THE PLATFORM
CURRENT MUSLIM AFFAIRS

REFLECTION OF BEAUTY
CONTEMPORARY ISLAMIC ART

This issue is dedicated to the valuable artist Heba Zagout, who was martyred by Israeli occupation forces in Gaza.

todam
RESEARCH CENTRE FOR SOCIAL THOUGHT AND POLICY

Research Centre for Social Thought and Policy (TODAM); was founded to realize the goal of a just, equitable and prosperous society. In addition to contributing to the social thought, it aims at proposing practicable solutions to the contemporary social challenges. We aim to witness the different dimensions of social change on the basis of knowledge and to bring solutions to social problems on the axis of common values and benefits. The activities we carry out at TODAM are based on a realistic understanding and constructive approach to current social issues from the lens of social sciences. In this way, we act as a bridge between researchers, decision-makers and civil society; and advance the possibility of producing independent knowledge about the social world we live in.

PLATFORM

Platform magazine is published within the body of TODAM of the İLKE Foundation for Science, Culture and Education (TODAM) in an attempt to provide up-to-date and original perspectives on the intellectual, political, social, economic and cultural agendas of Muslim societies. Platform is an output of the Thought and Movements in Muslim Societies Project. It aims to be a platform where the affairs of the Muslim world are followed and analysed through the activities of influential think tanks, research centres and institutes, universities, political, religious, and social movements. The Muslim world's contributions to global issues and the ongoing intellectual accumulation are presented to Türkiye and the world through Platform magazine. It keeps its finger on the pulse of the Muslim world through its website and its database of current institutions, movements, activities, and personalities.

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Editor's Note

The Islamic civilisation, which has spread all over the world throughout history, has created a profound Islamic art in which regional and cultural elements are combined with Islam's understanding of beauty. Islamic art continues for centuries with a unique understanding from calligraphy to architecture, from visual arts to music. Today, we see the applications of Islamic art not only in the historical heritage but also in the new forms that emerged with the fusion of tradition with modern and post-modern elements.

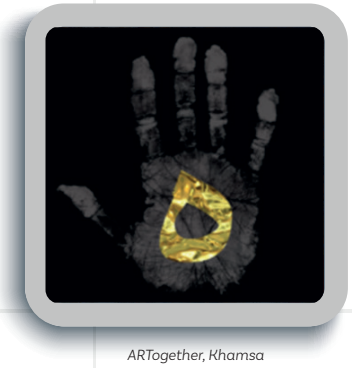
In this issue of the Platform magazine, we discuss the contemporary state of Islamic art with esteemed figures. In addition to his theoretical studies on modernism and Islamic art, Kaz Rahman as an artist and director contributed to our magazine with an article discussing the future of Islamic art. We interviewed Valeria Gonzalez, the author of *On Beauty and Islam*, Chinese calligrapher Haji Noor Deen, Palestinian director Nawras Abu Saleh. We present you articles of great importance that shed light on the present state of Islamic art and its rich branches such as cinema, music and architecture. In addition to those, the issue includes important artists and books in relation to the contemporary Islamic art.

In the 29th issue of Platform, which closely follows the agenda of the Muslim world with a genuine perspective, the main focus of the "Current" section was Palestine. The well-deserved resistance of the Palestinians against the inhuman treatment and oppression, which has been going on for 75 years, has continued since the beginning of October. We tried to focus on each aspect of the agenda of our Palestinian brothers and sisters who are subjected to genocide in front of the eyes of the world. In this context, we have included the transcript of *İLKE Agenda* seminar that we organised with distinguished academics. Longing to be able to stand with the oppressed and against the oppressors, and to reach the days of victory for the Palestinians; we hope the Magazine will be beneficial to its readers.

Selvanur Demircan & Elif Sağır

THEME: REFLECTION OF BEAUTY: CONTEMPORARY ISLAMIC ART

ART MOVEMENTS OF THE ISLAMIC WORLD



ARTogether, Khamsa

Gathering All Muslim Artists (The Gama Collective)

Place: USA

Gathering All Muslim Artists (The Gama Collective) is a U.S.-based movement that initiated the project titled "Khamsa: The 5 Stages of Grief." Derived from the Arabic word "five," the project is a multimedia art exhibition indicating that the pain experienced by Black, Muslim, immigrant, and refugee artists and musicians consists of five stages. With this project, particularly, the movement aims to make sense of the emotions of Gulf region migrants and Black refugees, creating a sense of solidarity.

The Muslim Art Movement

Place: Canada

The Western Muslim Initiative (WMI), based in Calgary, aims to showcase the work of Muslim artists and musicians. Every year, they organise an event called the Muslim Art Movement, and for over a decade, these events have provided an opportunity to connect with artists and musicians from diverse Muslim communities. The initiative aims to introduce the Muslim art tradition to the community in Calgary by discussing, sharing, and building art, fostering understanding among communities with different belief traditions.

Barjeel Art Foundation

Hurufiyya Movement

Place: Middle East

The movement that combines traditional calligraphy art with modern arts, also translatable as "Lettrism", has become one of the most significant art movements in the Middle East since the mid-20th century, influencing many countries and artists in the region. Additionally, it has played an essential role in creating national identity in the post-colonial period, and artists have incorporated motifs such as individual identity, freedom, and conflict into their works.

Reborn Sounds of Childhood Dreams I, Ibrahim Salahi, 1961, Tate Collection

The Khartoum School

Place: Sudan

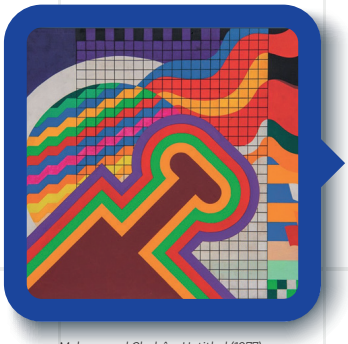
The Sudan-based movement that pioneered modern art in Africa emerged in the mid-20th century, a period marked by increasing independence movements. It became a significant tool in reflecting the identity of the newly independent country. Artists adopting this movement combine the primary art of calligraphy and Islamic imagery, which continues to influence the Middle East, as part of the broader Hurufiyya art movement, incorporating traditional primitive African images.

Encyclopaedia Iranica

Saqqakhana Movement

Place: Iran

The movement named after the fountains in the streets of Iran was conceptualised by art critic Karim Emami in 1963. Artists who embraced this movement merged religious objects, literary texts, and the cultural uniqueness of traditional Islamic and Persian art with a modern artistic understanding. In their works, emphasis was placed on visuality by highlighting decorative and iconographic details rather than narrative and subject matter. Although the movement gradually lost influence after the revolution, it still holds a significant position in modern Iranian art today.



Mohammed Chabâa, Untitled (1977), Acrylic on canvas, Tate Collection

The Casablanca Art School

Place: Morocco

Directed by Farid Belkahia, the Casablanca School of Art underwent a profound transformation and is considered the centre of this movement. Gradually enriching, the school facilitated the transfer of inspiration from diverse sources to paintings, sculptures, and textile products by artists. Those who received education at this school after Morocco gained independence in 1956 questioned Western artistic movements and techniques from Europe and America while establishing new connections with their traditional artistic heritage.

"Sabra and Shatila Massacre" (1982-83), Dia al-Azzawi, Image courtesy of Tate Modern

New Vision Group

Place: Iraq

Founded in Baghdad in 1969 following the Six-Day War, the New Vision Group, like other art movements in the Middle East, was influenced by the calligraphic art movement. Artists blended Arab heritage and Iraqi archaeology in their works, operating under the shared idea of the "Arab World". Influenced by modern art movements as well, these artists incorporated abstract images into their artworks, highlighting the political and liberating attitudes of the time.

The Newcomers Group

Place: Türkiye

Emerging in the mid-20th century, particularly in the 1940s-1950s and beyond, The Newcomers Group was inspired by social realism. Hence, artists belonging to this movement aimed to reintroduce art to society, emphasising that art is a beneficial realm for the community. At the same time, these artists depicted the daily lives of people from different segments of society in their artworks and included social critiques.

"Women Working in the Field", Nuri Iyem, Evin Art Gallery

Khidr Collective

Place: UK

The movement that began in the United Kingdom in 2017 is an art movement where individuals interested in different disciplines come together. In order to make the voice of young Muslims in the UK heard and to take a stand against Islamophobia, the movement aims to provide an intuitive response to the sense of powerlessness felt by Muslim communities. The movement, which also publishes a fanzine, told the stories of joy and resistance of young Muslims in the UK in its first issue in 2017. Some of these stories emphasised the feeling of "not belonging".

Sofia Karim, 2020, Turbine Bagh

Turbine Bagh

Place: UK

Turbine Bagh, a collaborative artist movement and platform, was launched in 2020 by Sofia Karim. The platform aims to take a stand against India's anti-Muslim citizenship laws. The movement took its first steps with a peaceful protest in the Turbine Hall of the Tate Modern Museum in London. It succeeded in drawing attention to human rights violations with the "Samosa Packets" campaign.

Islamic Art and Post-Modernism: A Way Forward

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The contemporary artist faces a number of choices when using a particular medium- the traditional plastic arts found in most art schools such as oil or acrylic painting, printmaking, stone or ceramic sculpture; the photographic-based arts and electronic media that mixes video and installation; and finally the classical traditions related to craft that tend to resurface every few years and can encompass a disparate range of methods of making paper (Japan), natural ingredients (Mexico) and/or using ink and calligraphic styles (Türkiye). The almost limitless sources of information and inspiration, which are a part of the over-saturated and hurried post-modern life can become overwhelming for both the artist to find the correct platform and for the viewer to distinguish between pastiche, derivative craft and innovative original work. If we were to add the more recent emphasis on identity-politics against the dominant slant of eurocentrism that runs through the history of art and many would dismiss contemporary art as antithesis to Islamic art and its emphasis on the sacred- the reality is both more complex and potentially ground-breaking for new movements that are original, use new media and work within certain traditions.

In Türkiye, over the last decade and a half there has been an explosion of renewed interest in "classical" Ottoman architecture (something that was not even taught in architecture programs for most of the history of the Republic) as well as ornately framed Qur'anic verses in calligraphy and Hilye-i Şerif (calligraphic features of the Prophet Muhammed); in film/TV, there have been numerous productions of historical Ottoman dramas as well as more independent films with contemporary Muslim characters (a major theme with the latter continues to be rural/urban cultural and lifestyle divisions). All of these speak to a longing to reconnect with a cultural legacy that is considered a high point in the history of Islamic art. It also speaks to the misguided problem of content, style and what defines Art. The big-budget mosques, high-brow collectors and slick TV series as well as the less-refined calligraphy and lower budget films all have one thing in common: a very narrow interpretation of Islamic art that often conflates reproduction (mosques), content (calligraphy) and historical style and/or history (TV/cinema) with producing art. At the other end of the spectrum, the "global" contemporary art scene places Istanbul as one of its stops with no

> ***Many would dismiss contemporary art as antithesis to Islamic art and its emphasis on the sacred- the reality is both more complex and potentially ground-breaking for new movements that are original, use new media and work within certain traditions.***

reference to any of the areas previously mentioned; it is as if the two inhabit completely different worlds where the term "contemporary art" refers to work that is driven solely by the post-modern dictates of numerous social topics with a deliberate exclusion of anything related to Ottoman or Islamic history/ culture (Rahman, 2016).

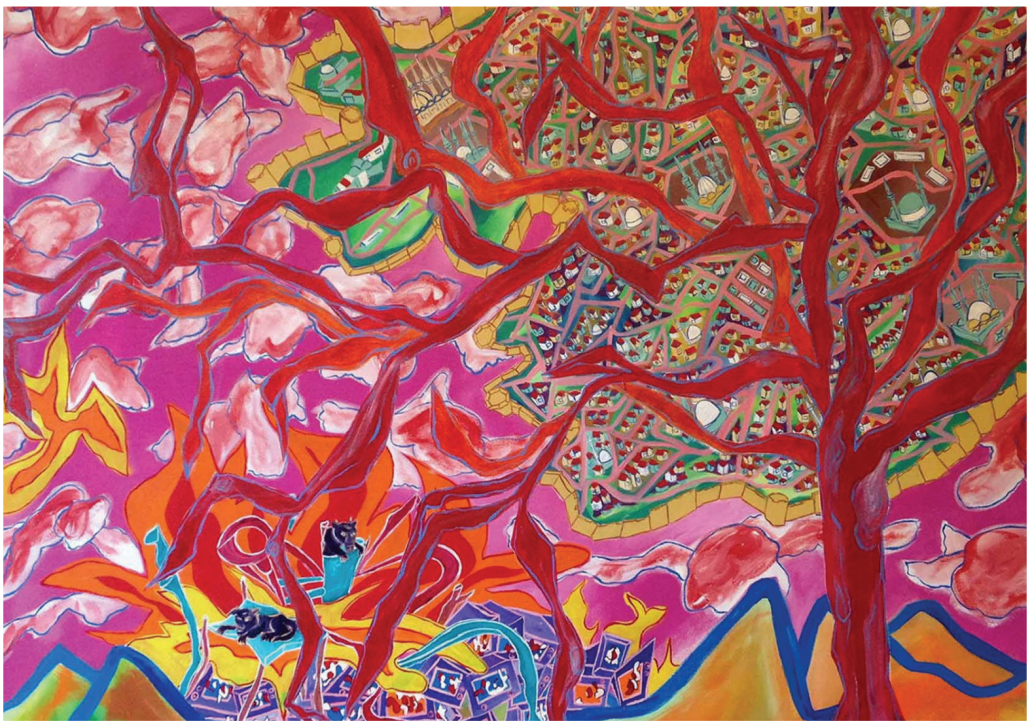
Islamic Art and Modernism

Islamic art is a very broad term that describes a multitude of styles and mediums throughout the world. Historical dynasties such as Ottoman, Persian, Mughal and Deccani have produced numerous works of lasting significance in both architecture and painting (as well as sculptural objects, calligraphic works etc.). An examination of formal qualities shows an emphasis on the use of space and light (architecture) as well as color and line (both within architecture and in miniature painting) to represent which is unrepresentable; a meaningful expression of the vastness/infinity of the heavens and the splendor of creation. This is in fact a modernist approach to art where abstraction and a non-naturalistic approach leads to a fresh yet, sophisticated interaction; variations on patterns found in nature and the dichotomy of minimalist/maximalist form alongside vibrant colors and innovatory use of light are among the reasons Islamic art from these periods still feels relevant and ultramodern. It is reproduced in contemporary design and furniture; and previously served as an inspiration for numerous figures in European art history. While the advent of Western modernism in painting is usually conferred to the late 19th and early 20th centuries and architecture is placed in early to mid-20th century- an alternative reading can situate the advent of modernism with these expressions in Islamic art from much earlier centuries (Rahman, 2017).

*Digital Dervish**

For further information see: https://www.firoza.co.uk/project/digital-dervish/

Kaz Rahman depicts Istanbul during the July 15 coup attempt in his work "Black Dogs".



Craft, Concept and Formalism

Many of the debates between what is considered "art" can be broken down into the difference between the craft of what is being made and the overall idea/theme/concept. Ideally, they work in tandem where an idea or concept is strong, original, and thought-provoking, and the execution of the work is at a high level of craftsmanship. This can also hold true when discussing works of cinema where a story that is of a highly original level should be matched with audio/visual expression that makes the concept and themes resound more. Separating "technical" crafts in any medium with those who are only concerned with "ideas" is a foolhardy practice; the great works in any medium show the artist in command of certain technical areas while also working with other craftspeople who are even more specialist- consider traditional Ottoman painting workshops with the lead artist and several assistants working under him, the role of the architect and the number of specialist craftspeople or the role of filmmaker and the sometimes hundreds of cast and crew members. In all of these cases the artist, architect or film director is versed in the fundamentals of craft but cannot do everything alone; at the same time one should not confuse knowing a craft with the ability to make art, architecture or cinema. An idea is needed and in contemporary work, that concept should have something to say- whether it is a commentary on past works/traditions, societies or something more sacred. Here again one should not confuse having an idea with the ability to make art, architecture or cinema... The bridge between the world of craft and concept is the formal language of the medium(s); and that is the important third area of experience and innovation which distinguishes the ability of the artist (whatever the medium- architecture, film or traditional mediums). There is huge area of "doing" that is needed in order to understand the medium, its possibilities and how to take a work into new and original territory.

"One of the biggest challenges in presenting a comprehensive movement in contemporary Islamic art is the fragmentary nature of both the mediums being used and the spaces/galleries promoting the work."

Kaz Rahman, "Seljuk Landscape", 2018

Towards an Avant-Garde

One of the biggest challenges in presenting a comprehensive movement in contemporary Islamic art is the fragmentary nature of both the mediums being used and the spaces/galleries promoting the work. Some artists showing in London, New York and the Gulf states have not explicitly framed the work within "Islamic Art", while others have co-opted the term when making work related to social justice or identity politics that has little to do with the formal qualities related to Islamic art. Architecture provides the work of a towering figure such as Zaha Hadid (1950-2016), committed to modernism and fragmented geometric forms/patterns while never explicitly having been placed within an Islamic art tradition. Iran continues to cast a long shadow in terms of painting, drawing and mixed media, while the cinematic Iranian New Wave of the 1990's led by Abbas Kiarostami (1940-2016) continues to be a major breakthrough and inspiration for many artists and filmmakers around the world. Projects like Firoza[1] and the Jameel Prize[2] are aimed at curating works related to contemporary Islamic art with the latter having shown several artists working out of Iran, India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Algeria and Türkiye. Islamic Arts with a plural may be a more apt description going forward since there is a burgeoning of work over the last several decades related to performance, poetry, music and electroacoustic arts that is also interconnected with both tradition and the avant-garde.[3]

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1 See: https://www.firoza.co.uk/

2 See: https://www.vam.ac.uk/info/jameel-prize

3 See: https://www.firoza.co.uk/project/digital-dervish/

An Interview with Valeria Gonzalez on Beauty and Islam

Dr. Valerie Gonzalez has produced important academic works in Islamic art history, aesthetics and visual culture. Her main research areas are aesthetics, examples and principles of artistic creation in Islam. Furthermore, she is interested in art criticism, phenomenology, art theory and philosophy. She is curently giving lectures in Institut d'Etudes Supérieures des Arts.

What was your motivation behind writing your book *Beauty and Islam: Aesthetics in Islamic Art and Architecture?*

The main thing is that Islamic culture is also my heritage. Because I was born in Algeria and have an immigrant family coming from south of Spain, Andalusia; they had migrated out of poverty and moved to North Africa. Thus, we, the Spaniards, have a Muslim heritage but it has a history that stopped in 1492 with the conquest of the Christians and the removal of the Muslims from Spain. But it's in our blood, in our culture due to 800 years of Islamic civilisation in Spain; so, this is our heritage.

Also, another reason is being born in a Muslim country; I was born during the War of Independence from the French, and Algeria was still a French colony. We were French citizens, but we were Spanish, not French. It was difficult, not as much as for the local population, but it was nevertheless difficult for us, not being French but living in a French colony. We suffered as well from segregation, yet it was the war of liberation, the decolonisation of Algeria as a

Exterior view and decorative detail from the magnificent Mosque of Cordoba. Present day's Mezquita Cathedral, Andalusia, Spain

part of the decolonisation of Africa. So, I'm part of this history. I was little when we were expelled from Algeria with the other French people after the end of the war so that Algeria could build itself as an Algerian Muslim country. I grew up in the south of France, in Marseille, which is again a place that has a very important Muslim community. Therefore, this culture has always been an environment; it's in me, it's my heritage and history, and it's always there.

It was natural for me to be interested in anything Islamic and the cultures of North Africa, Spain and the entire Muslim world. Before I was engaged in superior studies, I would visit North Africa all the time and with the local people, with Moroccans in particular. When I had to decide about my studies, I was very much interested in studying Islam and Islamic art and anything Islamic. So, that's how I developed my research, and that's what I always wanted to do. When I decided to research, it would be on Islam, nothing else; I never had any other project. It's been almost 30 years that I have been researching; what I present is the result, not only of 30 years of researching but also of thinking, writing and visiting. It's about going to the country; it's about being with the people, meeting with the people. For me, the people are as important as the locations and then studying at your desk. The books are good, but the people are teaching you as much.

Islamic heritage is a tradition, but it's a very alive tradition.

You are coming from an immigrant family. How did your immigrant identity shape your perspective on Islamic art?

First of all, going to Spain and seeing the magnificent Islamic art in Spain [was influential because] we have a magnificent heritage. One of the oldest mosques in the world is in Spain, the Umayyad Mosque in Cordoba. Muslims arrived from North Africa in 711; they conquered Spain and settled in, then built a mosque and completely transformed the Spanish landscape into an Islamic landscape. So, there are still monuments that show Alhambra in Granada. So, it's a very old Islamic legacy from the beginning of Islam in the world; in Spain, we have the best-preserved palace of the Middle Ages, the Islamic Palace of Alhambra. Furthermore, when the Christians removed the Muslims, they built a church inside the mosque, but just in the middle, they didn't destroy the mosque. You still have the

Damascus Room, Museum of Islamic Art, Qatar

magnificent mihrab there, built by al-Hakam in the 10th century. When I would go to Spain, I was dazzled by this heritage.

However, that's not the only reason why I was interested. There is a more disturbing reason, which is that since I was born during French colonialism, I became very quickly aware of colonialism, and I had to understand what [French colonialists] did to the Muslim countries and African society. This colonialism is a trauma for me as well. For example, a lot of people in my family were dead. I was a child, but the family stories of war and colonialism... I had to understand this and the trauma. Colonialism was even a much worse trauma for the Algerians, yet it was also [traumatic] for us as immigrants. So, for me, it was a quest for understanding. Because French colonialism is Christianism, then in Spain too, you have this history of Christianism. Then, we have a very bad episode in Spain in modern history where you have this dictator, Franco, who tried to erase the Islamic past of Spain from the memory of the Spaniards. That was very disturbing. Thus, it was all researching, trying to understand all of these very difficult things. Everything was difficult in the 60s, [all the issues of] the decolonisation, the relationship between the East and the West. So, all that history... There were multiple reasons why I was interested in it, like a quest, and it was always based on the love of anything Islamic, of the aesthetics and of the people. I love the religion and the essence of it.

Galleries are no longer only in New York or Paris or Berlin; [but instead, they are in] Dubai, Qatar, İstanbul...

Does Islamic art continue as a tradition in the modern world?

Today is like in the past; that is, the Islamic heritage is a tradition, but it's a very alive tradition. One of my messages always is that tradition is always creative. You don't need to be modern, you don't need to deny your tradition. To me, being modern is not being anti-tradition by no means. I think this is something that creates a lot of tension in the Islamic world because the West makes you think that tradition is anti-modern, and it's not true. You can be very modern in your way of thinking, a very modern person and a very spiritual traditional person. It's very compatible. Now, you have people who are not modern because they are backwards, and those people are not traditional;

> *The idea that 'real' art is produced in Europe is, in fact, a consequence of the cultural hegemony of the West.*

they are conservative. It's different. But the West makes you think that the West has the resources and that tradition is not modern. I don't agree with that. You aren't involved in your tradition or your religion passively; if you are in this type of vivid, alive, productive tradition, you are as well modern.

Do you think Islamic art continues with its own modern interpretations?

I think the art in Islamic countries is very alive, creative and very much appreciated by the West. Contemporary art in Muslim countries is very vivid and very much appreciated. And it makes people money, it's money as well for the Western collectors, museums and all; they love it, and they buy it. There is an attraction. But what is interesting is that you have a change of location. Galleries are no longer only in New York or Paris or Berlin; [but instead, they are in] Dubai, Qatar, İstanbul... It's changing. I'm not looking at politics here, I'm looking at cultural politics. For example, Iranian art is extraordinary, yet you don't look at the regime whatever you think about it. But I think we have to look at how people culturally behave, not the regime. But I think we need to look at the cultural dynamics and, in particular, in the Gulf, where there is a lot of money but also great artists. But the contributions of these artists in their country vis-à-vis the world is extraordinary. So, we have to look at that. You have a lot of talent and [talented] people in the Muslim world. But then you have the games, like, where is the money? Obviously, the politics are always on the way, always there.

Visual and plastic arts are very strong in European history; however, they did not develop as prominently in Islamic civilisation. Can we consider this as a weakness of Islamic arts? Can the fact that visual arts flourished in Europe while remaining relatively weaker in Islamic arts be seen as a disadvantage?

No, it's not a disadvantage by any means. First of all, we have great representations of Islamic art in books, in Ottoman or Mughal or Persian paintings. We have great art of images but it's in books, it's not like in frames or in pictures like that of the West. But in other countries, they invented other art forms that are as good. This is, again, due to colonialism, we think the art produced [in Europe] was the model. Now, we understand that this is not true. There is art everywhere in different forms, and this is just the Western distortion of things. Today, with globalisation, everyone can do whatever they want. You can use Western techniques but with an Islamic spirit, or even Westerners now are interested in looking at Islamic aesthetics and appropriating and doing things with their own vision of Islamic art. So, we have all sorts of possibilities of creativity today. There is no disadvantage here; it's different art forms, different visual expressions and everything that makes you think otherwise... You need to be conscious; this is Western intellectual hegemony; this is not the truth. In Africa, you have an extraordinary art. Artists in the West like Picasso or Matisse discovered that [the art in Africa and the masks there] are great art, and this changed the mentality.

The only disadvantage now is money or political oppression. When you are deprived of money and mobility, and you live in poverty, then you cannot [create art]. Unfortunately, you have a lot of parts of the world that are in that situation. So, that is the disadvantage, but creativity is everywhere and equal.

Nation and Muslim Branding in the Discourses of Middle Eastern Contemporary Islamic Art

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In the contemporary geopolitical landscape, soft power and nation branding have become integral for countries and communities aiming to project a positive global image. This process involves showcasing a nation's culture, values and achievements through various platforms, including cultural events, organisations, and the work of renowned artists. One of the most effective ways to achieve this is through the promotion of Contemporary Art, which has become a significant trend in the world of artistic creations and creative industries.

Contemporary art has the unique ability to transcend borders and connect diverse cultures. In this regard, contemporary Islamic art has emerged as a potent tool for nation branding, highlighting the rich cultural heritage and creativity rooted in the Islamic world. This art form brings contemporary Muslim issues and values to the forefront of diplomatic, business, cultural, religious and international contexts.

This article aims to explore the primary policies of key stakeholders in the Middle East and Western Asian countries, specifically Türkiye, Iran, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE, in the field of Contemporary Islamic Art. It examines the strategies these countries employ to enhance their soft power and nation brand through this cultural form. The central question is: What image does contemporary Islamic art project for Muslims as a global community and a grand nation?

Soft power is the ability of a country to influence its global audience through its culture, diplomacy, enterprise, and education (Nye, 2021). By promoting contemporary Islamic art, nations can effectively challenge stereotypes and misconceptions about Islam and its followers, fostering a more nuanced understanding of their culture and values.

The Need for Muslim Nation Branding

Temporal identifies three main reasons why Muslim nation branding is necessary. Firstly, Muslim nations face similar challenges and need to differentiate themselves in an increasingly competitive world. Secondly, countries must adapt to survive in a changing world, as past reputation does not always guarantee future success. Lastly, brands are strategic assets that can bring power and financial rewards. They can help countries attract talent and expertise, retain

"In the name of Allah, the Most Merciful and Compassionate", Jalil Ziapour's calligraphy in the form of ibibik
Source: Stedejelik Studies

their best citizens, and manage perceptions to address national concerns. This is particularly relevant to Muslim countries, where differentiation is lacking, images are unclear, and the country-of-origin factor can often negatively impact exports and domestic sales (Temporal, 2011).

A Discursive Typology of Middle Eastern Art

Before examining the role of contemporary Islamic art in the Middle East, it is crucial to understand the evolution of modern and contemporary Islamic art in the region. According to Moridi, modern Islamic art is not an "artistic style" but a "cultural discourse" that changes in social and political contexts. Six cultural discourses have shaped modern Islamic arts: *Orientalism, Nationalism, Returnism, Fundamentalism, Globalism,* and *Middle Easternism.* These paradigms have experienced historical sequences but are still current, leading to a complex situation with a multi-paradigm that shapes contemporary art in Islamic countries (Moridi, 2023).

In the orientalist discourse, Islamic art became musealised, defined, classified, and exhibited through a Western lens. This approach often classified Islamic art as decorative crafts rather than artworks, leading to the perception of Islamic art as "non-art" or applied art (Naef, 2015).

The nationalist discourse saw the emergence of Pan-Turkism, Pan-Iranism, and Pan-Arabism, with national institutions fostering national identity. Artists used ancient motifs and folk embellishments to create a national art style that represented the nation's image. Artists such as Nurullah Berk in Türkiye, Jalil Ziapour in Iran, Jawad Saleem in Iraq and Seif Wanly in Egypt were some of the prominent figures of this approach (Moridi, 2023).

The returnist discourse emerged as a solution to conflicts between Islamists and nationalists in the 1960s, leading to a liberal Islamic approach in policy and culture and a hybridity of traditionalism and modernism known as neo-traditionalism. The Saqqakhana school in Iran, and calligraphical paintings; based on the Hurufiyya movement heritage and Islamic calligraphical legacy in a modern painting sense, are two innovative outcomes of such a discourse. Artists like Hussain Zenderoudi and Faramarz Pilararm from Iran, Wijdan Ali from Jordan, Erol Akyavaş and Abidin Elderoğlu form Türkiye are some famous artists of the Returnism discourse (Moridi, 2023).

"According to Moridi, modern Islamic art is not an 'artistic style' but a 'cultural discourse' that changes in social and political contexts."

> ***The role of contemporary Islamic art in nation branding will only continue to grow in importance, shaping global perceptions and fostering cultural exchange for years to come.***

The fundamentalist discourse saw political Islam become the main issue, with art of war becoming the main focus in a region rife with domestic, inter-regional, and international wars. Accordingly, they set up events, such as festivals, established museums and artistic institutions such as Contemporary Art of Palestine Museum in Iran to promote this view, especially in the binary opposition of Palestine-Israel.

The global discourse, initiated in the 1990s, aimed to link traditional, religious, mythical, and logical ideas with universal modernism, emphasising metaphysics and mysterious realism in the form of abstract and geometrical patterns. Artists such as Ahmed Mater from Saudi Arabia, Mattar bin Lahej and Hassan Sharif, and Najat Makki from Emirates are among the famous artists of this approach. The features of this trans-modern art are: creating space of Islamic motifs by installation art as a new sacred public space open to everyone, digitalisation of Islamic art in project mapping, and creating space of light and shadow (Moridi, 2023).

Erol Akyavaş, Karbala, 1983
Source: Galeri Nev Istanbul

The most recent discourse, Middle Easternism, is not a religious identity but a geopolitical and strategic concept. This type of art is post-modern or post-Islamic and focuses on critical themes on religion, gender issues, ideological relations between religion and policy, and disoriented identities such as art of the Muslim diaspora. Artists such as Abdulnasser Gharem from Saudi Arabia, Faig Ahmed from Azerbaijan, Shirin Neshat and Soodi Sharifi from Iran are few famous names to mention (Moridi, 2023).

Discursive Nation Branding Approaches

Contemporary Islamic art, which began in the 1960s, developed in the 1990s, and boomed after 2000, has experienced several discursive practices by nations and artists. From Orientalism to Middle Easternism, countries in the region have activated the potentials of contemporary art to attract tourists, improve investments and education, and create a new cultural identity and reputation using Islamic and regional concepts.

In this arena, two main practices are prominent. The first involves pro-Islamic artists using contemporary arts to draw global attention to valuable Islamic concepts, rituals, sights, landmarks, events, and other potentials of Islamic culture and lifestyle. The second involves artists critically speaking through their artworks on global issues in the Islamic world

"The Power of Words" by Mattar bin Lahej, UAE, 2022

and nations, including gender, political, social, environmental, and religious concerns.

In both ways, contemporary art draws attention to the themes and subjects it covers. It depends on how countries are hegemonising the issues through events and exhibitions. Some countries have had a more global and liberal approach, leading to the increase of their soft power, while others have practiced more fundamentalist and traditional approaches, decreasing their soft power in global indexes and their reputation.

By promoting contemporary Islamic art, nations can challenge stereotypes and misconceptions about Islam and its followers, fostering greater understanding and appreciation for the diverse and vibrant culture of the Islamic world. As the world becomes increasingly interconnected, the role of contemporary Islamic art in nation branding will only continue to grow in importance, shaping global perceptions and fostering cultural exchange for years to come.

Muslim nations must hold mega art events in the region, supporting young artists to create innovative arts inspired by Islam from their local and shared values. Touring the selected works and presenting them in famous world museums through intelligent curatorship, telling stories and casting images about shared rituals and values of Muslims enhances the soft power of the Islamic World and the branding of Muslims as a unified respected Ummah.

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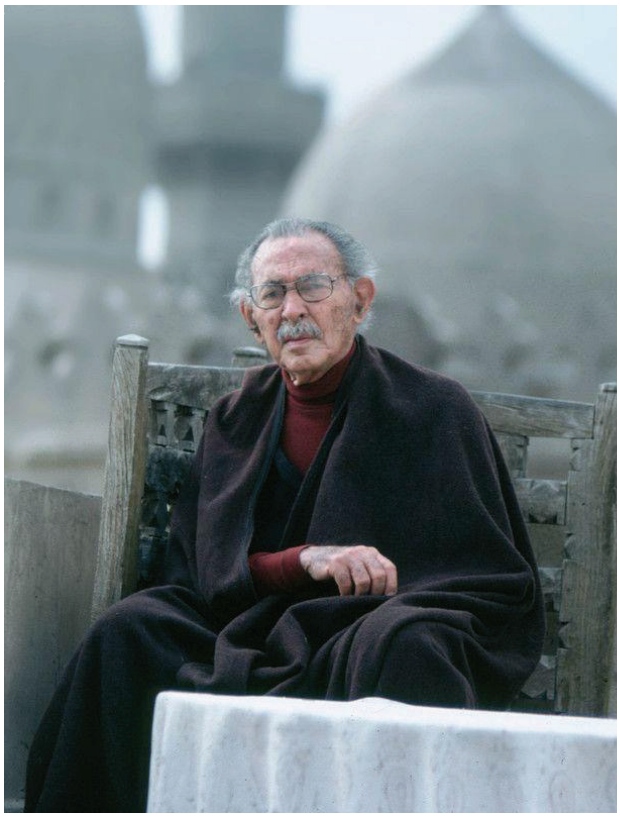
Architecture of Hassan Fathy: Reproducing Tradition in the Modern World



After centuries, we have come to a point in which the personality, tastes and preferences of the modern individual are passivised and the search for basic beauty is instrumentalised. In this process, which roughly started with the Enlightenment and became institutionalised with the modernisation, we witness a type of the individual detached from the social context and whose entire focus is on themselves in practice, while putting the individual-human at the centre in discourse. At this point, the main issue is how the modernisation process is. Sadettin Ökten refers to this issue in one of his writings as follows:

> "If you do not produce an object, that object comes to you from somewhere else. It either comes from repetition or imitation. But there is an intrinsic value behind what comes, which we cannot see, and you cannot know that value. As you use that object, that value transforms you, that is, first it transforms your behaviour and then the value judgement affecting your behaviour" (Ökten, 2014).

In essence, this is the problem that cultures, whose origin is not the same, cannot carry cultural products that they do not produce themselves. Seyyed Hossein Nasr states that the tension created in the minds and souls of Muslims by the confrontation between modernism and traditional Islam is directly reflected in the cities as chaos. Also, he refers to the responsibility of people who will be opinion leaders

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Abu Riche Mosque in Egypt

One of the mosques built in low-income areas by minimising the project cost and involving local people in the construction

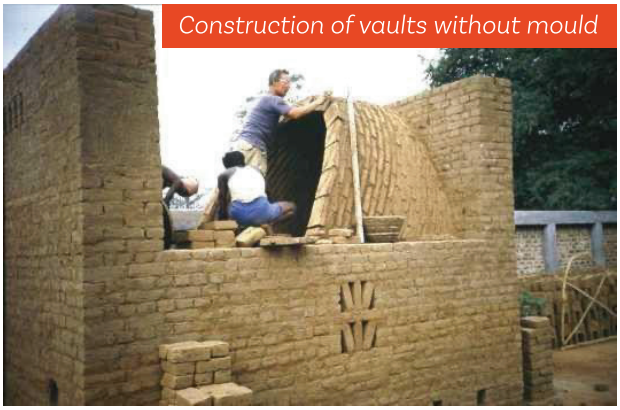
in the field of urban aesthetics and architecture and who have economic and social influence on the majority regarding the architectural and urban crises prevailing in the Islamic world (Nasr, 2009).

In general, modernisation, which represents a radical break from the traditional, refers to multifaceted processes of change and transformation. In this context, modernisation includes positivism, nationalism, capitalism, urbanisation, secularism, specialisation and many similar processes. It is a subject that requires expertise to fully comprehend the roots of introduced concepts and aesthetic judgements. When it comes to our cities; architects, artists, planners and policy-makers are the primary people who will design the aesthetic structures and make them applicable. When building cities and designing structures, proposing alternatives to the existing system alongside modern tools, while also being aware of their own value system, is undoubtedly something only a few architects can do.

In terms of asking the right questions to modern discourses and producing alternatives, Egypt appears as an exemplary country for such problems. With its civilisation in the early periods of history and the capital it has created with Islamisation, Egypt is a region that needs attention for its architecture, both in terms of its relationship with the idea of nation developed by modernism and its identity formed in the post-Ottoman colonial period. And in a such context, when modernism was particularly popular around the world, Hassan Fathy was an architect who went beyond the ordinary and showed that another form of architecture was also possible.

Architecture of Hassan Fathy

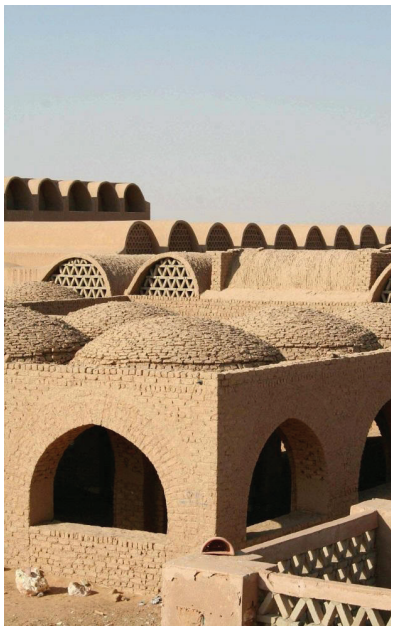
Hassan Fathy was born on 23 March 1900, in Alexandria as the child of an Egyptian Arab father and a Turkish mother. As a child of a wealthy family, Fathy wanted to study in the department of agriculture initially but later, he studied architecture at



Construction of vaults without mould

One of Hassan Fathy's personalised residences. When we look at the interior design, we can see that he includes traditional art elements and adapts them to contemporary use.

One of Hassan Fathy's personalised residences. The pergola he designed by imitating the symbol of Egypt, the palm tree.



New Bariz Village

While designing the village, Hassan Fathy visited the neighbouring villages of the old Kharga near the site and analysed the traditional building types. He adapted these structural details according to the current needs and designed the project.

a technical university in Cairo. After graduating in 1926, he worked as an engineer for a while and then was appointed as a lecturer. During this time, both his interest in nature and unplanned urbanisation he witnessed in the places he visited, as well as the inadequacy and helplessness of people in the face of modern means of production, motivated him to go beyond the common and to look for ways to re-establish an aesthetic environment that everyone could easily access.

Fathy's main focus is primarily on ordinary people with lack of adequate financial resources. Hence, he developed two architecturally important things accordingly: Inspired by Mamluk and Ottoman architecture, one is the latticed bay windows, double-storey halls and courtyards which provide natural air conditioning.

The other is the upper covering system, which Fathy designed with arches, vaults, and domes made of affordable and formless terracotta or stone. While doing so, he followed a different path by designing projects that respond to current needs by also including the end-users in production, and with completely local materials and craftsmanship.

Hassan Fathy, well-known in the international literature of "architecture for the poor", simultaneously produced many projects for upper-income levels and applied formal and structural details that he was seeking to these buildings. Thus, we can also see that his architectural pursuits were not only dependent on the economic conditions.

The architect, who argues that regardless of the project, the project cannot be thought of independently from its end-users and that the priority is the life there, states in one of his writings: "Those who would transform the countryside could do so by loving the fellahs [peasant] enough to live with them, settling in the countryside and dedicating their lives to working on the ground to improve rural conditions, not through regulations issued in Cairo" (Fathy, 2000).

Turgut Cansever, who relates the phrase "There are two pearls of wisdom that the last prophet added to the previous ones: the sublimity of Individuality and the love of Beauty" to the architectural context (Doğan, 2015), says the following on this subject: "The engineering of the 19th century changed the world, and this change occurred in the form of complete

New Bariz Village, 1967

The village consists of a wide site including market, workshops, brick factory, public spaces (coffee houses, mosques, libraries, etc.) as well as official buildings such as executive offices and residences.

destruction of culture. What an individual produces is shaped by the reflection of their thoughts and beliefs on what they do. In other words, there is an inseparable bond, a unity between form and belief. When you think that something produced by technology is a solution on its own, it is also a belief. Still, it also means that the existence of human beings, human cognition and reality are pushed aside, and a single factor alone determines human behaviour, which deifies technology. In this sense, technology is an entity that cannot look at the world holistically and creates one-dimensional products without understanding the world in its entirety. It fulfils the needs of the biological existence of human beings. But which of the social needs of human beings does it fulfil? For example, when you build a thirty-storey building and place a family there, it means that you dictate to those people where to live. Therefore, you remove those people's right to create, perceive, evaluate and change their environment" (Cansever, 2010). In modern architecture, the person for whom a space is designed is not specific and defined. In this context, we se that Hassan Fathy architecture follows an inductive method rather than a deductive attitude imposed by modernity and prioritises the preferences and needs of those who will use that space.

Furthermore, the principle of unity, namely tawheed, is the main point that Islamic architecture is not aligned with modernity. Hence, form and function should not be separated; preserving the unity between them is essential. Oleg Grabar, who raises the question of what makes monuments Islamic except for the way they are used, says: "The existence of the order of meaning in the evolution of Islamic architecture is neither in the forms used, nor in the functions, nor in the vocabulary used to describe form and function, but in the nature of the relationship

Andreoli House in Fayyum
It is one example where he successfully transformed a traditional form into a contemporary one.

The inner courtyard space of a personalised residence he designed, one of the examples with traditional decorative and structural elements.

> ***Hassan Fathy architecture follows an inductive method rather than a deductive attitude imposed by modernity and prioritises the preferences and needs of those who will use that space.***

between these three" (Leaman, 2012). The most basic approach in Hassan Fathy's architecture is to pave the way for ensuring the unity of these three elements in each of his projects rather than creating an architectural type. In addition, another topic related to the disruption of the principle of unity in modern architecture is the design process of the interior and exterior spaces, and gardens by other specialists. Fathy also seeks to ensure harmony in architecture in this regard and designs holistically.

Fathy encountered many difficulties throughout his life and travelled to Greece to work with Constantinos Doxiadis for a while. They worked together on housing projects in Pakistan and Iraq and a research project on "the city of the future". After this busy process, he worked on theorising his ideas. After returning to Egypt, the architect opened the doors of his house to anyone interested and became a source of inspiration for many other architects. As an architect known for his contemporary Islamic buildings and discourses, Abdel Wahid al-Waqil was also one of his students. Thus, he also served as a bridge in creating his own aesthetic. Fathy's most well-known project is the New Gourna Village Project, although it was not completed for a number of reasons.

The building is a source reflecting Fathy's thought, experience and spirit. With this project, he won the Aga Khan Award for Architecture in 1980 and the International Union of Architects gold medal in 1984. It inspired many local architectural traditions. The architect, who served on the board of directors of the Aga Khan Award for Architecture for a while, founded the International Institute for Appropriate Technology in Cairo in 1981. Having designed more than 170 projects, Fathy continued his honourable stance and ideas against modernism in many forms and died in Cairo in 1989.

According to Cansever, sacred art seeks beauty in simplicity. It emphasises the mortality of human beings and consists of cheerful modest design and ornamentation, the truth of stone and mortar and their relationship, and the usefulness and practicality of the work of art. Considering these points, it would not be an exaggeration to say that Hassan Fathy's architecture captured this truth.

The architect Abdul Wahid al-Waqil's phrase, "Tradition is the living spirit of the dead, and traditionalism is the dead spirit of the living", also reflects Hassan Fathy. He was an architect who responded to the needs of his time without resorting to traditionalism, and was able to pass down his tradition to younger generations.

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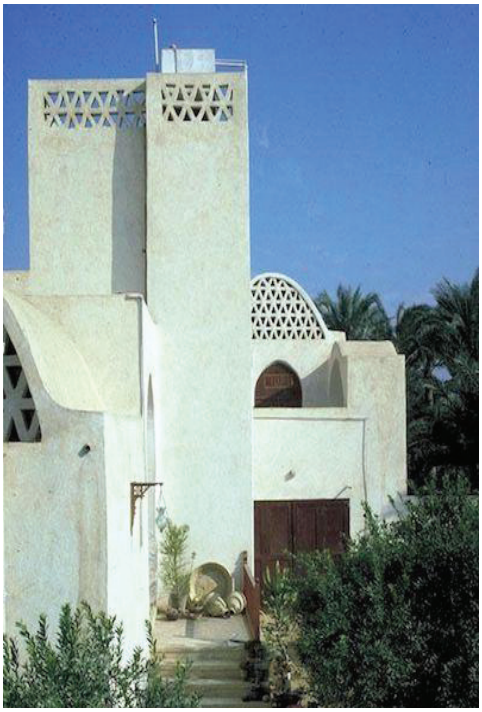


Akil Sami House

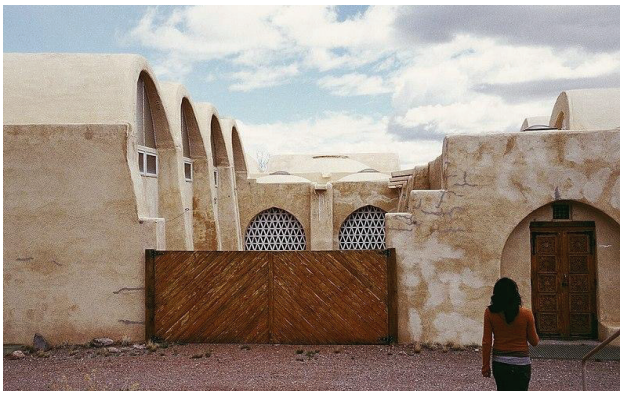
The principles common to Fathy's every project are to evaluate the settlement in harmony with the land and the landscape and to aestheticise the different heights required by the building, using traditional elements.

The Drawings of the New Gurna Village Project

The fact that he uses the principles of modern technical painting and presents them integrated with miniature techniques can seen as a projection of his effort to make tradition sustainable without traditionalism. Moreover, one of his main approaches is evaluating the interior and exterior spaces together and incorporating the existing life into his design.

The Drawing of İsmail Abderrazik's House

The use of miniature techniques to present his project hints at traditionalism. At the same time, in this expression, we also see that he not only evaluates the house as a structural shell but also designs the project through a holistic perspective aligned with its nature.



Dar al-Islam Mosque, New Mexico

Hassan Fathy designed projects worldwide. He prioritised using the structural details from the place of construction and creating spaces according to the world of the end-users.

New Gurna Village Mosque

His habit of designing his projects "in alliance with the place" rather than "despite the place" can be analysed even in his relationship with the landscape.

Islamic Art in Thai Mosques

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From the 13th century onwards, Islam has influenced Southeast Asia for seven hundred years through many Arab, Malay, Indian, Persian, Iranian, Indonesian and Chinese Muslims. The official religion of Thailand is Theravada Buddhism, a branch of Buddhism. According to a survey conducted by the National Statistical Office of Thailand in 2018, 93.5% of the population in Thailand is Buddhist. The proportion of Muslims is 5.4%, Christians 1.1% and Hindus, Sikhs, other religions and non-religious people less than 0.1% (Avcı, 2011). Islam, which is the second religion in Thailand, has spread in the region with the trade of Muslims. According to the latest official records, there are 5,680,000 Muslims and 3898 mosques in Thailand (The Central Islamic Council of Thailand, 2017). These mosques are classified as southern, central, northern or north-eastern in Thailand. The historical background and artistic and cultural characteristics of Muslims in all four regions of Thailand are different. This study will discuss the architectural understanding of the mosques of Muslims living in central Thailand.

It is necessary to mention how Islam reached Southeast Asia and Thailand briefly. According to sources, Muslims came to Southeast Asia in the seventh century after the Hijrah. Trade relations, intermarriage and the effectiveness of preaching (tabligh) activities played an important role in the rapid spread of Islam in this region (Waehama, 1967, p. 106). In Thailand, bordered by China, India and Malaysia, Islam spread rapidly under the influence of Indian, Arab and Turkish traders (Gilquin, 2005). Muslims living in Thailand consist of Arab-Iranian, Malay, Indo-Pakistani-Bangladeshi, Javanese, Cham (Cambodian) and Chinese origin (Jitmout, 1988).

After the southern region, the central region of Thailand has the largest Muslim population in the country and is home to Muslims of Arab, Iranian, Malay and Cham origin. While those of Arab origin date back to the Ayutthaya period and live in Phra Nakhon Si Ayutthaya province and the central of Bangkok, those of Malay origin were brought here as captives during the early Ratanakosin period. Muslims of Malay origin settled along the main canals in Bangkok and the cities surrounding Bangkok. Muslims of Cham origin were Indian traders who were made dependent on states such as Britain, the Netherlands and France. In the 19th century, they came to

* All the images used in the article belong to the author's personal archive.

Tonson Masjid, in its current state

Kudi Charoenphat

Siam and have continued living in the commercial centres of Bangkok.

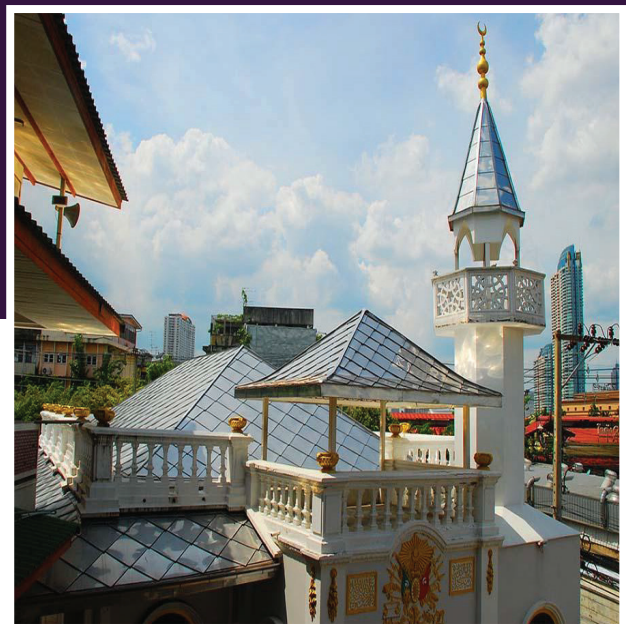
Today, the central region of Thailand consists of Muslim communities living in the provinces of Phra Nakhon Si Ayutthaya, Nonthaburi, Pathum Thani, the eastern part of the central region and Phetchaburi. There are 515 mosques in 26 provinces in the central region of Thailand. There is a mosque in every city. Bangkok, the capital, political and economic centre of the country, has the highest number of mosques in the region, with 183 mosques (The Central Islamic Council of Thailand, 2017). The mosques in Bangkok have unique architectural structures and ornaments because of the influence of local factors brought by the city. Tonson Masjid, the oldest mosque in Bangkok, is located in today's Thonburi district, formerly the outpost and international trade centre of the Ayutthaya Kingdom. Located on the edge of the canal of Bangkok Yai, Gudi Bangkok Yai, also known as Gudi Yai for short, was later known as Tonson Masjid, meaning Cypress Mosque, since cypress trees were planted on the sides of the mosque (Chuenpakdee, 2001, p. 168). The first structure of Tonson Masjid resembled a simple wooden structure in the Thai tradition, and the structures called guti where Buddhist monks stayed. Since 2009, the final appearance of Tonson Masjid has been preserved, and only various interventions and added decorations have given it a new look. This new look has been inspired by other Islamic countries' aesthetics, especially Egypt.[1] The ladies' quarters of the mosque are quite simple, but there is a beautiful engraved wooden plaque on the qibla wall, and the ceiling is decorated with geometric patterns.

Kudi Charoenphat, the second most important mosque in the region, was built between 1785 and 1786 by Shaykh al-Islam Aka Yi. The interior of the mosque, built by Thai Shiites in Bangkok, is quite ornate. While Iranian and Turkish tiles are dominant, the mosque also has rumi motifs, hatayi and other stylised flower motifs. There are various writings between these motifs. The beautiful names of Allah, such as "al-Qabidh, al-Basit, al-Waliyy", are seen on the body of four square columns surrounding the central court.

The Bang Uthit Mosque was repaired in 2014 with the financial support of the Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (TİKA) (Petwattana, 2017, pp. 15-20), during which the interior of the mosque was restored entirely according to the Turkish style. Prior to the repair, the oval pediment of the portal had a colourful, embossed coat of arms of the Ottoman Empire motif, and it did not include only the tughra (insignia), epitaph and Nişan-ı İftihar (Order of Glory). On both sides of the coat of arms are epitaphs in dark blue rectangular form, with the 18th verse of Surah al-Jinn. The epitaph on the left side reads, "The places of worship are only for Allah", and the epitaph on the right reads, "So, do not invoke anyone besides Allah". After the restoration by the Turkish

1 This mihrab, the minbar and the wrought-iron modelled on the Kiswah patterns were designed by Wirat Phumalee, a member of Tonson Masjid and a graduate of Mecca. He also restored the plaque depicting the holy place. See also: Sorayut Chuenpakdee, Ed., Muslim Masyid Tonson Kab Banpachon Sam Yuk Samai (Muslims of Tonson Mosque and Their Three-Generation Ancestors), Bangkok, Jirarat Kanpim, 2001, pp. 151-152.

Roof and minaret of Bang Uthit Masjid



The general appearance of the Guwatil Islam Masjid

Cooperation and Coordination Agency (TİKA), some of the basic structural elements of the building were replaced with gilded ornaments in the classical Ottoman style. The synthesis of the Muslim migrants in the region with the Thai society is intended to be demonstrated through these three mosques.

Located in central Thailand, the Guwatil Islam Mosque is built on the banks of the Choa Phraya River. The mosque is a masonry with a rectangular plan close to the square and a hip roof. The colour scheme of the building is green and white. In the east of the mosque is a portal, a fountain in the northeast and a minaret in the north. Additionally, a rowboat pier is visible on the northeast side of the structure, along the riverbank.

Krue Se Mosque, located in the southern region of Thailand and considered the first mosque built with Middle Eastern architecture in Patani, was reopened for worship in 2005 after undergoing some damage. Because of the effects of these damages and especially the destruction that followed wars, it becomes difficult to provide a clear description of the mosque's original appearance. The interior of the mosque, with a wooden ceiling, is adorned with motifs such as star polygons and flowers, while ventilation openings are embellished with geometric patterns. Near the mosque, which was not built as a complex, is the Barahom Tomb. This tomb belongs to King Inthira, the first king of the Patani Kingdom to accept Islam, and the Patani sultan and his wife, who was called Sultan Ismail (1500-1530) after he reverted to Islam.

The Mosque of the Foundation of Islamic Center of Thailand (FICT), located in Bangkok, was built as a centre for religious activities, as an association for the education of young Muslims and also as a foundation for those in need. The interior of the mosque

General view of Krue Se Masjid

Exterior view of the Mosque of the Foundation of Islamic Centre of Thailand

has a hexagonal plan and bears the influence of the modern architectural tradition. There are few ornaments in the building, and the echoes of Islamic architecture can only be seen in the pointed arch and the application of Arabic calligraphy.

One of the important mosques in the southern region is the Nakhon Si Thammarat Central Mosque. The mosque was built to be the central mosque of Nakhon Si Thammarat and the office of the Nakhon Si Thammarat Islamic Council. The building's upper covering is a flat roof with a polygonal central section containing five domes. The main dome is the largest in scale, and its tip protrudes from the dome's surface, creating pointed ends that form star points. These star tips merge at the end by forming pointed corners and have crescent and star motifs at the junction points.

Hidayatul Islam Mosque, the first mosque of Chinese Muslims, is located in the northern region of Thailand. This mosque, called the Mosque of the House of Islam Ho, was rebuilt in 1966 due to the increased jama'ah (congregation). Hidayatul Islam Mosque is a two-storey reinforced concrete building with a white-painted, rectangular plan and a pitched roof. There is a wheelchair ramp south of the building and an entrance with three round arches and columns on the east side. Above the entrance is a wooden plaque with the epitaph "qīng zhēn sì" (清真寺), meaning a pure and proper place in Chinese. Access to the mosque is through through a three-step marble staircase. The name of the mosque is written in Arabic, Thai and Chinese on a wooden plate on the door.

Jannatul Firdaus Masjid, the first known mosque in northeast Thailand (Munlanithi Pue Kan Sueksa Lae Pattana Muslim Esan, 2016, p. 38), is today a square, flat-roofed and two-storey building. The lower parts of the building's exterior walls are covered with green tiles. Although Muslims have come to the northeastern region of Thailand in recent years, local people have been in contact with Muslim communities for a long time because many Thais there worked in Saudi Arabia many years ago.

In conclusion, these buildings show that Muslims have adapted to the lifestyle of Thai society without losing their own beliefs and culture. Muslims living in Thailand have been embraced by Thai society thanks to the buildings they have built and have been accepted as members of the society.

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General view of Glang Nakhon Si Thammara Masjid

The eastern front of Hidayatul Islam Mosque

General view of Jannatul Firdaus Masjid

Inventing Tradition and Reviving Architecture in New Mardin

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There is no doubt that the practice of architecture is as old as human history. In this respect, architecture can be considered the concrete form of the art and space production activities of civilisations in history, carried into the future. Hence, it is not easy to understand, analyse and evaluate architecture shaped by geography, materials, social structure, life practices, beliefs and many other elements. Architectural historians sometimes read architecture through states and civilisations (such as Byzantine Architecture and Islamic Architecture), sometimes through geography (such as Middle Eastern Architecture and European Architecture), and sometimes by dividing it into movements and eras (Gothic, Renaissance, Baroque, etc.). Regardless of the title, they evaluate by distinguishing and classifying the standardised and similar spatial elements through the inventories of the buildings they examine. What makes examination and evaluation possible is essentially the "spirit of standards" that the buildings communicate and create through repetitive forms. Only in this way can architectural historians arrive at standard judgements and interpretations of architecture: Flying buttresses point to the Middle Ages, planimetric designs to the Renaissance, curvilinear styles to the Baroque, and geometric ornaments to Islamic architecture. These analyses, which are consistent and correct up to a point, can be accepted as valid until the post-industrial period when the limits in construction methods were greatly exceeded and reviving elements gained momentum. In this article, I attempt to read the Artuqid revivalist works constructed in Mardin in the last twenty years or so in the light of the concept of the invention of tradition through the dichotomies (old-new, interior-exterior, time-space, etc.) brought about by the age.

In contrast to the relatively static, standard, stereotyped forms of pre-industrial architecture, the rapidly changing spirit of the post-industrial period brings an eclectic and stimulating understanding of architecture. In the works of this period, architectural elements do not address the end-user from a single world; on the contrary, each element seems to be the work of its own era in its own world and brought together unconsciously. This way of producing space is quite different from the architectural form that civilisations created in a period of history and repeated for centuries by resembling classical forms. It may look traditional but introduces a new

Mardin Yenişehir (Murat Çağlayan Archive)

model that refers to different traditions, eras, forms and construction standards. In the post-industrial period, it is common to see elements of medieval Gothic architecture in skyscraper structures[1] or to adapt a temple plan to a parliament building.[2] This is the period when architects can make selective and reviving designs according to the preferences of the end-users without any material, structural or technical limitations, thus, far from being standardised. With the misconception that it carries freedom and innovation, this period actually brings along many dualities: Old and new, interior and exterior, time and space. The old is presented renewed; the new is intended to be displayed like the old, so the distinction between what is old and what is new becomes increasingly blurred. The inside is not reflected on the outside, time is independent of space, and the definition of tradition has become ambiguous.

Spatial/historical elements, many of which are produced based on symbols, rituals or practices, can be called traditional. However, in the field of Turkish urbanisation and architectural practice in the last century, what tradition refers to, what it contains, and how it can be traditional are other problems. It is possible to find the old-new binary in the architectural practices of many Anatolian cities. However, this binary has sharply divided some, such as Mardin. This dichotomy is so visible in Mardin that it is possible to divide it into two spatial planes, Old Mardin and New Mardin.

I am aware of the stone hillside houses with rooftop terraces overlooking the Mesopotamian plain that come to mind when one thinks of Mardin. A pair of eyes scrutinising this image realises that Old Mardin is essentially a medieval Islamic city. The city owes its landscape character (albeit heavily influenced by the multi-layered Assyrian culture) to the rapid Arab migration to the region following the Islamic conquests[3] and the constant construction activities that took place in the following centuries.[4] During this period, the urban landscape of Mardin, was dominated by yellow limestone (known as Mardin stone by the society) as a local material, as well as single-storey, vaulted and dome-covered buildings, externally fluted domes, square epitaphs written in *maqili* calligraphy, spolia including columns and stones, geometric adornments, rumi and palmettes. All these qualities describe Old Mardin. However, the

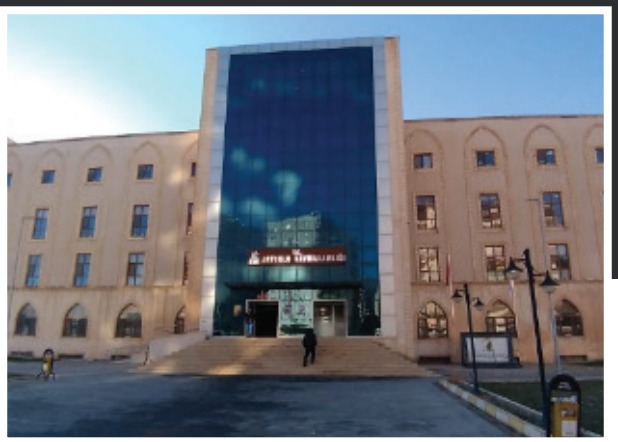
1 The Chicago Tribune Tower, constructed in the 20th century in America, can be given as an example, along with the Woolworth Building.

2 Thomas Jefferson: The Virginia State Capitol (1785-1789) was chosen as a model for the Maison Carrée in Nîmes, France.

3 For detailed information on migrations, see Belazuri.

4 Abdusselam Efendi's treatise is the first comprehensive publication on the history of Mardin. He mentioned the importance of the castle for Mardin's urban history and stated that Nasrüddevle (1011-1061), one of the Marwanid rulers, built many buildings on the southern slopes of Mardin Castle during his reign (Abdüssselam Efendi, 2007). In addition, many steps towards urbanisation on the southern slopes of the Mardin castle were taken during the Artuqid period. During this period, "the southern slopes of the castle, which constitute the urban centre of Mardin, were the scene of intensive public works and construction activities" (Dinç 2021, pp. 307-346).

Muftiate of Mardin (Left) and The District Governorship of Artuklu (Right) (Personal Archive)



New Mardin, constructed gradually since the 1980s and equipped with multi-storey reinforced concrete buildings where most of today's urban population resides, is far from this description.

Indeed, there are many concepts to describe the new Mardin: Land rent, high-density housing with storeys up to twenty-five, insufficient green areas, car parks and pavements. In addition, it can be argued that the main factor in the formation of duality in the New Mardin is the practice of referring to the past, which is noticeable in the present buildings and ongoing constructions for the last twenty years. The ancient city of Mardin, which existed in many periods of history, found its true identity, especially during the Artuqid period; therefore, the works constructed in the city in recent years clearly refer to Mardin's middle age. In New Mardin, Artuqid revivalist artefacts, many built in the last two decades, can be seen as soon as one passes Old Mardin. Some of the artefacts look like and/or refer to Artuqid artefacts with their teardrop motifs, fluted domes and pointed arches. The revivalist works, which find their main characteristics in mosques and public buildings in the city, are exact copies of Artuqid works in terms of elements such as minarets, façade designs and ornamentation or have partial similarities. The District Governorship of Artuklu and the Rectorate of Artuklu University, built in recent years, are notable for their symmetrical façade designs, exterior part covered with a layer of yellow limestone, the stone niches surrounding the façade and the pointed arch windows built in addition to them. Although Muftiate of Mardin is similar to Zinciriye Madrasa and Kasımiye Madrasa with its yellow limestone-clad façade or the triple window arrangement on the façade, it also contains orientalist references with its fluidly shaped parapet and the entrance door railings on both sides.

In mosque architecture, there are many examples where the minaret of the Great Mosque of Mardin or the minaret of the Şehidiye Mosque and Madrasah are reproduced exactly, or which draw attention with their similarity to the dome of the Great Mosque.

The Rectorate of Artuklu University

"The main factor in the formation of duality in the New Mardin is the practice of referring to the past, which is noticeable in the present buildings and ongoing constructions for the last twenty years."

Left to Right: Artuklu University Zeynel Abidin Erdem Mosque, Mardin Yedikardeş Mosque, Şakir Nuhoğlu Mosque, Fuat Yağcı Mosque (Anonymous)

Tümer defines the spatial design in Zeynel Abidin Erdem Mosque as architectural syncretism. Completed and opened for worship in 2020, the building, according to the author, carries examples of Ottoman and Artuqid architecture. The author interprets this situation as both "a reference to the profound history of the city" and "an indication of the deep specialisation and respect for this history" (Tümer, 2021, pp. 133-144).

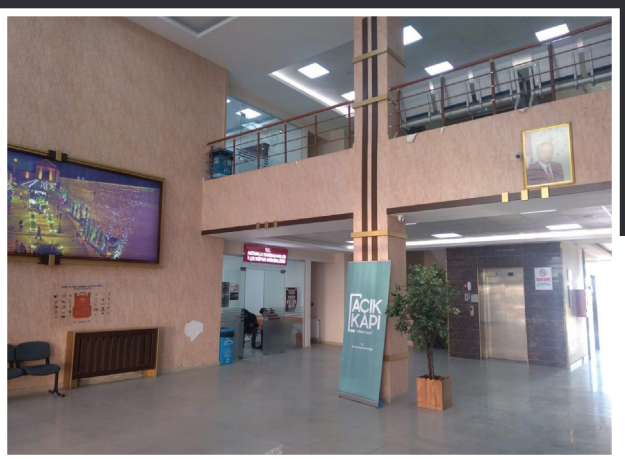
Artuqid revivalism can also be examined in the construction of apartment/residential areas. The spatial features reflected in the multi-storey buildings may include revivalist elements borrowed from different Artuqid buildings built in the past. Most of these buildings have exterior painting that resembles yellow limestone. Many complexes are equipped with pointed arch windows and palmettes on the façades.

Whether built in the Artuqid revivalist or Orientalist style, another dichotomy draws attention in recent buildings: In these buildings, the exterior is usually not reflected in the interior. The interior of mosques with classical Artuqid façades lack rumi and palmettes inlaid in stone or carved, as in Artuqid buildings; instead, they are adorned with two-dimensional calligraphy ornaments on the surface. Public and residential buildings, on the other hand, are designed in a rather ordinary, even modern and simple manner.

Although I partly agree with the architectural approach that approves referencing the past, my partial abstention is that space is not produced with buildings only. One of the issues that should be addressed regarding revivalist structures that refer to a certain period of history *is the invention of tradition*. Hobsbawm states that "Traditions that appear or claim to be old are often quite recent in origin and sometimes invented" (2006, p. 1) and defines invented traditions as "a set of practices, normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules and of a ritual or symbolic nature, which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behaviour by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past" (2006, p. 3). According to Hobsbawm, what is interesting is that "use of ancient materials to construct invented traditions of a novel type for quite novel purposes" (2006, p. 7). According to him, "A large store of such materials is accumulated in the past of any society, and an elaborate language of symbolic practice and communication is always available. Sometimes new traditions could be

A Building in Mardin Ravza Street (Personal Archive)

Interior of The District Governorship of Artuklu (Personal Archive, 2021)



readily grafted on old ones; sometimes they could be devised by borrowing from the well-supplied warehouses of official ritual, symbolism and moral exhortation" (2006, p. 7).

Architecture in New Mardin, which still points to the medieval style through contemporary buildings, has taken on a revivalist attitude as a quite new form of construction. This attitude becomes comprehensible in light of the concept of the invention of tradition. These buildings, far from being products of their own era, bring the dualities of new and old, interior and exterior. This situation confirms what Anthony Giddens says in *The Consequences of Modernity*. He states that in the pre-modern period, space and time were interlinked, but in modern times, with the invention of the mechanical clock, time was separated from space (Giddens, 1994, p. 23). Similarly, the new construction forms can be considered an example of space/place becoming independent from time.

> ***These buildings, far from being products of their own era, bring the dualities of new and old, interior and exterior.***

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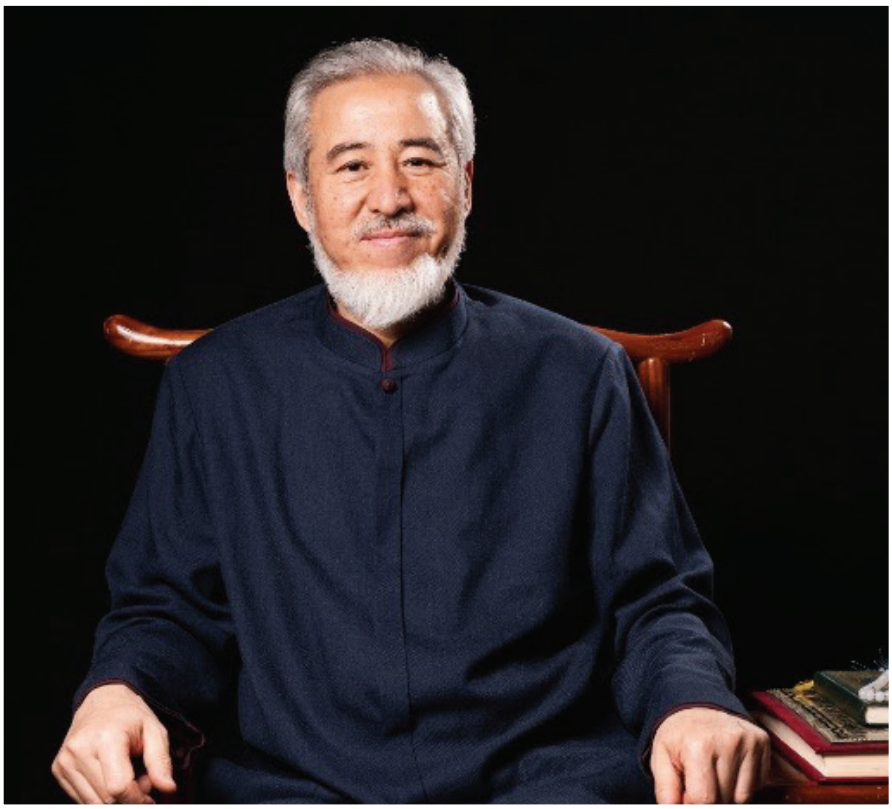
A Calligrapher in China: Haji Noor Deen

First of all, we would like to get to know you briefly. Could you tell us about yourself? How did your interest in the art of calligraphy begin?

In 1997, I became the first Chinese to be awarded the Arabic Calligrapher Certificate in Egypt. In 2000, I started the first regular and systematic Arabic calligraphy course at Zhengzhou Islamic College in China. In 2005, one of my works, "Ninety-Nine Names of Allah", was purchased by the British Museum to be exhibited in the Islamic Art Gallery. In 2017, I was honoured with an Arabic Calligraphy Certificate in Istanbul by master calligraphers Hasan Çelebi, Davut Bektaş, Ferhat Kurlu and Ahmet Koçak. I became the first Chinese calligrapher honoured by the Ottoman Calligraphy School.

Arabic calligraphy is one of the most distinguished calligraphic arts in the world. It is a treasure of art that harbours the cultural essence of Islam. I consider it my duty to popularise and promote this art. I am determined to produce my works in such a way that as many Muslim families as possible can own and display them in their own homes so that more people can recognise and appreciate this art. Inshallah, such works of art will become widespread and will be instrumental in the living of Islam. I dedicate myself, my hands and the mind that Allah Almighty has given me to use them diligently to promote and develop Islamic arts.



You have produced a new and original genre by synthesising Chinese calligraphy with traditional calligraphy. Does this genre have a special name? Moreover, what are its characteristics?

Yes, I have given this calligraphy a special name: Chinese Arabic calligraphy. The types of Arabic calligraphy in Chinese style are as follows: calligraphy of the Mus'haf (Qur'an) in Chinese style, calligraphy of copies of religious books, wide style calligraphy, portrayal calligraphy, brush style calligraphy, hand illustrated calligraphy, traditional Arabic calligraphy synthesised in Chinese tradition. There are other types, similar to the Musalsal style that can be produced on cloth, iron appliqué drawings, seal engravings, brick, wood, monument carvings, and embroideries, etc.

Traditional Arabic calligraphy is the most representative form of Islamic art in China. Although the individual characters may be of different sizes, the work must be balanced. It must be completed with a single purpose in order to have clarity, rhythm and a three-dimensional feeling. This type of art has its own spirituality.

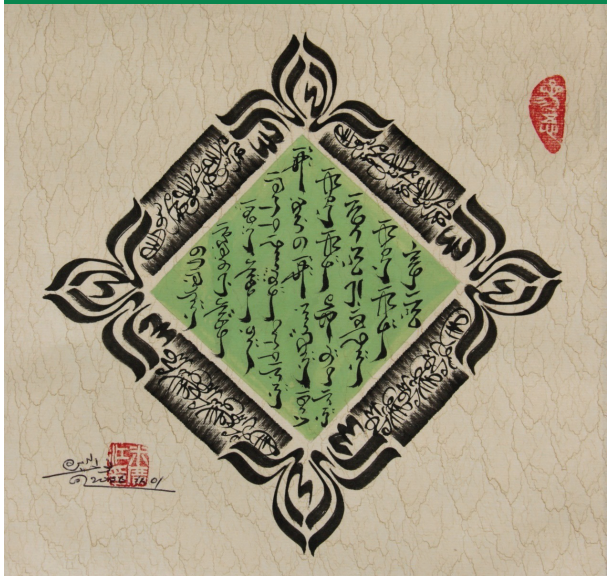
Are there any other practitioners of this art besides you, and is there an interest in this art? Will "Chinese calligraphy" become a tradition in the future?

Yes, there are many Chinese Muslims who know this kind of calligraphy. I have been teaching this calligraphy art among Chinese Muslims for 20 years. Students are very interested in this unique calligraphy art; I have trained nearly 150 calligraphers who have received ijazah (license) for many years. Now, I am teaching international students, and ten international students have also received ijazah.

This calligraphy is a traditional art in China, and now I am striving to popularise and develop its training. I have named this style of calligraphy for the first time and developed a complete teaching method. I have also prepared two books for learning this calligraphic art and developed a teaching method that should play a key role in preserving and developing the heritage of this calligraphy.

Chinese Muslims are very fond of traditional calligraphy. Although the vast majority of Chinese Muslims do not speak Arabic, they still cherish these works of calligraphy because of their love for Islamic art.

"Surah al-Fatiha and Kalima al-Tawheed", Haji Noor Deen, 2006



Music in a Cultural Dilemma: Algerian and Rai Music

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Most of the musical genres that exist in the world reflect their own history and ideology in general terms. For this reason, music genres generally have not developed independently of the historical and social context to which they belong. The change and development of the musical process of Algeria and Rai Music have been through a chain of events. If we analyse the historical panorama of Algeria's musical adventure and its sociological structure, we must start by shedding light on the events in the 19th and 20th centuries.

In Algeria, occupied by the French in the 1830s, people witnessed a difficult period in every sense. Like any other nation going through turbulent times, people have searched for communication channels that will motivate them in their struggles and convey their feelings and thoughts to others more effectively. One of these forms of expression that reflects the character of each nation is musical expression. Rai music, especially after the 1960s, has become a musical style through which people living in the slums have expressed their distress, passions and heroism.

Rai means idea and thought literally (Noor Al-Deen, 2005, p. 598). The homeland of Rai music is the city of Oran in Algeria, also known as Wahran. The city has a culturally multinational structure. When we analyse the inhabitants of the city, we can say that they are generally composed of French, Spanish, Arabs and Jews.

Origins of Rai Music

When we look at the basic elements that make up Rai music, we need to know two more types of music that underlie this music. In the early 20th century, two kinds of music were frequently listened to in Algeria: One of them is Andalusian music and the other is Malhun music. Andalusian music is a type of music that came to Algeria from Spain in the 19th century. Some of the main characteristics of this music are the preference for more colourful and major tones and the inclusion of lyrics from classical Arabic poetry (Morgan, 1999, p. 414). Malhun music, on the other hand, is a type of music composed of poems composed by Bedouins in spoken language. In Malhun music, pieces are also composed with lyrics containing odes, epics, religious topics, heroism, and love themes without aesthetic concerns, as in Andalusian

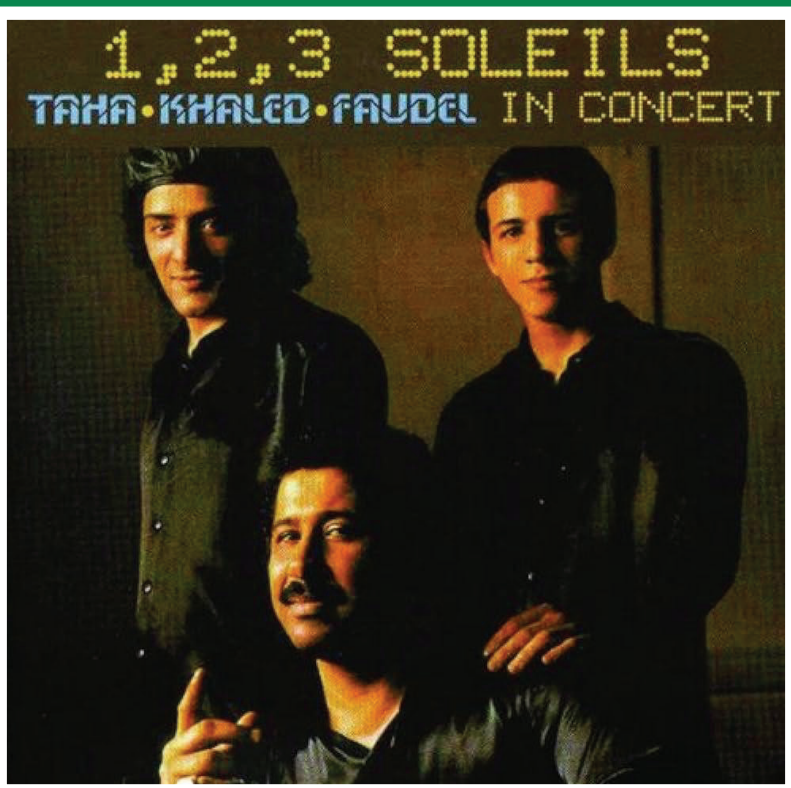
Cheb Khaled

music (Schade-Poulsen, 1999, p. 15). Another factor that distinguishes Andalusian music from Malhun music is that Andalusian music is listened to by the elite in Algerian society. Since it forms the base of Rai music, giving more information about Malhun music is crucial to understand the subject. The performers of Malhun music are called *Cheikh. Cheikh is an essential* and prestigious title in Arab culture. In some sources, its Turkish equivalent is translated as "wise man, sublime personality". The words spoken by these wise men are called "*rai*", and people go to Cheikhs for their opinions. In other words, they take their Rai. As mentioned above, Cheikhs have made almost every theme in daily life and language the subject of their songs. They performed their works at weddings, circumcision ceremonies and religious gatherings. During the French occupation, these wise men continued to perform their compositions by including political issues.

"Rai music, especially after the 1960s, has become a musical style through which people living in the slums have expressed their distress, passions and heroism."

Is Occupation Creating a New Style of Music?

Until 1950, the musical styles performed in Oran were mainly Andalusian, Malhun, Egyptian and French. With the arrival of the Americans in Algeria around 1942, Algerians were introduced to jazz and swing music. The people of Oran, who had been performing their music with gillal (a percussion instrument) and kasbah (a flute-like instrument) until then, became closely acquainted with instruments such as accordion, piano, guitar and violin, and started to integrate them into their music (Kelfaoui, 2001). This acquaintance was the beginning of Rai music. With the instrumental knowledge they acquired from the Americans, a piece of new music started to be performed in the city of Oran with a much more modern understanding of style and lyrics instead of making music with kasbah or gillal. Therefore, since it is the homeland of Rai music, Oran/Wahran is often cited as an example regarding the genre.



In the 1960s, we see trumpet, saxophone and electric guitar as the first examples of this music. Here, the electric guitar is a striking breaking point in transforming music from its traditional/acoustic dimension to an electronic one. In addition, even synthesisers started to be used instead of piano in search of a new sound in later periods.

Rai Music as Rhytym, Melody, Language and Subject

When we analyse the rhythmic structure of Rai music, which gained its musical character, especially at the end of the 1980s, we see that rhythm structures such as rock, punk, soul, reggae and bossa-nova are used. When we look at its melodic structure, we notice that elements regarding maqam (melody) continue to be used in the linear succession and in the chord progression; we generally observe the use of chord voicings commonly found in blues and partially in jazz music. In terms of language, it is performed combined with French and Arabic lyrics. When we analyse the lyrics in relation to their subject, we see that, unlike traditional Malhun music, the topics of pleasure, love and rebellion are more predominant. These topics expressed in the songs sometimes created serious crises and even caused the murder of many rai artists such as Cheb[1] Hasni and Lounes Matoub.

From Algeria to the Worldwide Music Chart / 1, 2, 3 Soleils

There have been some breaking points that carried Rai music to the worldwide music charts. Some of these are technological advancements and the increasing migration flows from Algeria to Europe. Rai music became more widespread, especially after the migration to France.

Cheb Khaled plays an important role here. In 1991, Cheb Khaled travelled to France and released his first album, Didi, which sold over 100,000 copies in France alone (Morgan, 1999). In 1996, he released the album, Sahra, which sold around 700,000 copies in France.

In 1998, with the offer of the Barclay company, Faudel and Rashid Taha gave a concert in Paris as the 1, 2, 3 Soleils group.[2] The concert, conducted by Hossam Ramzy, went down in world history as a concert where musicians from all over the world came

1 In Rai music, the male artist is called “cheb”, and the female artist is called “cheba”.

2 For the concert recording, see: https://bit.ly/3siR2VQ

together in orchestration and arrangement, and more than 50 musicians participated in the concert. After this concert, the recognition of Rai music has increased, and even reinterpreted examples have occurred all around the world. Worldwide, Sting did a joint project with Cheb Mami for the song Desert Rose. In Türkiye, artists such as Levent Yüksel and Süheyl-Behzat Uygur brothers have reinterpreted Rai music with Turkish lyrics.

Conclusion

Throughout history, every nation has struggled for its existence, and Algeria's struggle for independence is another example. Rai music was created during this struggle and became a source of motivation for people. It always defended the marginal in terms of its form but also expressed an impaired rebellion. However, today, with the dominance of fast music, just like fast food, the technical structure of Rai music has been increasingly restricted and seriously deformed. Therefore, Rai music is a subject that needs to be analysed in depth. This article is written from an introductory and partly analytical point of view, and it intends to explain a type of music performed in Muslim terrains and its formation process. With the hope of living with the unifying and encompassing power of music...

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A Mixed Form in Sufi Music: Afro-Arab Meshk Ensemble

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In Sufi music, meshk is a form of music performed directly beside the teacher to learn the compositions. In the Sufi music tradition, certain places where meshk is performed are called "meshkhane" ("hane" meaning house; house of meshk). However, it is also known that meshk is performed outside of meshkhanes. A meshk ensemble is analysed in this ethnographic study with data I collected through participant observation. Even though we can position this community musically in a different place from Sufi music, it can also be related to the realm of Sufism due to its grounds and motivations.

The places where the Afro-Arab Meshk Ensemble performs meshk are considered "meshk spheres" instead of the definition of meshk lodges in the literature. This difference is because these places do not have an organic relationship with meshk, and every place where the group is present and starts to make music suddenly turns into a meshk place. The place is suddenly transformed into a music space, gathering its own audience and the place of meshk is transformed into a music "sphere". In this sense, instead of space as an identifiable area with definite boundaries, the concept of "sphere" emerging as a result of the interaction is a more suitable concept for the meshk places of the Afro-Arab community. Meshk performers do not have a specific stage; moreover, they do not separate themselves from the audience. The group members form a small circle. The only sign that separates them from the audience is this circle. However, the circle is open to anyone who wants to join.

Due to the lack of a rigid structure in these meshk spheres, where they started quite flexibly, and the meshk conductor is open to everyone, meshk has become a haunt and various "networks" have been established. In the interviews with different performers, they expressed that the meshk sphere turned into a "friendly gathering", that the performers liked to listen to other performers, and that a "sphere", a sphere of "sincerity", emerged there for such reasons.

In addition to shared principles among performers due to their musician identities, interviews also indicate that the commonality of the group members through Sufi music is an essential element that develops the group culture. The instruments used by the band members are generally instruments from the Sufi music tradition. The *rebab,* known as the

Afro-Arab Meshk Ensemble, Konya 2022

Source: Ali Mohamed Farred

Mawlavi *saz,* percussion instruments such as *oud* and *ney,* significant instruments of Sufi music, as well as instruments such as *bendir, erbane, kudüm* and *halile* (cymbal) are used in meshk. All the performers have somehow been in places where Sufi music was taught, learned, and *meshk'd* (performed). Hence, their experience in Sufi music is a very decisive commonality for the group. In this sense, the meshks, which are a practice of the Sufi tradition, show that the musicians do not only make music but also have a specific relationship with this tradition.

Moreover, their relationship with this tradition is also related to their ethnic origin. The performers, who are Mauritanian migrants in Türkiye, have become a community to preserve the small group culture, and this communalisation has been realised based on Sufi culture. Therefore, meshk is a family practice into which they were born. What they have in common with other performers who are familiar with the Sufi tradition is that they see meshk as places where one "remembers Allah". Thus, it appears that Sufi inclination played a significant role in shaping the values of the Afro-Arab Meshk Ensemble. Dhikr, remembrance of Allah, "experiencing spirituality", and recalling the past stand out as the motivations that bring them together.

The repertoire of Afro-Arabic meshk consists entirely of hymns. The main conductor of the ensemble explains some of the qualities of the group, relating the main motivation for the group to come together to the Sufi dimension of the meshk. Described by the participants as a circle of sincerity in which Allah is remembered, the mashkis are also a form of worship for the leader. The ethnic origins of the meshk performers emphasise a cultural capital that led to the composition of the Afro-Arabic repertoire. The conductor, who played a pioneering role in establishing the group, explained the Afro-Arabic repertoire that comes from his own musical background in detail. Having made many visits to the Arab world, Performer A[1] has been to various parts of this geography at different times for long periods and engaged with the local music culture. The "Arab" part of the Afro-Arabic naming references the hymns learned in the local music culture, especially in Egypt. In this sense, the ethnic origins that constitute past experiences are seen as a visible link that goes beyond the discourse of "we make music".

The "Afro" used in the naming of the ensemble signifies the conductor's African roots. One participant explained that African inspiration has various effects on the repertoire: "African music is both rhythmic and

1 Interviewee, the conductor of the meshk ensemble.

energetic; that's why the word Africa is emphasised in the name. It is always rhythmic. There is always exhilaration, joy, and a kind of enjoyment".

The emphasis on ethnicity and the Sufi culture that carries the Afro-Arab community beyond being a music group and gives it a cultural meaning becomes visible through the Afro-Arab repertoire. The repertoire is essentially the cultural carrier of the group. With a vast repertoire, Afro-Arab adds one or two new hymns to the repertoire every week in addition to the fundamental hymns. However, the order in which the repertoire is performed usually remains the same. The meshk starts with *ney taqsim* (musical improvisation) in a Turkish style and continues with an Arabic hymn. Hymns from different regions continue with a common rhythm. Turkish pieces are recited and diversified according to the situation of the meshk environment. Usually, one or two Turkish pieces are performed. Closing is always done with a Mauritanian hymn. In all these series, the methods inherent in Sufi culture are followed or transformed in a way adapted to the group's own style. The most obvious example is before the taqsim is over, the soloist starts to duel with the *neyzen* (ney player) with their *bendir.* Such variations and the hymns included in the repertoire make the values of the group visible.

"The performers, who are Mauritanian migrants in Türkiye, have become a community to preserve the small group culture, and this communalisation has been realised based on Sufi culture."

Afro-Arabic style meshk has an order of its own, unlike classical Sufi music. The Afro-Arabic Meshk Ensemble's primary performers consist of seven people. In all meshks, there is at least one more performer who is added to the main group. Meshks are performed with the soloist Performer A, who is also the main conductor and directs the meshk group in various ways. Performer D[2] defines meshk spheres as "assemblies" and states that there is a procedure in these assemblies: "...There is always a chief of the assembly. The chief here is the Performer A", pointing out the main point about the organisation of the meshks. However, the directions by the chief/conductor are generally related to the "continuation", the smooth conduct of the meshk. The director, who is concerned with the progression of the repertoire, does not interfere with the way any musician plays music.

This is one of the most critical elements distinguishing Afro-Arab from other meshk ensembles and traditional Sufi music environments. This quality has also been an important factor in the preferences of group members to be in Afro-Arab. The fact that "no one interferes with anyone else", "no one is patronising", and "no notes are given", in other words, the fact that meshk is performed in a very flexible way highlights the order within the disorder of Afro-Arab meshk. The fact that the group is a "sincerity-based" organisation has ensured the continuation of the meshk order in a complimentary manner. Nevertheless, the only area where the meshk ensemble is intervened is the seating arrangement of the performers. Meshk is performed on the carpet because the performers desire to be with the audience/participants; there is no specific stage. However, the lights are partially switched on; the atmosphere is dim. I believe they prefer dim light to allow people to focus on the music rather than watching each other.

The absence of a boundary between the participants and the musicians is an important element in the atmosphere they wish to create. In addition, the performers do not sit scattered, but a circle is formed in the middle of the audience with all the performers side by side. The preference for this circle format over the usual concert format is also related to the fact that although there is a specific repertoire, the repertoire continues randomly in each meshk. The performers make the transitions

2 Interviewee, a member of the ensemble.

> ***It is significant for the performers that the participants are involved in the meshk and the music. The performers try to create an atmosphere of "fellowship" (mohabbat).***

between the pieces by following each other with small note changes. Thus, it makes it necessary for them to be face to face/eye to eye during meshk. Furthermore, instruments that have the potential for "duelling" with each other are situated opposite each other. This is why the *neyzen* (ney player) and the soloist always try to sit opposite each other. A person playing a percussion instrument is seated next to those playing wind or string instruments. I have observed that they try to balance the sound in this way.

In addition to environmental conditions, certain routines are involved in the meshk order. The first is that the performers start with an introduction to the meshk before starting the meshk. The soloist of the group, Performer A, makes introductions in Turkish, which are then translated into English by Performer B. In this speech, which can also be described as a welcome speech, all participants are welcomed, and it is expressed that it is vital to accompany the meshk.

It is emphasised that it is very important to participate in the repetitive parts of the hymns, and it is requested not to leave the meshk place until the end of the performance. Emphasising the importance of following the meshk, they highly value silence when the meshk starts, especially when only instruments are used. Almost the same speech is given in all meshks. In some meshks, the soloist asks if there are any newcomers, especially when he realises many new faces. When there are multiple new people, their participation is especially emphasised. The emphasis on involvement is related to creating a sense of unity among everyone present, conveying the idea of togetherness in this ensemble. The soloist interprets being together as "Capturing Tawhid (unification of Allah)". A phrase is always used at the end of the speech: "When I say we are all here together? Capture Tawhid".

This question of the soloist continues until harmony is reached, that is, until everyone voices the answer. The harmony as an answer to the question is an important factor in determining participation in the meshk. In this sense, the soloist has a guiding influence both on the meshk group and the participants. In meshks, sometimes, some instruments can drown out the sound of other instruments, and in such cases, the performer may break away from the meshk. Noticing such situations, the soloist encourages all performers to participate in the meshk. For example, the percussion instruments are silenced, and wind or string instrument performances are added in between.

It is significant for the performers that the participants are involved in the meshk and the music. The performers try to create an atmosphere of "fellowship" (mohabbat). During the music transitions, performers joke about the group to familiarise people with the group. An environment where there are no boundaries, both musically and socially, is created through hymns. Sometimes, they put instruments in the hands of regular participants who have now become familiar, or performers exchange their instruments. Yet they do not even need extra time for this. A space of exchange is provided both within the group and with the individuals "outside"/on the periphery. Amid all this communication, meshk itself continues. "Capture Tawhid" is the prominent motto of the group and a key expression to characterise this whole process of togetherness. In Afro-Arabic meshk, it is a fundamental concern for the group to establish unity and become "one" through music. In this sense, the formation of groups here seems to occur through the cultural exchange in the Afro-Arab meshk sphere. A new culture emerges through Afro-Arab music.[3]

The amusement of the lovers of Haqq is Tawhid. (Niyazi Misri)

3 For the concert recording of the Afro-Arab Meshk Ensemble, see: https://bit.ly/3QEgAWG

Mobilising the Arts: Artivists

Heba Zagout - Palestine - Painter

Heba Zagout, who aims to raise social awareness about Palestine and especially Jerusalem through her paintings, was born in the Bureij Refugee Camp in 1984. Zagout seeks to convey a message through her paintings by depicting the feelings and experiences of the Palestinian people, of which she is a part, as well as the cultural heritage of Palestine. However, despite the ethnic cleansing and genocide that has been going on in the country for almost a century, when we look at the artist's paintings, we see that vivid colours are used in the paintings, which reflect the hope and the belief in freedom of the Palestinian people despite what is happening there.

Israeli occupation forces martyred Zagout in October 2023.

Murad Subay - Yemen - Street Artist

Born and raised in Yemen, street artist Murad Subay has been interested in painting since the age of 14, thanks to the support of his family. Choosing street walls as his canvas, Subay sees art as a tool to help people express their social and political circumstances as well as their emotions. He started his first project, "Color The Walls of Your Street", in 2012 to protest the conflicts in Yemen and continues to carry out different projects to draw attention to the problems in Yemen.

Source: https://muradsubay.com/

Laila Ajjawi - Jordan - Graffiti Artist

Born and raised in the Irbid Refugee Camp, Laila Ajjawi was interested in painting and art from an early age. In 2013, she started her career as a graffiti artist by drawing her first painting on one of the camp walls. Ajjawi, who focuses on women's and refugee rights, believes that art plays a crucial role in social change and transformation. Hence, she tries to convey a positive message to society in all her works, especially in her murals.

Kelly Izdihar Crosby - USA - Painter

Kelly Crosby, an American Muslim who transforms art and the artworks she creates into a tool for social justice, is known for her works that emphasise identity politics. Crosby, herself a black woman, uses positive portrayal techniques to break down prejudices against women of colour and/or Muslim women and highlights the cultural and ethnic diversity of Islam in vibrant colours.

Inspired by Arab American activist Linda Sarsour's phrase "unapologetically Muslim", the artist emphasises Muslim American identity in this work.

Source: https://www.kellycrosbyart.com/

Hamza Namira - Egypt - Musician

Egyptian musician Hamza Namira, also known as the "Voice of the Revolution", has made a name for himself in the Arab world and the whole world with his album titled "Human", especially during the 2011 Egyptian revolution. Namira skilfully combines traditional Egyptian melodies and different genres with the social problems in the Middle East, especially in Egypt, and touches upon matters such as hope, alienation, oppression and change in his songs.

Interview with Palestinian Director Nawras Abu Saleh

We know you as the Palestinian director of notable films such as *Oversized Coat* and *AlQeeq*. But who is Nawras AbuSaleh in his own words? Could you introduce yourself briefly?

I'm a Palestinian filmmaker and want to represent my people to the world. My goal is to share their stories and show the real human side of their struggles. I know what it's like because I was born in a place under occupation, and it still affects my daily life despite my efforts to live a normal life.

As a director, the film industry has been a way for you to express the Palestinian cause. What do you think is the role of cinema in conveying socio-political issues?

In my filmmaking journey, I ensure that I speak for myself and my people, countering prevailing stereotypes perpetuated by the media. The Palestinian cause is a unique humanitarian issue, marked by seven decades of occupation. Within this history lie numerous untold stories that deserve to be shared, shedding light on our struggle. It's essential to challenge misconceptions, affirming our rightful claim to our land and rejecting the label of terrorists. We have been occupied, not the occupiers.

Through my films, I want to tell stories that help people understand us better. I want to show that we're not just numbers but regular people with dreams and a strong desire for our rights. I hope to break the stereotypes that have been around for

> ***Despite these political obstacles that may limit freedom of expression on the Palestinian issue, the real power lies with the people.***

too long and make it clear that we're not terrorists. We are the ones who have been occupied, not the other way around. By telling these stories, I hope to create empathy and contribute to the global conversation that can help bring a fair resolution to our long-standing problems.

We know that the Palestinian cause is not portrayed correctly in the mainstream cinema industry. Are you of the opinion that there is a space of freedom in Muslim societies where the Palestinian cause can be presented as it is?

To Muslims, Palestine holds a special place as a central and just cause. It receives continuous support in various forms, with media advocacy being significant. Muslim communities actively utilise social media platforms to raise awareness and rally for the Palestinian cause.

However, inside Palestine, challenges such as the limited freedom of production due to the circumstances of occupation and restrictions on movement at checkpoints persist. Similarly, outside Palestine, in film festivals or on platforms, there are instances where the Palestinian narrative faces obstacles in being shared or published. This is often due to political pressure and the influence of occupation lobbies that impede the telling of the Palestinian story. Yet, despite these political obstacles that may limit freedom of expression on the Palestinian issue, the real power lies with the people. They have the ability to create a conducive atmosphere for advancing the Palestinian cause within their own countries. The passion and dedication of individuals and communities, both online and offline, contribute to a global network of support for justice in Palestine. This collective effort underscores the enduring importance of the Palestinian struggle in the hearts and minds of Muslims all around the world.

Unlike the mainstream film industry, in the movie *Oversized Coat*, you narrate what really happened in Palestine, and in *AlQeeq*, you tell the story of a man who went on a hunger strike against Israel's unjust arrests. How did the films impact the way people think about what is happening in Palestine? In your opinion, how can the field of culture and arts shed light on the issues faced by Muslim societies?

Culture and art have a unique way of bringing together people from diverse backgrounds and interests, much like yourself. People love to watch stories and learn about different cultures, embracing the experiences that movies provide. Films, in particular, act as a universal language that crosses borders, allowing individuals to dive into stories and discover new worlds. Through cinema, audiences can connect with characters, cultures, and experiences they might not have encountered otherwise, fostering understanding and appreciation for the richness of human diversity. It's the power of storytelling and creativity that unites people in their shared desire for knowledge, empathy, and cultural exploration.

Oversized Coat portrayed the Palestinian narrative in its raw, unembellished form, devoid of any

superficial attempts or exaggeration. Remarkably, many Western audiences in particular, found themselves astounded, often questioning if the depicted events were indeed unfolding in Palestine. It was surprising to witness their limited awareness of the Palestinian issue, despite the consistent news coverage spanning over 70 years.

This underscores the power and significance of cinema in reaching fresh demographics and acquainting them with the Palestinian cause. It highlights how the film has the capacity to shed light on a complex issue and provide new perspectives to audiences who may have previously been uninformed or misinformed about the realities faced by Palestinians.

When you evaluate the situation of the cinema industry in Muslim societies, what would be your observations and suggestions?

As we can observe, purpose-driven production in Türkiye began relatively late after a significant absence. However, it's better to start late than never, considering that there have been very few attempts by Muslims to share our narrative with the world. For instance, the film *The Message* was created nearly 50 years ago. Muslim productions are insufficient, with most of them being domestically focused rather than aimed at international audiences. We have a new generation of filmmakers, but they are not being effectively utilised or guided in the right direction. Therefore, I strongly believe that we should actively engage in the world of cinema without delay. If we hesitate, the void we leave will be filled by others who may tell our stories, but not in our voices. This belief is encapsulated in my well-known quote: "Our films should be made by none other than ourselves".

I propose that we prioritise guiding our younger generations towards studying cinema and producing impactful films and purpose-driven videos. We should not underestimate the significance of this sector, as it profoundly influences our daily lives, shapes our future, and moulds our perspective of the world at large.

The "Others" of Cinema: Muslim Representation in Hollywood

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Dr., Cinema

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Films have the potential to play an active role in determining which subject will be chosen and which discourse will be highlighted, or how observations will be framed and associations be constructed. Hollywood, as one of the most important standard-bearers of Western cinema, has the ability to have a greater impact on the formation of popular culture through symbolic images than thousands of words. An image on the screen plays an essential role in the construction of identity, images and the formation of stereotypes. Although the problematic portrayal of Muslim identity in Hollywood cinema seems to be a result of the global terrorism of September 11 theoretically, we cannot ignore the fact that it stems from the historical discourse of the West. Even before 9/11, the representation of the Muslim image in American society through the orientalist framework of "us" and "them" was a result of the civilising mission of the West. The important point here is as follows: After the events of September 11, Muslims have been represented more as the "other", primarily through the lenses of security threats and political identities.

Has the Image of Muslims in Hollywood Transformed?

For centuries, discourses on the East have been narrated by the West through different portrayals. This centuries-long process of marginalisation manifests itself today as Americancentric and Eurocentric; thus, a specific culture continues to assert its own unique world all over the world. Hence, all kinds of actions and violence against Islam have been legitimised, while Islam and any notion regarding Islamic geography have been demonised. The perception of "Muslim equals fear" has been carried to another dimension with the attack on the Twin Towers in the United States of America on September 11, 2001; and the perception of "Muslim equals terrorist" has been legitimised by inscribing it into the public memory in different ways. The problem here is the problem of marginalising a religion by associating the negative thoughts and actions of individuals or groups, who share the same religious beliefs, with all believers of that religion. After the September 11 attacks, then-US President George W. Bush popularised the concept of Islamic terrorism in American society by using media outlets effectively. Especially after 2001, the

> ***Especially after 2001, the Hollywood film industry played an active role in the circulation of 'Islamist terror' in society.***

Hollywood film industry played an active role in the circulation of "Islamist terror" in society. The effort to establish a compulsory relationship between Islam and terrorism and the function of establishing a close connection with the religious identity of a terrorist has been carried out only on Islam, while other religious identities have not even been mentioned. Therefore, it is necessary to discuss the existence of a deliberate ideology in shaping the perception in question. This problematic perspective continues to gain legitimacy through "stereotypes". In this context, I would like to point out these stereotypes:

Stereotypes involve a categorisation process and are usually characterised by a negative, imprecise and superficial assessment of individuals, groups, nations or ideologies. Moreover, stereotypes are deeply embedded in people's minds and are self-perpetuating, which makes these stereotypes challenging to eliminate. Films can also significantly shape the perception of the viewer through their presence and ability to attract attention. The marginalisation of the concept of "Muslim" in Western societies has endured before and after 9/11. Stereotypes of Muslims as a threat to the social fabric have been created through perilous depictions. While representing Muslims as terrorists after September 11, Hollywood films such as Babel (2006), The Kingdom (2007) and Rendition (2007) have also portrayed them from a different perspective. Moving away from the concept of constructing a single image of evil as in the past, Hollywood has started to produce films that try to overcome this unbalanced attitude when it comes to Muslims. It is possible to say that this is progress because the constant reflection of the biased image in cinema damages the understanding of the represented society, its people, and culture to this day. The following conclusion can be drawn from this: With the September 11 attacks, the image of Muslims in the Western world has deteriorated further, but as the nature of the film world has changed in recent years, there has also been a change in the way films are shown, and films that portray diverse facets of Muslim life have been produced. Nevertheless, the number of such films remains quite limited.

Do "Pluralism" and "Inclusivity" Justify Cinema?

Islam is contextualised in terms of the clash of civilisations, especially by the Western media, and the religious and cultural differences are presented as real-life scenes by fictionalising them in a biased way. In 2021, the study titled *Missing & Maligned: The Reality of Muslims in Popular Global Movies* examined 200 films between 2017 and 2019 and focused on the representation of Muslim characters in these films. We can see it as a recent study with important findings in this context. The study included 100 films from the USA, 63 from the UK, 32 from Australia and 5 from New Zealand. When we look at the percentage of Muslim characters by country, Australia has the highest percentage of Muslim characters. Muslim characters are being erased from popular films. Of the 200 popular films in the study, 80% do not have a single narrative about Muslim characters. The erasure of Muslim characters from these popular narratives serves to eliminate any understanding of the role of this community off-screen and in public life. Muslim women are also absent in the most popular films. Only 15 out of 200 popular films feature Muslim women. From this point of view, it is possible to say that the portrayal of Muslim women fails to reflect their roles and contributions in real life. Again, the fact that the characters are from the Middle East and North Africa provides a narrow view of the racially and ethnically diverse reality of Islam. The audience associates Muslim identity with a specific racial and ethnic group. Lastly, as the analysis of these 200 films reveals, the fact that Muslim characters face stereotypical prejudices in storytelling. According to the study, which emphasises how rarely the Muslim character appears on the screen, especially without

Ramy, which premiered on Hulu, is one of the new generation series representing American Muslims on the big screen and receiving acclaim.

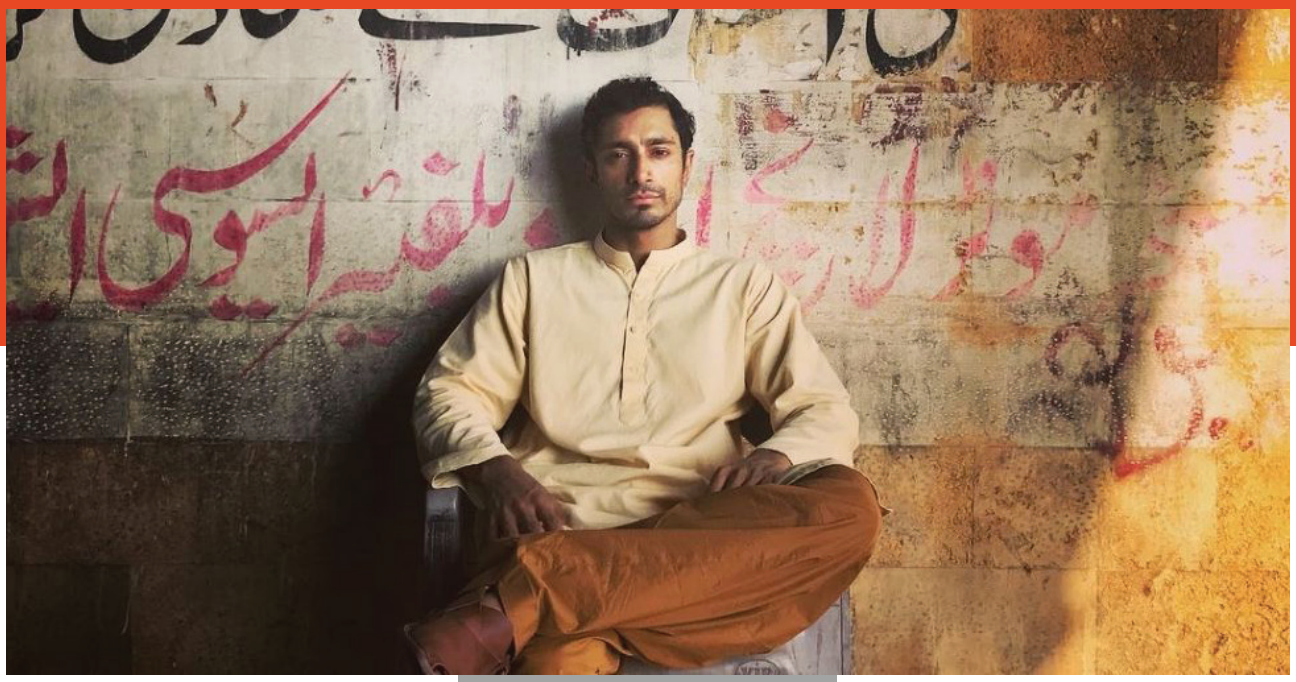
any dialogue, film content producers still have basic prejudices about Muslim societies. Therefore, it is possible to say that the lack of imagination of the character designers limits both the overall number of Muslim characters on screen and the roles they fill. In reality, Muslims constitute a vibrant community with global diversity. This narrow view of Muslims is a perspective that needs to change and grow, not only in the context of the silver screen but for individuals all over the world.

The search for pluralism is a concept that expresses the need for cultural integration and cohesion and points to a necessity that exists for both sides. What does fostering a pluralistic and inclusive understanding of the "other" in the West mean? In this context, if we go through the Muslim identity, it is possible to talk about a context in which Western culture is insensitive to the concepts of this culture and, over time, it has strengthened a vision of Islam that is synonymous with "Islamist extremism". This period we are living in is culturally, spiritually and intellectually poor. The concept of pluralism is a bit provocative in this regard because this project, which is a modern approach, is designed to deprive Muslims or other identities of their heritage. Other identities, attributed to a time in history that clearly does not exist, are treated and represented as if they were not a part of the conceptual universe of humanity. Hence, it is problematic because, although the modern idea of identity emphasises progress, it attempts to create a new identity by decontextualising identity. There is a monolithic, undifferentiated, intellectual protocol that exists all over the world and through which we are all condemned to look at ourselves. How can any civilisation or alternative opinion survive if it is not allowed to look at its own history, identity, art, and culture from its own perspective? From this point of view, the concepts of pluralism and inclusivity only serve this idea.

> ***Of the 200 popular films in the study, 80% do not have a single narrative about Muslim characters.***

I think pluralism requires more than what I have just described. It should be an endeavour that goes far beyond a simple procedure of not excommunicating each other; it should be an endeavour about

Riz Ahmed is the first Muslim actor to win an Oscar in the Best Actor category.



how they can relate to each other productively and how they do so. I would like to mention three basic normative claims here: The first is to recognise the other as oneself. That is, to acknowledge empathy in a realistic and meaningful way. We should take each other seriously and care for each other, recognising that everyone is human. Secondly, we should take differences in traditions seriously, engage with and criticise them on their own terms; and present the other identity in the best possible way while acknowledging an irrational attachment to a shared cultural life. The third is the common good. This notion is expressed in many sacred texts in different traditions and is something very relevant to human development. Individuals in all societies are interested in easing their own growth; therefore, the development of one person is also very much a part of the development of another person. In this context, one's pursuit of well-being is also someone else's pursuit of well-being. Accordingly, working on strategies and goals will bring about a more inclusive perspective on existing diversity within the community.

How can any civilisation or alternative opinion survive if it is not allowed to look at its own history, identity, art, and culture from its own perspective?

Farha: Testimony of the Nakba through Cinema

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Based on a true story, the Jordanian film *Farha* tells the story of what happened in Palestine through the eyes of a young girl named Farha in 1948, the year of the "Nakba" (Catastrophe), which marked the establishment of the State of Israel. On 14 May 1948, on the day when Israel declared itself a state and Zionist militants began looting villages in many parts of Palestine and forcibly evicting people from their homes, Farha, who was locked in a basement by her father for safety, watches the atrocities in her village from the tiny window of the basement. Thus, as a cinematographic stance, director Darin Sallam presents the story only from Farha's point of view, making the viewers witness all the events along with Farha.

Another point worth highlighting in connection with the theme of "bearing witness" is that although the film premiered at the Toronto Film Festival in 2021, it gained prominence when it was released on Netflix in 2022. The release of this film, which presents the events in Palestine in their purest form in contrast to the longstanding Israeli and Western media propaganda, on a platform like Netflix with millions of subscribers worldwide was deemed unacceptable, especially by Israeli politicians. In fact, former Minister of Finance Avigdor Liberman accused the film of engaging in anti-Israel propaganda and "creating a false pretence and inciting against Israeli soldiers" (The Times of Israel, 2022). In this regard, the film not only emphasises personal memories and the reality of individual and collective memory but also holds the power to critique and even challenge the media, especially the mass media, hegemony that has persisted for years.

The film unfolds by painting a vivid picture of Farha's traditional and simple life. Eager to pursue education in the city, she finds herself in a persistent struggle with her father, the village governor. However, the narrative skillfully avoids falling into the stereotypical traps of the "Middle Eastern, oppressive, Muslim father" or the predictable arcs of the "young woman fighting for her right to education" and the ensuing struggle for "freedom". Instead, it subtly introduces the looming presence of an approaching occupation. Farha loses her family, her home and her entire future, including her education in the city, on the day of the "catastrophe" created by the Israeli occupation forces, while her father allows and supports her

education. On the day of the "catastrophe" realised by the Israeli occupation forces, Farha, despite her father's support for her education, tragically loses her family, home, and the promising future that included education in the city. While the film maintains a fluid pace until the occupation forces enter the villages, and Farha is portrayed with a sense of "joy" reminiscent of her name, the storyline gradually slows down as the ominous threat of occupation becomes tangible. Locked in the basement, Farha's confinement marks a turning point where the rhythm of the film slows down, inviting the viewer to immerse themselves more deeply into her character. In this sense, the symbolic significance of the basement gains prominence. The dark and claustrophobic atmosphere surrounding Farha as she enters the basement space becomes a poignant reflection of the Gaza Strip, often referred to as an "open-air prison" due to blockades. The basement, reflecting a microcosm of Gaza, transforms into a suffocating space, where those who have witnessed or been forced to witness the atrocities in Palestine since 1948, are metaphorically suffocated alongside Farha. The stifling air not only slows down the unfolding moment but also integrates the viewer into Farha's most basic and humane actions, such as her frantic search for water or a suitable place for personal needs. The film artfully captures her anxiety

“The basement, reflecting a microcosm of Gaza, transforms into a suffocating space, where those who have witnessed or been forced to witness the atrocities in Palestine since 1948, are metaphorically suffocated alongside Farha.”

> ***Farha becomes more than a film with historical and emotional depth; it becomes a documentary, and even more, a vibrant testimony of the lived and ongoing Palestinian experience.***

about her father's whereabouts and the sorrow she experiences witnessing the harsh realities around her. In an interview with Time magazine, Sallam emphasised her intention not to reduce Farha to a mere "number" (Syed, 2022). Rather, she sought to depict her as a "normal" individual with dreams, much like anyone else. From this perspective, the film transcends being a mere portrayal of 1948 or the historical experience of a specific Palestinian child or young girl. It serves as a reflection on the dehumanisation of Palestinians reduced to statistics in the news, highlighting the systematic ethnic cleansing and genocide perpetrated by Israel against Palestinians. Thus, Farha becomes more than a film with historical and emotional depth; it becomes a documentary, and even more, a vibrant testimony of the lived and ongoing Palestinian experience.

Locked within the confines of the basement, Farha experiences a temporary detachment from the outside world. Her first encounter with external reality unfolds when gas bombs cast into the village enter the basement. The initial resonance of bomb blasts fills her ears, and soon, the entire basement is engulfed in gas, transforming the already claustrophobic space into a literal suffocating environment. The first thing Farha sees when she looks out of the small window of the basement after a long time is another Palestinian family who took refuge in Farha's house while fleeing from the occupation forces; and especially the Palestinian mother who had to give birth right in the garden of the house. As Farha tries to look at the garden of the house from under the door of a basement, through the small window and again through the gaps of the door, the viewer is left contemplating what will happen to this family after the birth of the baby and whether they will be able to hide from the soldiers; as the curiosity and tension increase, it harmonises with Farha's movements. However, this heightened activity is abruptly interrupted when Israeli militants position themselves in front of the house, apprehending the father who sought refuge there. Farha falls into a hushed silence, a witness to the atrocity unfolding before her eyes. The militants drag the other family members, including two children, from their hiding places in the house, leading them to the garden, where all are murdered except for the newborn baby. Yet, this massacre scene is not shown directly to the viewer, as the director wants to reflect "[Farha's] feelings on what she's witnessing" (Syed, 2022), not the war. While Farha witnesses the unfolding atrocities right in front of her eyes; the viewer, the other witness of the Nakba, only hears the echoing sound of gunfire. After a brief moment of the sounds of this atrocity, a deathly silence ensues, only to be broken by the cries of a newborn baby, abandoned to fate in the garden of the house… Then Farha's voice is heard accompanying the sounds of the baby, and then the baby, like "all the children in the neighbourhood who slept long ago" as mentioned in the lullaby Farha sings, also succumbs to silence.

At the end of the film, Farha, overwhelmed by the weight of all these events she witnessed, breaks the lock of the door with the gun she finds among the sacks in the basement and comes out after days of confinement. The first thing she does is to drink water from the fountain in the garden, as she could not find water and had to drink pickle juice during her confinement. This image reminds the audience of the reality of the water crisis in Gaza (Visualizing Palestine, 2021), where 97% of the water is contaminated and undrinkable due to the ongoing occupation and blockade. The scene continues with another symbolic image: Farha looks up at the sky after a long time and sees birds flying in the sky. Although the sky and birds are associated with freedom and hope in traditional storytelling, when Farha looks down, she sees the dead body of the

baby left behind, and the magic of this traditional narrative is shattered. The film concludes with Farha, exhausted by the trauma of all that has happened, walking on a long road that leads to the sun in a barren wasteland.

In the end credits, we discover that this is the narrative of a young girl named Radiyyeh, who, having fled to Syria, shared her story with someone else with the intention of preserving it for future generations. Director Darin Sallam also says in an interview that the "someone else" to whom this story was told was her own mother (Syed, 2022). However, *Farha* is not only the story of Sallam's mother's friend, but in fact, it is the story of all Palestinians who experienced the Nakba in 1948 and continue to experience the same *catastrophe* today. In contrast to the wide spectrum of emotions portrayed throughout the film, especially the overwhelming despair, Farha's emergence from the basement and her path towards the sun, even though it seems endless, evokes hope and freedom for viewers, supporters of Palestine, and most importantly for all Palestinians who have lived through these traumatic events or heard about them from past generations.

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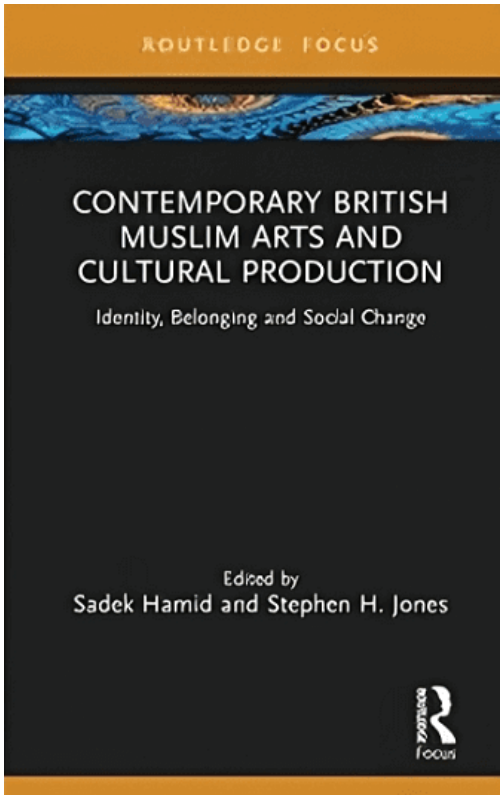
Existence through Art: Young British Muslims



Sadek Hamid and Stephen H. Jones. *Contemporary British Muslim Arts and Cultural Production.* Routledge, 2023.

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According to the latest statistics, the number of British Muslim citizens is approximately 3 million, indicating a steady increase. Therefore, the increase in the Muslim population naturally increases their need to express themselves and prove their presence in British society. Hence, British Muslims also continue to be present in the art world.

In this comprehensive study of British Muslim studies and cultural production, Sadek Hamid undertakes the ambitious task of uncovering all aspects of contemporary British Muslim arts. The book not only provides a panoramic view of the diverse artistic expressions within the community but also explores in depth the narratives, experiences, and challenges of the individuals who have shaped this cultural fabric.

In the book, Hamid and Jones argue that the concept of "co-production" has recently come into use. Considering this point, the study is a joint collaboration of Muslim artists, curators and researchers. In the work, which presents new forms of contemporary

> ***It also sheds light on crucial sociological issues such as integration, identity, self-expression and the intervention of Islam into the fabric of contemporary British society in a post-modern age of enduring and evolving calls for freedom and self-expression.***

British Muslim art, the experiences of Muslim artists in theatre, music and calligraphy are illustrated. Consisting of three main parts, the cultural production of British Muslim art, art in contemporary British Muslim culture, and the status of British Muslim art in the market are analysed. Thus, in addition to demonstrating the relationship between art, culture, and economy, it sheds light on historical and social problems that affect Muslim societies today, such as Eurocentrism, colonialism, and racism. In this context, the art movements affecting British Muslims in the global context are also examined.

Muslims Contribute to Global Culture

The book provides the reader with a quick but qualified narrative, touching on the most critical points of Islamic art and showing what makes it different from other arts. The book mentions that Islamic art mainly revolves around three axes: Calligraphy, geometry and Islamic patterns. In general, all drawings and manuscripts in Islamic art carry a meaning. Every line and every pattern refers to the spiritual aspect of Islam. It also refers to the basic principles of Islam: "Allah is beautiful and loves the beautiful", "Allah loves the flawless work", "There is no god but Allah".

The book is a quick and concise introduction to the history of Islamic art in general and the journey of contemporary Islamic art in particular. It also sheds light on crucial sociological issues such as integration, identity, self-expression and the intervention of Islam into the fabric of contemporary British society in a post-modern age of enduring and evolving calls for freedom and self-expression. The book also documents the rise of a new generation of Islamic art and relates it to the history of Islamic art.

The Changing Structure and Art Practices of the New British Muslim Generation

Despite the established presence of Muslims in the fabric of British society, for many years, they were not recognised as a genuine part of British society. Therefore, their attempts to join the art world were unsuccessful because they were inherently

Ibrahim Sincere, a young artist of Kenyan origin living in London, is one of the representatives of Grime music. His songs deal with social issues such as social justice, poverty and the search for prosperity. He sees his art as a part of his Muslim identity.

marginalised in British society, especially in the discriminatory world of Arts. However, Generation Z has made a significant contribution to changing this equation, and thanks to technology, they have considerably impacted the artistic texture of British society. They have made various contributions in all art forms, from theatre to poetry, painting to music. In this sense, the art of the young generation of British Muslims has had a global impact.

According to Hamid, British Muslims generally deal with issues of religion and belief as well as social and political transformations and emphasise the ethnic origins of the artists in the domain of art. Their general understanding of art has an Islamic character and reflects the diaspora spirit.

Hamid argues that the new British Muslim generation is a generation that not only expresses themselves and puts forward their ideas but also defends their families and their environment. They have succeeded not only in establishing dialogue among themselves but also in establishing communication and dialogue among British society. English, the common language among young Muslims all around the world, has been instrumental in establishing a bond with British society. This generation approaches everything critically and has an activism that has the ability to mobilise those around them. Thus, this situation of the new generation is also reflected in contemporary art. There is a desire to express their own identity in most of the works they create.

The second part deals with the traditional meaning of *fitra* (innate human nature) in Islam and its reflection on Islamic art, especially calligraphy. Calligraphy is the combination and harmony of asceticism and beauty. Then comes the role of fitra, which means creating and maintaining a balance between asceticism and beauty.

The book, which also examines Sufism and the post-Sufi period, finds that Sufism has gained great popularity among British Muslims of all ethnicities. In the past, Sufism was linked to a particular sect, with its own ceremonies performed within their own communities of the same race. Nevertheless, Sufism is witnessing a contemporary transformation with the youth of today. British Muslims are fulfilling their religious duties while embracing national and popular culture. Sufism continues to spread through conferences, lectures and individual events. Social media platforms, especially, play a significant role in increasing this popularisation. These movements enable the more unrestricted practice of Sufi applications without adhering to a specific method, creating a wide space for the experience of spiritual Islamic practices. All of these, in the post-Sufi order,

with the influence of social media, create new perspectives on how the future of Islam in England will take shape.

Religion, Grime Music and Hip-hop in Britain

The book analyses the close relationship between religion and music in European music through the perspective of Richard Wagner and recent research on religion in modern music.

Grime is a mainstream form of hip-hop music that demonstrates the relationship between the dominant role of religion and the deep religious commitments of the artists. The lyrics of grime music also convey religious knowledge through various religious words and concepts. This intersection between religion and music encourages a challenge to prevailing secularism, and simultaneously, it is an attempt to understand religion in everyday life.

Grime artists also use terminology in their lyrics that often goes beyond what formal education provides. Instead, this music reflects the common culture and also different worldviews of the society. For example, Sweet Shop Boys, a hip-hop group, attracts the South Asian diaspora audience with their rich and diverse lyrics, combining Islamic and Hindu experiences.

Overall, British grime and hip-hop provide a perspective on contemporary religious culture outside official or rigid narratives and offer essential clues for understanding the role of religion in everyday life.

Inclusion of British Muslim Art

This section of the book addresses issues surrounding the representation and identity of Muslims in the theatre. British Muslims face a significant handicap in this area because of the Western image of Muslims as "terrorists". The author describes how some artists have faced censorship or backlash when attempting to present alternative narratives that challenge dominant views and assumptions about Muslims in society. In addition, the influence of social class in Arts and the representation of working-class background are also addressed, and the author argues that this situation intersects with issues of misrepresentation within the context of Islamic narratives.

The book emphasises the importance of theatre as a place where innovative and diverse ideas are encouraged, and audiences are provided with opportunities to engage with and better understand the experiences of marginalised communities such as Muslims. It also draws attention to the importance of diverse perspectives and voices in theatre, noting that theatre serves as a critical platform for exploring multifaceted issues.

Art, Heritage and Islamic Manuscripts

The book discusses museums in Britain and the representation of Islamic heritage in them, as well as the consequences of the global protests against racism and brutality following the murder of George Floyd in June 2020, when the statue of Edward Colston was pulled down. The toppling of the slave trader's statue in Bristol emphasised the need for cultural diversity. In this sense, museums should also cater for underrepresented communities.

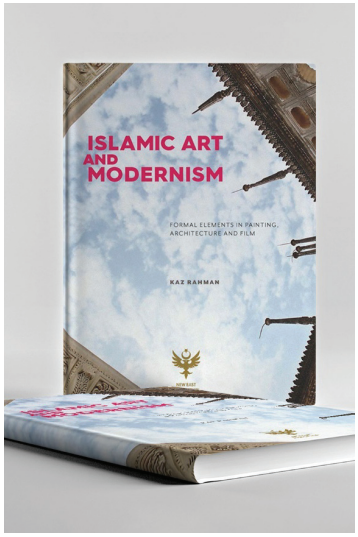
To address these concerns, Birmingham launched the "Decolonising, Not Diversifying" programme. Some institutions have sought to bring new perspectives to their collections. Nevertheless, the challenge of representing Muslim audiences in exhibitions remains, as responsible authorities need to take into account the great cultural diversity among Muslims, focus on subjects that evoke strong emotional responses, and recognise the role of faith in identity, culture and art.

The Future of British Muslim Arts

British Islamic art, which is in a state of dynamic and rapid change, is considered both a local and transnational system. A new generation of British Muslims have carefully preserved the traditions of Islamic art and at the same time blended it with contemporary art, making it a representation of their Muslim identity and thus helping to erase prejudices against Muslims.

BOOKS

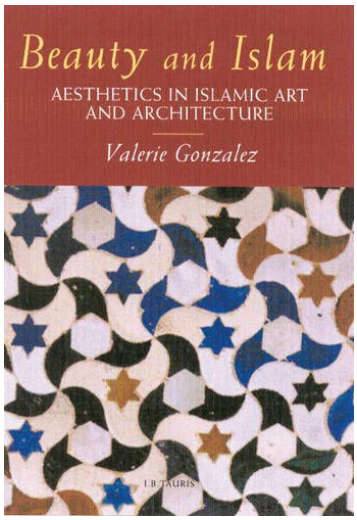
Recent Books on Contemporary Islamic Art



Islamic Art and Modernism: Formal Elements in Painting, Architecture and Film

Kaz Rahman, New East Foundation, 2017

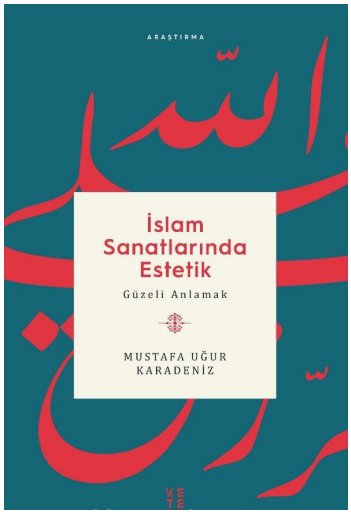
In this book, Canadian-born artist and filmmaker Kaz Rahman evaluates the relationship between Islam, art and modernism. He proves that contemporary art has not developed independently from Islamic art by choosing thematic zones instead of evaluating Islamic art in a particular chronological pattern. He also presents this relationship pattern in three thematic areas: painting, architecture and cinema. In the first part of the book, he describes the stages of modernist painting through fragmentation, abstraction, line and colour. In the second part of the book, he evaluates the shaping of modern architecture through space, form and light. According to Rahman, these two fields pave the way for forming "modernist film". The last five chapters cover the themes of landscape, water, flight, dreams and death. In these chapters, Rahman shows how Islamic art blends with these three fields and modernism with factual examples.



Beauty and Islam: Aesthetics in Islamic Art and Architecture

Valerie Gonzalez, Küre Publications, 2020

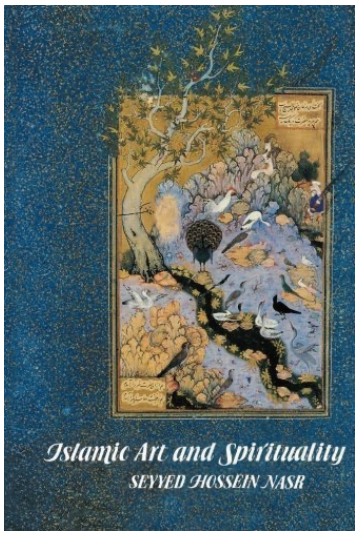
In this study, Gonzalez questions the relationship between Islamic civilisation and aesthetics. However, he emphasises that aesthetics is not only a form of thought that exists in the mind, but that this relationship can be seen with concrete examples. Drawing on many Islamic sources, the author analyses the aesthetic perspective of Ibn Hazm, Ibn Sina, Averroes and Ibn al-Haytham in the first part of the book. Expressing the difficulty of analysing textual and visual products aesthetically, the author states that Islamic sources shed light on the discipline of aesthetics. However, he emphasises that these sources alone will not be methodologically sufficient and for this reason he makes use of the phenomenological method. In this context, in the second chapter, the author, who is influenced by the parable of Solomon, points to the aesthetic dimension of knowledge with the 44th verse of Surat al-Naml. In the last two chapters, he analyses the Alhambra Palace, one of the products of Islamic aesthetics, and its inscriptions.



Aesthetic in Islamic Arts: Understanding Beauty

Mustafa Uğur Karadeniz, Ketebe Publishing House, 2021

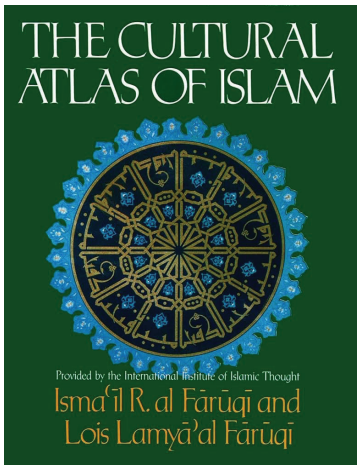
Karadeniz argues that the artist's relationship with art is not a form of struggle with God or the purpose of existence but a relationship with art through the concept of "responsibility". From this point of view, the author says that Islamic art is not individual-centred and that the artist as a subject is not at the forefront of the Islamic tradition. Drawing attention to the fact that the quality of "beauty", one of the basic concepts of aesthetics, is related to the attributes of Allah, the author thinks that beauty exists and cannot be invented. In this context, he reveals this relationship between Islam and aesthetics and criticises the limitations that the modern understanding limits art and the artist.



Islamic Art and Spirituality

Seyyed Hossein Nasr, State University of New York Press, 1987

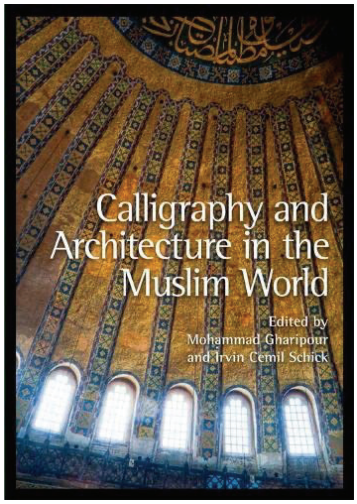
In this book, Nasr deals with Islamic art and spirituality, traditional Persian music, Persian culture and art. With this study, he aims to explain the relationship between Islamic art and God. Stating that the principle of Tawhid is the fundamental element of Islamic art, the author notes that Muslims value "emptiness", especially in artistic fields such as architecture. In contrast, he says that in Western architecture, works are based on "meaning" and "determination" rather than "emptiness". The book is divided into three parts. The first part explains the relationship between the nature of Islamic art and spiritualism. In this section, he also presents the contribution of Persian culture to art, which he considers to have important reflections on the spiritual aspect of Islamic art. In the second part, he explains literature; in the third part, music; and in the fourth part, plastic arts on metaphysical grounds.



The Cultural Atlas of Islam

Ismail R. al Faruqi & Lois Lamya al Faruqi, Macmillan, 1986

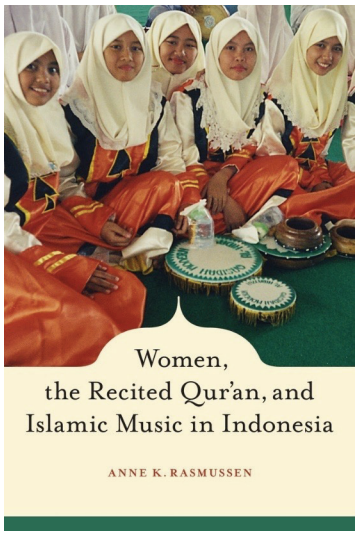
This canonical work in Islamic culture and art explains the roots of Islamic civilisation, the region it influenced, the legal and moral norms it has created, and the institutions built according to the Qur'an and Sunnah. The issue that the author prioritises in this book is to show that the relationship between Islam and art has a world of meaning reflected in these institutions. Because Islamic arts are considered to be Qur'anic arts by the author, this claim may surprise non-Muslims, and even some Muslims may disagree. The authors, who indicate that they follow a phenomenological method in doing so, aim first to visualise Islamic civilisation conceptually and then concretise the issue with institutions after this abstraction. For this reason, the last chapter describes many products of Islamic civilisation, from hadith to art. The general index and map index at the end of the book provide convenience for readers.



Calligraphy and Architecture in the Muslim World

Gharipour, M. (Ed.), Edinburgh University Press, 2019

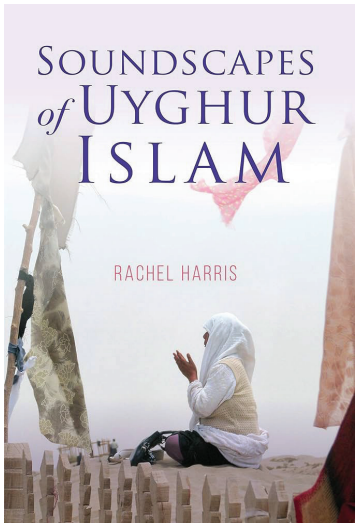
Edited by Gharipour, the book examines the relationship between Islamic architecture and calligraphy in North Africa, the Middle East and South Asia. It consists of six sections: places, style, content, patronage, artists, region and modernity. The first section of the book focuses on the places important for Muslim societies. The Naqsh-e Jahan Square or Imam Square in Isfahan, Alhambra Palace in Granada, Palatine Chapel in Palermo and Hajji Sinan's Tekke in Bosnia in relation to aesthetics and architecture, and the use of Islamic ornamentation and the meaning created by non-figurative calligraphic designs in these structures are examined. In addition, the semantic relationship between context and style in the inscriptions of mosques and religious buildings in the Ottoman, Qajar and Chinese periods is re-explored.



Women, the Recited Qur'an, and Islamic Music in Indonesia

Anne Rasmussen, University of California Press, 2010

Using ethnography, Rasmussen explores the impact of the "Reformation" era, which began at the end of Suharto's "New Order", on music production. She analyses the soundscapes reflecting Islam in the public sphere and the home. It focuses on various soundscapes, such as the call to prayer, radio, and technological tools such as television. The subject of this study is women living in Indonesia. As a result of interviews conducted in Jakarta, Java, Sumatra, Kalimantan and Sulawesi, the book analyses the profound relationship that Indonesian Muslim women have established between music and religion. In addition, although women are the main subjects of the book, it also examines the relationship of men and institutions with religion. The author points out that the influence of Arabic culture is dominant, especially in the reading of the Qur'an, which Indonesians reinterpret with their own musical aesthetics. Furthermore, this study also draws attention to the fact that religion and nationalism are closely linked.



Soundscapes of Uyghur Islam

Rachel Harris, Indiana University Press, 2020

Rachel Harris, who analyses the aesthetic dimension created by Uyghur women's recitation of the Qur'an, wants to draw attention to China's persecution of Uyghur Muslims and to explain that during this persecution, Uyghur Muslims can communicate with different Muslim societies through "voice". With this book, she emphasises that since many Muslim women all around the world cannot speak or read Arabic, the Qur'an must first be experienced as a sound, not as a text. Thus, she starts her study by analysing the Qur'an recitation rituals and dhikr of Uyghur women living in rural areas. Harris examined these rituals between 2009 and 2012. In her work, while investigating which reading style a Uyghur woman living in a rural area adopts when reading the Quran, she seeks to understand the impact of the cultural traumas imposed by China on the Uighurs. Thus, she shows us how religion spreads to other parts of the world through sound and how sound transforms Islamic movements.

The Poetry of the Orient: Iranian Cinema

Cihan Aktaş, İz Publishing, 2015

Starting with the statement, "I am not a filmmaker", Cihan Aktaş expresses that she decided to write a book centred around cinema with the curiosity of the question, "What should be the place of representation in the life of a person seeking to lead an Islamic lifestyle in a modern age?" She explains the answer to this question through the development process of Iranian cinema. During this process, she interviewed artists, directors, scholars, and officials from the Farabi Cinema Foundation. Based on these interviews, she divided his book into five sections. The first part covers Iranian cinema until the 1979 Revolution, while the second part discusses Iranian cinema after the revolution. Since this book encompasses Islamic religious life, it seeks answers to whether the concept of "religious cinema" can be addressed and how the ideals of Islam can be realised, considering the universality spread by cinema.

Gaza 2023: The Path to the Future of Palestine

İLKE Agenda organised a seminar titled "Gaza 2023: A Glimpse into the Future of Palestine", on October 26, 2023. The seminar was moderated by Assoc. Prof. Dr. Ebubekir Ceylan, and the speakers Dr. Azzam Tamimi, Assoc. Prof. Dr Abdallah Marouf and Sami Hamdi discussed the details of the Aqsa Flood and the future of the situation in Gaza.

See: https://bit.ly/3u14HkJ

Israel and the Western media are trying to portray Hamas as a terrorist organisation. Netanyahu is also quite careful to use the name of Hamas, together with other terrorist organisations like ISIS. Could you give us some information on Hamas? What is Hamas, and what are the main motivations behind this organisation?

Azzam Tamimi: It is not unusual for the West to designate groups or individuals they disagree with or dislike as terrorists. To answer the question of portrayal and the history of it, Hamas was born out of the Ikhwan al-Muslimin of Palestine (Muslim Brotherhood of Palestine). This happened at the same time that the Palestinian uprising known as the Intifada erupted in December 1987. Prior to this and probably since after the Nakba of 1948, during which the Muslim Brotherhood sent volunteers to fight for Palestine, the Muslim Brotherhood, generally and especially in Palestine, adopted the policy of focusing on education, social welfare, spiritual betterment, believing that the issue of Palestine was well beyond them and liberating Palestine is really a project for the Ummah and requires the return of the Ummah to its glorious days. Therefore, to pave the way for that, you needed to reform the individual, the family and society. But by 1987, the situation was getting so bad in the occupied territories, both the West Bank and Gaza, that the grassroots within the Brotherhood were pressuring the leadership to adopt a more proactive position and participate in the jihad because some other Palestinian factions had already been participating in the resistance, especially Islamic Jihad, which was created by a number of dissenting members

of the Muslim Brotherhood like Fathi Shaqaqi and Abd al-Aziz Awda. So, on the 9th of December 1987, the leadership of Hamas in Gaza met and decided to create the Islamic Resistance Movement, Hamas, which is the acronym for the Arabic name of the movement, Harakat al-Muqawamah al-Islamiyyah.

What Hamas stands for is what the entire Ummah stands for. Palestine is part of the Ummah. It was usurped by the invaders; a colonial outpost was illegitimately created on Earth. Its people were dispossessed and have been struggling for their rights; thus, Hamas wants to liberate the whole of Palestine. Because Hamas doesn't believe that Zionism has a right to be anywhere in the Muslim world, and it should be made clear here that in subsequent years, Hamas came up with a clearer agenda or information about itself. As we saw in the document released in 2017, Hamas clearly distinguishes between Zionism and Judaism, between the Zionists and the Jews. Now, it clearly says that we have no problem with the Jews. We have only a problem with those who invaded us, attacked us, and took our homes from us.

The recent Al-Aqsa Flood operation was a serious surprise to the Israeli people. And what are the main features of this recent attack of Hamas? Also, what is the point that distinguishes this operation from the previous operations?

Sami Hamdi: One week before this attack happened, Netanyahu was standing in the United Nations holding up a map that had erased Palestine completely from the region. And in the same breath, he was saying that normalisation of ties with Saudi Arabia would be the greatest deal since the end of the Cold War. Because they realise that normalisation with Saudi Arabia means the complete Arab abandonment of Palestine, they will know exactly what to do. Netanyahu was putting the picture of him sitting with Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan everywhere, taunting the Palestinians with this meeting that took place the first time the Turkish president had met with Benjamin Netanyahu. UAE's ambassador, Yousef Al Otaiba, was telling a think tank that they had failed to secure any concessions for the Palestinians and, that normalisation had failed in this regard, and that now it was for the other states that will normalise to talk about Palestinians. Then, Netanyahu went back to Tel Aviv from the United Nations, absolutely convinced that the Palestinian cause was dying and no longer had power; it would only be a matter of time before he could annex the West Bank and defeat the Palestinians because everybody was talking about the chapter in which the Palestinians no longer had any agency. It is a significant fact that the greatest attack on Israel, or rather, the most potent attack on Israel, comes at a time in which everybody believed the Palestinians to be at their weakest. This was the first time since 1948 that the Palestinians had temporarily taken back land from the Israelis when they entered into those settlements, and that's why Netanyahu declared war because it was the most potent attack on Israel since 1973 and perhaps even 1948. Remember, in 1973, the Egyptians broke the defensive line in Sinai, and the Syrians broke the defensive line in the Golan Heights, but they didn't penetrate Israel proper. But with Aqsa Flood, they managed to penetrate Israel proper; that's why it's unprecedented and so significant. The questions that are being asked by the Israelis and by the Americans is, "How did the Palestinians manage to achieve that when they were supposed to be weak and dying and no longer having a cause to protect?"

There are question marks as to whether the Palestinians themselves knew that they would be able to enter as much as they did into Israel proper. There are suggestions that the plan was simply to take hostages and then trade those hostages for Palestinians who are arbitrarily detained. But many people, even Palestinians, were surprised by the extent to which they were able to penetrate areas outside Gaza. The reason that Netanyahu is pounding Gaza so hard, the reason why he is starting to attack the

> ***"Palestinians were dispossessed and have been struggling for their rights; thus, Hamas wants to liberate the whole of Palestine."***

West Bank, and the reason he is so adamant that there shouldn't be a ceasefire is because what they're terrified of is not Gaza itself, but the fact that the whole world now sees a renewed spirit in the Palestinian cause.

For the last three weeks, we have all watched the events unfolding in Gaza and Palestine; in fact, there are some conflicts in the West Bank as well. There have been frequent references by Israeli politicians and army commanders to the Torah, to Talmudic tradition, etcetera. So, in this context, should we perceive the ongoing conflict as a war of religions or, considering the open support of the Western countries, can we talk about another crusade in Jerusalem or Palestine?

Abdallah Marouf: It's really interesting to see that some religious fanatics have brought religion into the Palestinian issue.

We all talk about the liberation of Palestine, so how is the liberation of Palestine going to happen if the people are not willing to make sacrifices?

It's not limited to supporters of Israel from the precipitation of the Jewish faith because, at the beginning of the whole events, we have noticed some content that some similar contexts actually in when Senator Lindsey Graham mentioned clearly that it is a religious war, and that is actually quite alarming in. A rabbi called Yaron Reuven spoke clearly in this context and mentioned that you have to kill every single one and tried to legitimise this atrocity by the Israelis and connect it to the Jewish religion. However, this is a very important issue because we can see at the same time that a lot of religious bodies within the Jewish faith around the world, especially in the United States, are actually trying to show to the whole world that they are pro-Palestinians and these actions are not done in the name of Judaism as a religion. Some Christian religious groups are also trying to distinguish between Zionism and Christianity in their support for Israel. However, some of the religiously motivated fanatics in the world of today are trying to use

On 16 October, the US, UK and France vetoed a UN Security Council resolution on a proposed ceasefire in Gaza.

religion as a tool to assist Israel within this context and to gather as many of the right-wing supporters in the West as possible. Therefore, it becomes a very dangerous discourse, because the Palestinian issue is not a matter of the Book of Isaiah or the Talmud; it is only a matter of religious authorities interpreting the situation in the way they want to interpret it. Therefore, from a Palestinian and Muslim point of view, we must realise that the Palestinian cause is not and should not be about religion. It is not a religious war between Judaism and Islam or between Christianity and Islam. On the contrary, we are witnessing an atrocity caused by an occupation force that occupied the country, displaced Palestinians, committed genocide and ethnic cleansing since 1948 until today. Now the same occupation forces are trying to carry out the same ethnic cleansing in Gaza, as well as in the West Bank and Jerusalem, and are threatening people with it. Therefore, this issue should not be about religion. Because the groups who support Israel from more of a religious point of view are trying to derive the whole conflict into a religious conflict because it fuels it easily, and it makes it easier for them to gather more supporters of this cause.

This situation is also directly related to the Third Temple issue. Because when Hamas announced the operation, one of the most important reasons emphasised for this operation was the Israeli attacks on the Al-Aqsa Mosque. These attacks were being carried out by a very small minority of the Israelis but, at the same time, ultra-Orthodox and ultra-fanatic groups that are called the Canaanites. These groups are the ones who believe that to let the Messiah come for the first time; the world has to go into a religious war. So, that is what makes this assumption very dangerous in this context because they are trying to drag the whole world with them into what they believe as that war will bring peace to the world. But this conflict should not be taken out of the context of Palestine and especially Jerusalem, and should not be seen as a war between two or three religions. It is a conflict and a war that is being built upon the idea of ethnic cleansing and genocide committed by an occupier.

Many people, even Muslims, criticised and asked the question, "Didn't Hamas know that the result of this attack would be a devastating war for the people of Gaza?" What would you say on this point?

Azzam Tamimi: Whoever planned and ordered this attack on 7 October expected that the Israelis would respond with madness, especially given that the Israelis are superior in their capabilities and that

they enjoy the full and unconditional support of the superpowers of the world, the United States of America and its allies in Europe. But Palestinians have been under occupation for 75 years, and Gaza has been under siege for 17 years. Land usurpation in the West Bank, attacks on Al Aqsa and harassment of Palestinians continue. Around 5000 to 6000 Palestinians are in detention, and the world seems to have forgotten about them. So, something needed to be done to rock the boat, and so long as you live under occupation in a manner that is denying you your basic human rights, you're really left with very limited options. Some people say, "We could have avoided all of this by remaining content with the status quo!" but the status quo is ugly. Nobody in the world would agree to live for so many years under such humiliating circumstances. We all talk about the liberation of Palestine, so how is the liberation of Palestine going to happen if the people are not willing to make sacrifices? This is a very hefty price, a huge sacrifice, but you cannot change the status quo by just wishing, by sitting in front of a TV set and weeping over Palestine and Masjid al-Aqsa. There has to be action, and that action can be very costly.

The Western world stopped talking about a two-state solution. What's the role that the neighbouring Islamic countries or the Muslim communities, in general, might assume?

Sami Hamdi: When we read Israeli commentary on what's happening, there isn't any sentence that suggests any concern about the positions of the Muslim countries. There's no concern that these countries will do anything in terms of substance in favour of the Palestinians against the Israelis. There's only one country whose foreign policy in the region is quite destructive: Iran. This is one of the reasons why Israel is concerned about the prospect of a ground invasion. Because it fears that if it goes into a ground invasion with an army that hasn't really seen combat, that is used to police duties and breaking the bones of little children, or beating up elderly people or shooting unarmed teenagers.

When it comes to the regional powers, I think that more indications from them suggest that they want to keep good ties with the Israelis and that they just want this situation to go away. Even when you look at the diplomatic initiatives and compare it to

> ***The whole world now sees a renewed spirit in the Palestinian cause.***

[Western leaders going to Tel Aviv], there aren't any Muslim leaders who do that in a show of force that we are here, and we will not allow Israel to depopulate Gaza or the like. This is what makes what's happening even more spectacular for the Palestinians and even more worrying for Netanyahu in that Israel is worried that despite these countries not doing anything, the Palestinians still did something. It's the Palestinians who are the heroes of this story in causing this shift, sadly, on their own. When you look at the other countries, the message being sent to Israel from these countries is, "Netanyahu, we'd like you to stop. We still want to be friends. We don't want to ruin this relationship". But no real action is being taken when you compare it to what [Western figures are] doing. In terms of the regional positions, they are still very slow, but Palestinians are forcing them to start moving and forcing them to take action. The extent to which they do is unclear, but certainly, any change in the Israeli position or any backing down on the part of the Israelis will not be because of the Muslim nations who haven't moved in a very effective way. It will be because of public opinion that will force the regimes that are trying to keep good ties to say, "Look, now I'm worried about big protests [all around the world]. I don't want to be seen on the wrong side of history. Let me mobilise instead". It's a heartbreaking answer, but at the same time, when we see the gains that the Palestinians have made,

> ***It's not only a war that is being fought on the ground in Gaza, or West Bank, Jerusalem or any other territory. It is a war that is being fought [on the ground] and online, everywhere.***

despite the horrible scenes before us, Palestinians have shown that they still have agency and power, that they're still strong, and that they alone are able to bring about all these regional changes and force a change in regional positions.

The Western world is blind to the brutal terrorism of Israel and its human rights violations, the destruction of the hospitals and the killings of civilians. [Yet many protests were organised in the universities, some cancelled, etc.] In this regard, [how should we understand and analyse] the response and the reaction of the academics and faculties in Western universities?

Abdallah Marouf: Firstly, we should note that the mass majority of the people do not understand what is happening there because usually, the power of the media in the West is quite significant that it controls what the people see and hear. However, the most important difference that we are facing and witnessing these days is the evolution of social communication and social society. On platforms such as Facebook, Twitter or Instagram, people actually see what their governments do not want them to see. This is why, for example, Israel had a mutual agreement with META. So, this is quite new in our world today because nobody heard about the atrocities that were committed against the Palestinians in 1948 or 1967 because the media did not speak about it, and the people did not have their own platforms at that time to speak to each other, to show what is happening. Yet today, ordinary people do not believe the governments when they tell them. We have people who are being followed by millions of people who can hear and listen and know that the governments are lying to them, and the mainstream media is lying to them as well in the West. The people who understand the main problem and the justice or the just cause of Palestine, especially in academia, need to use these new tools in order to get to the people who do not understand or know what is exactly happening around the world. So, they need to use it for the benefit of spreading the justice of Palestine. Because it's not only a war that is being fought on the ground in Gaza, or West Bank, Jerusalem or any other territory. It is a war that is being fought [on the ground] and online, everywhere, to the extent that Israel is now investing millions of dollars in this cause. Yet, we do not need to do that because we have justice around us, which is why many people are volunteering for this. Israel understands the problem that is actually that it is facing in this context; this is why they are trying now to silence any influencer or any person who speaks the truth.

Also, academics need to be at the forefront of this issue. The academics have the tools, have the real story. Thus, it is actually the duty of the academy, in particular, to be in front of the leading party regarding this issue and to tell the truth with figures, names and information. Because the information is the main weapon that Israel is so afraid of since it exposes the Israeli propaganda that is trying to impose a code in our world today by force; either the force of money or by threatening the world. I have my own duty to tell my students to get to tell the truth that they learned and tell it to the world. Because every single student has their own website or [social media] account. I hope that we can spread the word as quickly as this war is going in order to let justice prevail and let the people know the true face of Israeli brutality that we can see in Gaza today.

CURRENT

Embodied Resistance: Muslim Women in the Dilemma of French Identity

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Since the events of September 11, the surge of Islamophobia in the West, notably amid the Arab Spring, has positioned France as one of the European nations where anti-Islamic incidents and rhetoric are most felt intensively. The French administration's unease regarding the lifestyle and attire of Muslims has significantly influenced the government's policies towards Muslim communities. In France, where Muslims make up 10% of the population (INSEE, 2023), understanding the historical processes underpinning the conflict involving religious identity and symbols is also crucial for understanding its contemporary manifestations. The presence of the immigrant and Muslim population in France, rooted in colonial history and subsequent migration movements, highlights the complexity of the current socio-cultural landscape.

During the colonial era, France asserted control over several Muslim-majority countries, including Algeria, Morocco, Egypt, Tunisia, Chad, and Senegal. The aftermath of these occupations witnessed a significant influx of migration from these regions to France, particularly following the conclusion of World Wars I and II. These migrations, driven by the pursuit of cheap labour and encompassing workforce movements, were predominantly undertaken by Muslims from the Maghreb countries. France, in response to these migrations, sought to address the labour gap in its factories with cheap labour, while immigrants, compelled to leave their nations under French colonial rule, aspired to attain a better life by settling in areas characterised by poor socio-economic conditions (Yardım, 2017). Muslim immigrants, facing unfavourable living conditions such as low income, limited education, strenuous work, and marginalisation, were, in a sense, scapegoated and perceived as a significant security issue amid internal unrest and events like the Paris incidents. The visibility problem of Muslims, targeted, in a way, through denigrating discourses on their religious identities by the state, began to develop at this point (Özdemir, 2012).

Muslims, whose visibility in the public sphere is claimed to have increased through their attire, religious rituals, and symbols, have been portrayed as a perceived threat due to identities deemed incompatible with French society. They have faced different forms of oppression and human rights violations,

Protests against the abaya ban in France

Source: Anadolu Agency

particularly fueled by the harsh and provocative discourses of politics and the media. The emphasis on symbols and clothing in these discourses has inevitably led to discussions specifically targeting Muslim women. In 1989, debates on the prohibition of headscarves led to laws prohibiting the wearing of religious symbols in schools, including the ban on headscarves in 2004. In 2010, wearing face-covering garments such as veils and burqas in public spaces was once again prohibited by law. The rationale behind the ban was the perception that veils and burqas symbolise a security issue in public areas and carry political motives. On the other hand, exemplified by the recent abaya ban, there has been an attempt to legitimise extreme oppression, attitudes, and notably anti-Islamic discourses regarding the attire of Muslim women on political grounds (Najib, 2022, p. 237).

France, aiming to create a homogeneous nation, pursues integration policies by prohibiting any religious and cultural symbols, particularly the attire of Muslim women.

In essence, the ban on the abaya is a significant indicator that debates around the Muslim woman's attire within the framework of the French identity are still ongoing. France, aiming to create a homogeneous nation, pursues integration policies by prohibiting any religious and cultural symbols, particularly the attire of Muslim women. These decisions are purportedly implemented within the framework of the principle of secularism: the prohibition of wearing "religiously affiliated" clothing like the abaya in educational institutions is argued to be contrary to secularism, with explanations asserting that displaying symbols indicating a person's religious affiliation carries political motives, as defended by the French government. Although these bans claim to encompass all religions, Muslim women are disproportionately affected. According to the European Islamophobia Report (Faytre, 2018),

> ***The opposition to all forms of cultural and religious representation is portrayed as more threatening and inconvenient when it comes to Muslims.***

70% of Islamophobic acts in France are directed towards women, with the headscarf being a distinguishing factor, often associated with rates of physical attacks. Documented instances, such as the assault on two women in Paris in April 2022 for not removing their headscarves, the obligation for the hijabi parents to remove their headscarves during a school trip, and the recent suspension of a group of Muslim women from their education due to harassment for wearing abayas (Najib, 2022, p. 244), serve as tangible evidence that these bans are inherently rooted in Islamophobia.

The discriminatory treatment, violence, harassment and stigmatisation of Muslim women are undoubtedly not independent of the Islamophobic attitudes of the French administration and public opinion. In this regard, the increase in anti-Islamic practices in France day by day is a clear indication of hatred, but it also reveals the assimilation aspect of the integration policies implemented towards immigrants. Policies that attempt to protect national identity and culture ignore the fact that Muslim women wear the headscarf as part of their identity. The opposition to all forms of cultural and religious representation is portrayed as more threatening and inconvenient when it comes to Muslims. It is evident that on one side of this perception lies the image of an Eastern Muslim woman who needs to be saved from the oppression and constraints of her own culture. The image of "the Muslim woman oppressed by her own culture and religion, forcibly veiled and cut off from society" created by Orientalist discourses creates a perception that stereotypes them and deepens the gap between them and others (Göle, 2017).

The juncture where the conflict arises between Muslim women, who express their identity through the headscarf, and the French identity perceiving the headscarf as a threat and an act of resistance and rebellion, underscores the issue of the visibility of Muslims. Ultimately, as the headscarf serves as a reflection of Muslim identity, it becomes imperative to discuss the challenges centred around visibility, particularly from a woman's perspective. Women wearing the headscarf in the public sphere embody a representation that disrupts Western values, feminist ideals advocating for hard-fought freedoms, and notions of equality between men and women. Conversely, the matter, encompassing secular values as well, views the representation of Muslim women in public spaces as a sign of threat.

In this respect, it can be clearly stated that the real problems of Muslim women, who are almost in a resistance against the oppressive attitudes of the French administration with their headscarf representation, are not related to their own identity, but to the imposed French identity. Until this reality is acknowledged, the problems will remain unresolved and the violations of human rights will continue to increase as long as anti-Islamic practices are legitimised on legal grounds and are not considered hate crimes.

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SANATIN GÖÇÜ

THE MIGRATION OF ART

Walaa Tarakji

The “Migration of Art” project, initiated in 2022 with the support of the İLKE Foundation for Science, Culture and Education and the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, is a project that describes the migration process affecting Syrian migrants in Türkiye, their lives there and how these dynamics are reflected in their artworks. The project emphasises the opportunities and potentials that cultural diversity offers to artists rather than associating migration with a negative framework. Hence, the migrant artists’ various forms of artwork have been included in the project.

Walaa Tarakji / Illustrator

Walaa Tarakji, an artist and illustrator, began her education by studying theatre and later specialised in drawing. Walaa has also worked on a project called “Migrant Dreams”, in which she tells her own story as a migrant and the stories of other migrants.

After migrating to Türkiye, Walaa realised that she started to see in her dreams or nightmares that she had lost her passport, left something behind or missed the plane and started to depict her dreams in her paintings. However, we can see that the paintings of the artist are generally dominated by black and white, but she also emphasises light and shadow with red and yellow. Walaa explained this symbolic colouring by saying that she painted these paintings at night in the moonlight after her children were asleep, and that there were lights emanating from the houses that represented hope for her, and emphasised that she actually reflected these lights she witnessed at night in her paintings.

Bara Haddad / Photographer

Baraa Haddad, from Latakia, Syria, began his journey in photography and filmmaking in 2011 with the Syrian revolution. Haddad has incorporated both his experiences in Syria and his life as a refugee in Türkiye into his work. Working as a documentary filmmaker for approximately five years at TRT (Turkish Radio and Television Corporation), the artist highlights human rights and activism in his documentaries, bringing the stories of different individuals to the forefront.

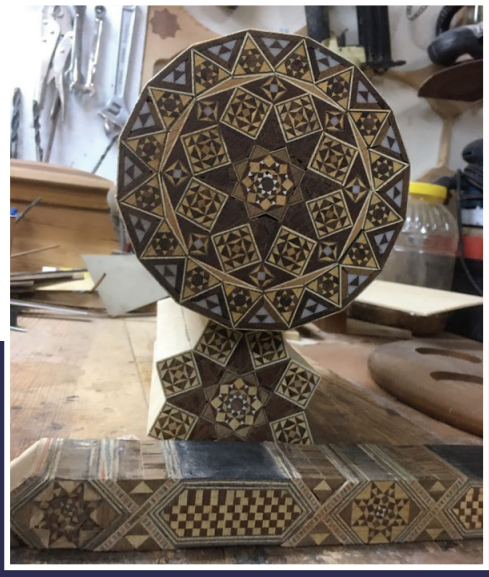
Haddad also collaborated with a researcher from the University of Cambridge to produce a documentary film about the suffering of Syrian refugee women, their illnesses, psychological trauma and difficulties in accessing mental health services. In his film "A Suspended Life", he focused on those who disappeared or were subject to enforced disappearance in Syria during the Syrian revolution and in the years following the revolution.

Bara Haddad

Cihad Katat / Mosaic Artist

Mosaic artist Cihad Katat learnt the art of wood mosaic as an apprentice in Damascus, where he was born and raised. After migrating to Türkiye, Katat has continued his work in Türkiye, and in his workshop in Halkalı, he skilfully carves geometric shapes, as an essential place in Islamic arts, into his wooden pieces and sustains the tradition of wood inlay art in his homeland. For this reason, he also takes part in society as a carrier of the cultural heritage of Syria.

Although it is difficult to find materials in Türkiye, the artist combines the geometric shapes he uses with pieces obtained from different types of trees, such as lemon and pine and carves abstract figures extending to infinity with the techniques and patterns he uses on chests, trays and coffee tables.



Cihat Katat

Ahmed Haj Omar / Painter

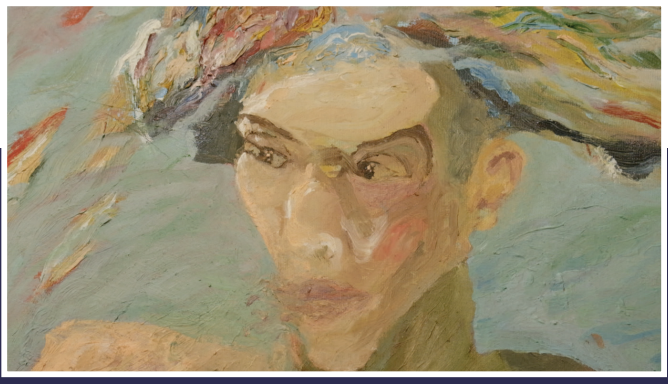
Ahmed Haj Omar, who graduated from the Faculty of Fine and Applied Arts in Aleppo in 2014, migrated to Türkiye after the revolution and had to continue his work here. The artist adopts an expressionist approach to art and wants people to understand what he wants to tell or feel by looking at his paintings.

Omar, who says that he especially focuses on the faces of people affected by the war and the change of these faces in his paintings, also sees the cultural diversity in Türkiye as a source of inspiration. For this reason, the themes of trauma, change and diversity that Omar focuses on are emphasised in the artist's works with sad but vivid colours.

Hasna Tahhan / Calligrapher and Illuminator

Syrian calligrapher and illuminator artist, Hasna Tahhan, had to leave Aleppo with her family after the Syrian revolution and migrate to Türkiye Tahhan, whose husband was also a calligrapher, became interested in calligraphy while helping her husband, but it was only after she came to Türkiye that she learnt calligraphy as a craft and became a calligrapher.

The artist has adopted a more feminine style by adding qualities such as sensitivity, transparency and kindness in the traditional typology of women to her works. Tahhan, who is also engaged in illumination as an art of ornamentation, prioritises artistic and technical diversity in her works.



Ahmed Haj Omar

Hasna Tahhan

From Poetry to Politics: The Jameel Prize

The seventh Jameel Prize will be awarded to those who produce works of film, animation and digital media. A group of finalists selected by the jury will exhibit their works at the Victoria & Albert Museum in the winter of 2024. Following this exhibition, the finalists will present their work at another partner institution in the UK and at Hayy Jameel, an organisation of Art Jameel in Saudi Arabia, in 2025. Organised in partnership with the Victoria & Albert Museum and Art Jameel, the internationally recognised Jameel Prize aims to recognise the work of artists who follow the Islamic tradition and demonstrate that the Islamic artistic tradition is still vibrant. It also shows how the Islamic tradition parallels modern artistic actions. Artists and designers of all ages and backgrounds, Muslim and non-Muslim, who produce works in many fields of art are eligible to apply. The Victoria & Albert Museum, which brings together works of Islamic art created since the 1850s, has distributed the Jameel Prize since 2009. The prize covers a wide range of themes, including activism, Islamic geometry, calligraphy and digital design. Artists re-symbolise events that have historically affected Muslim societies with Islamic patterns while at the same time innovating the Islamic art tradition with their cultural heritage and way of life. Especially in the Jameel Prize 2021, organised with the theme "From Poetry to Politics", artists portrayed the problems of the society and the world they live in. In addition, they were able to produce new artworks by using symbols inherited from their families. The exhibition featured the artworks of eight designers from India, Iran, Lebanon, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, the UAE and the UK. The finalists are Ajlan Gharem, Golnar Adili, Hadeyeh

"Paradise Has Many Gates", Ajlan Gharem, Victoria & Albert Museum, 2015

Source: https://www.vam.ac.uk/articles/jameel-prize-poetry-to-politics

"Gunjaan 7", Ghulam Mohammad, Victoria & Albert Museum,
Source: https://www.vam.ac.uk/articles/jameel-prize-4

Badri, Kallol Datta, Farah Fayyad, Sofia Karim, Jana Traboulsi and Bushra Waqas Khan. Ajlan Gharem won first place with "Paradise Has Many Gates", his installation art. Also a mathematics teacher, Gharem used wires reminiscent of border walls and prison fences in his design, organised in the traditional form of a mosque. Despite the intimidating nature of the wire, the openness and transparency of the space serve as a reminder of the mosque's function. With this design, the artist particularly criticises refugee issues and Islamophobia.

In this installation, which resembles the traditional mosque form, artist Ajlan Gharem used wires reminiscent of prison fences. With this work, he criticised Islamophobia and refugee issues.

Bangladeshi Marina Tabassum preferred to build the mosque outside the city centre. She built this mosque, which has no minaret, mihrab and dome, by synthesising modern and Islamic architecture. She decided to build the mosque at the request of her grandmother who lost her two daughters. Tabassum thought that symbols are distracting and designed a space that focuses on "spirituality".

Ghulam Mohammad, who makes collages out of paper, won the fourth Jameel Prize with four untitled works and five works titled Gunjaan (2014). With this work, the artist, who cuts and combines papers from Urdu writings, aims to show the aesthetic integrity created by the language by liberating the language from the pages.

Rachid Koraïchi, winner of the Jameel Prize 2011, uses Arabic calligraphy to illustrate the words of Islamic thinkers, including Mawlânâ Jalāl al-Dīn Rûmî and Muhyī ad-Dīn Ibn 'Arabī. With this work, he aims to show that Islamic thought is still alive and continues to influence different societies.

"Les Maitres Invisibles", Rachid Koraïchi, Victoria & Albert Museum, 2008

Source: https://www.vam.ac.uk/articles/jameel-prize-2011

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