terrorist attacks on New York City. The Kuraby Mosque thereby became the first mosque anywhere in the world to be damaged or destroyed as a direct response to the attacks of September 11.³¹ While it is beyond the scope of this paper to pursue this point in any depth, it is nonetheless important to note that Muslims living in Australia remain subject to racial and religious denigration from some sectors of the Australian population.³² This was evidenced even recently on the Gold Coast in the form of a public outcry against plans to build a new mosque at Worongary, which at one stage saw the proposed site maliciously vandalised with hateful racial slants scrawled over planning

31. Mohammed Adallah, "Mosque Attack, September 2001," 2005, transcript and video, *Making Multicultural Australia*, online at <http://www.multiculturalaustralia.edu.au/library/media/Video/id/824.Mosque-attack-September-2001> (accessed April 24, 2013).

32. Australian Multicultural Advisory Council, "The People of Australia," online at http://www.immi.gov.au/about/stakeholder-engagement/_pdf/people-of-australia.pdf (accessed March 27, 2013).

Figure 3. Darra Mosque



signs.³³ Late in October 2012 plans for the mosque were approved despite the protestations of some members of the local community, further confirmation of the challenge that Muslim communities face in the process of gaining acceptance in Queensland and Australia—and acceptance of realising visible centres for their worship.

Returning to the Kuraby mosque: the current building was the outcome of a collaborative process between members of the Kuraby Islamic Trust and an unidentified Yugoslavian Muslim architect.³⁴ According to Kuraby trustee Imraan Nathie, the architectural aesthetic of the mosque is modelled on the prevalent suburban vernacular of South-East Queensland, with its sheltered verandah space, corrugated iron roof, and blockwork construction.³⁵ The Kuraby mosque differs in appearance from previous examples, the only tellingly “Islamic” feature being a singular minaret, a free-standing structure to the south of the main entrance standing 11.5 metres high and surmounted by a metal sphere and crescent. The site boundaries permit a correct alignment of the entire building to suit the direction of the *qibla* wall which makes for an ordered plan with symmetrical placement of ablution areas, shoe storage and amenities. Suggestive of the curvature of the traditional dome, the roof instead comprises a corrugated iron clad barrel vault running through the longest section of the rectilinear plan. Internally, the expression of the barrel vault roof runs parallel to the *qibla* wall, which features a full height glass block window acting as a *mihrab* in place of the conventional niche. The reinterpretation of more common architectural conventions in this mosque, such as the transformation of the dome into a barrel vault and introduction of a glass block window *mihrab* are small constituents that suggest the ongoing process of contestation over symbolism, ethnic diversity, culture and the built environment in Australia.³⁶

33. Paul Weston, “Gold Coast Mosque Protest Turns Ugly with Pig’s Head Posted on Fence,” *Sunday Mail* (Qld.), October 23, 2011, online at <http://www.couriermail.com.au/news/queensland/mosque-protest-turns-ugly/story-e6freoof-1226174049519> (accessed January 20, 2013).

34. Interview with Imraan Nathie, Kuraby Mosque Trustee, June 5, 2013.

35. Interview with Imraan Nathie, Kuraby Mosque Trustee, June 5, 2013.

36. Beynon, “Centres on the Edge: Multicultural Built Environments in Melbourne,” 9.



Figure 4. Darra Mosque prayer hall.

The Mosque in Suburban South-East Queensland

The mosques considered in this paper are programmatically consistent but differ—and in some cases markedly—in their application of symbolic and architectural elements, in scale and in the ethnicity and original nationality of the members of their communities. As Mohammed Arkoun observes, “the design, the forms, and the semiological systems (the signs and symbols used by members of any social group to convey shared values) are usually reproduced in accordance with familiar archetypes.”³⁷ In Australia these familiar archetypes are the crescent-topped domes, minarets and repetitive archways. Each of the mosque projects deploy, interpret or omit these elements according to the circumstances of their construction and the ambitions of the community to position itself overtly within the fabric of Australian society.³⁸ The mosque buildings considered here embody a range of attitudes and circumstances that demonstrate, in turn, architecture’s role in negotiating between Muslim and non-Muslim communities in this country.³⁹

37. Arkoun, “The Metamorphosis of the Sacred,” 272.

38. Grabar, “The Mosque in Islamic Society Today,” 244.

39. David Beynon, “Cannibal Tastes, the Architecture of Non-European Migrants in Australia,” in *De-placing Difference: Architecture, Culture and Imaginative Geography*, ed. Samer Akkash (Adelaide: University of Adelaide, Centre for Asian and Middle Eastern Architecture), 224.

Figure 5. Kuraby Mosque.



What, though, do the customary forms of mosque architecture ultimately mean for the architecture of South-East Queensland, and what implications do they have for Australian architecture in the broader frame? Reflecting on Australia's increasingly multicultural future, David Beynon suggests that if the ethnic and religious histories and allegiances to both traditional and present values can be made legible, "our appreciation of the unfamiliar forms of these buildings may increase"—and with it, a more thorough understanding of the way in which the histories of other cultures can play a role in shaping the Australian landscape.⁴⁰

As the examples above demonstrate, the diverse approaches to local building habits, "Islamic" building forms and the capacity for each to be opened to interpretation suggests that the formation and maintenance of an Australian-Islamic architectural identity will draw on sources and possibilities as diverse as the nation-wide communities it serves. The Australian cases support Cleland's observations when he states:

Muslims, especially second and third generation Muslims, are adding a new layer to their identity. They are developing a certain bond with Australia, which, in most cases, is not at the expense of their Islamic and ethnic heritage. The result may be a hybrid Islamic architectural response based on a commitment to Australian conventions and Islamic/ethnic traditions.⁴¹

For Islamic architecture in South-East Queensland, and indeed Australia, the outcome of the design process responds to pressures and design factors that encompass issues of cultural displacement, monetary and resourcing difficulties as well as outward societal pressures. For any community, holding onto the customary architectural attributes associated with the mosque building type is a much simpler option than introducing change, as critical conjecture relating to the architecture of the mosque is secondary to the main issue of faith and risks the distortion of tradition and the apprehension of sacred space.⁴² Highly apparent in the study of mosques on which this paper reports is that the community utilising these spaces are collectively proud of their centre for worship, especially where, as in most cases considered, the building of the mosque was a pioneering endeavour for all involved. Vigorous community involvement, from participation in design, construction and funding is at the heart of each of the four cases presented here.

40. Beynon, "Centres on the Edge: Multicultural Built Environments in Melbourne," 6.

41. Cleland, "The History of Muslims in Australia," 12.

42. Grabar, "The Mosque in Islamic Society Today," 243.

This paper offers a brief reading of a series of instances in which Australian Muslim communities have sought to reconcile the inevitably numerous complex pressures of realising a building to serve those same communities. The gratification gained from collective participation in a communal goal along with the satisfaction of consistent features orientating the Muslim community to its faith may render the design consciousness of the built form less of a concern—but also open the building up as a zone of interpretation within tradition. Oleg Grabar’s summary of the relationship between Islam and its architecture resonates with these cases: “there never will be an answer to the correct way of designing within any one culture or to classify and evaluate whatever creation one contemplates.”⁴³

43. Oleg Grabar, foreword to *Understanding Islamic Architecture*, by Attilio Petruccioli and Khalil K. Pirani (London: Routledge Curzon, 2002), x.

Islamic architecture in the Australian context is at an important stage in its brief history as Muslim migration continues to increase and as its impact on the Australian built environment becomes increasingly apparent. The architectural opportunity of the future must not disregard the values of tradition and cultural expression within an ever-increasingly homogenized world. Rather, the specific contribution that the architecture of Muslim communities makes to Australia must be acknowledged, studied and reflected upon so that Islamic architecture can properly figure in Australia’s rich multicultural landscape.

