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ABOUT THE
E–JOURNAL

The UNESCO Observatory refereed e-journal is based within the Graduate School of Education at The University of Melbourne, Australia. The journal promotes multi-disciplinary research in the Arts and Education and arose out of a recognised need for knowledge sharing in the field. The publication of diverse arts and cultural experiences within a multi-disciplinary context informs the development of future initiatives in this expanding field. There are many instances where the arts work successfully in collaboration with formerly non-traditional partners such as the sciences and health care, and this peer-reviewed journal aims to publish examples of excellence.

Valuable contributions from international researchers are providing evidence of the impact of the arts on individuals, groups and organisations across all sectors of society. The UNESCO Observatory refereed e-journal is a clearing house of research which can be used to support advocacy processes; to improve practice; influence policy making, and benefit the integration of the arts in formal and non-formal educational systems across communities, regions and countries.

Editorial

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INTRODUCTION

The 'Contemporary' embraces the dynamic of the current. Thus, contemporary thought should also ideally encourage multidisciplinary curiosity, encounter and engagement. This multidisciplinary dynamic, fuelled by creativity, is the platform for the Vision Culture Lecture program ('VC Lectures'), launched in 2010 by Shalini Ganendra Fine Art ('SGFA'), in Malaysia, with the endorsement of the UNESCO Observatory. Over this short and enriching period, the VC Lectures have developed an informing presence in the region, fostering meaningful global discourse and cultural encounter, to inform the Contemporary.

SGFA is a pioneering cultural organization, embracing an eclectic and quality sensibility for collecting, consideration, capacity building and place making. We value new visuals - whether for materiality, concept or culture - and multidisciplinary processes in their creation. In addition to the VC Lectures and exhibition program, SGFA has: an artist residency program (the 'Vision Culture Art Residency'); an arts management residency for university students (the 'Exploring East Residency'); and the PavilionNOW project which celebrates local architects, contemporary design and materiality. Through these programs and a growing interest in emerging regions, we delight in the increasing international engagement with our represented areas of South East Asia and Sri Lanka.

Over twenty three speakers have participated in the VC Lectures since their inception, each invited because of eminent reputations and notable contributions within respective fields. The lecture module involves free public talks at the SGFA's award winning green space (designed by Ken Yeang), Gallery Residence, with external lectures often hosted by other local institutions and organized by SGFA. Participating curators generally conduct portfolio reviews with local artists, learning more about regional geopolitics and art practices. Strong press coverage enables outreach beyond the urban populace, as does active social and digital media. Speakers stay at the Gallery Residence and enjoy vernacular space that embraces natural ventilation and cooling systems, elegant aesthetic and greening philosophies. The VC Lecture program is as much about cross-cultural and multi-disciplinary encounters as it is about content – all defining platforms for SGFA's exhibition progamming as well.

The eleven luminaries published in this peer-reviewed UNESCO Observatory journal were selected for a variety of reasons including expertise. They are: Sir Roy Calne (award winning surgeon and artist, UK); Christopher Phillips (Curator, International Center of Photography, NYC); Anoma Pieris (Associate Professor at the Department of Architecture, University of Melbourne); Susan Cochrane (curator and authority on Pacific Art); Volker Albus (Professor of Product Design at the University of Arts and Design Karlsruhe, Germany); Michiko Kasahara (Chief Curator at the Tokyo Metropolitan Museum of Photography, Japan); Matt Golden (Artist/Curator); Gregory Burgess (Architect, Order of Australia); Beth Citron (Curator, Rubin Museum NYC); Oscar Ho (curator and academic, HK); and Brian Robinson (Torres Island artist and curator, Australia).

Sir Roy Calne speaks of personal experiences using art to nurture empathy in his medical practice and his own passion for creating. Christopher Phillips, the pioneering curator credited with introducing Chinese contemporary photography to the United

States, writes about an important exhibition that he curated at the International Center of Photography. Anoma Pieris considers the impact of modernism on architecture in South Asia, and analyses supportive political and social ideologies, while Gregory Burgess tackles the place of architecture in creating a sense of individual and community belonging. Volker Albus, playfully but seriously asks us to consider the role of designers as technical and social mediators. Michiko Kasahara adeptly reviews challenges faced by successful contemporary Japanese photographers in addressing and reflecting Japanese culture, real and perceived. Susan Cochrane explores cultural ownership of Pacific Art through the use of terminology and context. Brian Robinson writes about his personal cultural narrative as a Torres Island artist. Beth Citron shares insights on Francesco Clemente's acclaimed 'Inspired by India' exhibition which opened at the Rubin Museum in 2014. Oscar Ho speaks to the challenges of curatorship and requirements to sharpen its impact and discipline. Matt Golden shares the visual journey of his art alter-ego, Juan Carlos, with special focus on experiences in Malaysia. We bring to you a wonderful mix of multi-disciplinary and cultural discussions that show the exhilarating impact of this program.

The Vision Culture Program enters its sixth year and we look forward to its continuing impact as a pivotal program to foster meaningful global discourse. We have forged strong friendships and benefitted from cross cultural discovery thereby building platforms for more informed understanding and appreciation of our world.

Many thanks to Lindy Joubert, Editor-in-Chief of the UNESCO Observatory journal, and her marvelous team, for supporting this project from its inception; to SGFA's Exploring East Residents who assisted with editing these texts and most importantly, the amazing Vision Culture Lecture participants who have fostered knowledge, encounter and consequently, the Contemporary.

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OBSERVATORY

Regional identities and global aspirations in South Asian capitol buildings

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines modernism in Asia during the late twentieth century, linking designs for capital cities and the work of individual architects whose western aesthetics underwrote their success. It explores the combination of particular aesthetic ideologies and opportune political scenarios that transformed architectural production during that era. Borrowed forms and material and aesthetic vocabularies were translated and transformed beyond the cultural expectations of that era, familiarizing alien institutional traditions through local idioms. Specifically, this essay focuses on capital city projects in India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka and on both Western and indigenous architects, whose training and social advantages lent national significance and global visibility to their architectural designs. This paper also examines the legacy of these buildings and the inherent difficulties of their adaptation and acceptance.

KEYWORDS

National capitals, capitol buildings, India, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Bangladesh

BIOGRAPHY

Anoma Pieris is an associate professor at the Faculty of Architecture, Building and Planning at the University of Melbourne. Her most recent publications include *Hidden Hands and Divided Landscapes: A Penal History of Singapore's Plural Society* (2009), *Architecture and Nationalism in Sri Lanka: the Trouser under the Cloth* (2012) and *Assembling the Centre: Architecture for Indigenous Cultures, Australia and Beyond* (2014) with Janet McGaw.

INTRODUCTION

During the latter half of the twentieth century, when the novelty of modernist architecture was waning in the West, a new generation of modernist architects sprang up in Asia. These architects were a group of professionals trained and educated in prestigious institutions like the Architectural Association London and were selected to deliver western progressive ideologies to the once-colonized. Modernism was the flag-bearer of industrialized building systems, social democratization and experimental studio-based teaching methods that would become the basis for the professionalization of the field. Programmes were established in London and Melbourne to educate students in 'tropical architecture' during the 1950s and the 1960s. A climatic distinction that had once differentiated equatorial regions was now assumed for architectural pedagogy. This new focus on 'the tropics' was both political and economic, a manifestation of the post-war re-emergence of European economies, the gradual strengthening of governments equipped with new ideas about progress. It was a marked departure from an earlier era when the pathological attributes of tropical cultures had been magnified as both purgatory and paradise, exotic, savage and disease-ridden. In the new postcolonial world order, where former colonies were being patronizingly drawn within the umbrella of the British Commonwealth, the tropics were the enigmatic receptacle of modernist experimentation. The Tropical Programme was set

up in the Architectural Association School in 1954 by Maxwell Fry and Jane Drew. The architects who trained there and the many others who followed them would hone their architectural expertise on grand designs in the global south.

This paper examines modernism in Asia during the late twentieth century, linking designs for capital cities to the work of individual architects whose western aesthetics underwrote their success. This paper will explore how much of the Asian architecture of the period arose through the combination of particular aesthetic ideologies and an opportune political moment. It looks at how borrowed forms, material and aesthetic vocabularies were translated and transformed to a more familiar local idiom. The specific focus is on capital city projects in the South Asian region and on both Western and indigenous architects whose western training and social advantages rendered their architecture nationally and globally visible.

DECOLONIZING ARCHITECTURE

In her anthology *Third World Modernism,* Duanfang Lu (2011) describes the mid twentieth century as an era of intense political rivalry during which modernist experiments outside Europe and America proliferated, producing new meanings for and interpretations of an aesthetic honed in the west. In Asia, modernism had many manifestations but above all became the face of secular political agendas cultivated for post-war democracies. An earlier alliance to Victorian Indic architectures was deliberately de-emphasized.

To understand the radical tenor of such interventions we need to briefly examine the architectural style advanced in India by the British. Exemplified in the architecture made for New Delhi (1920s-1930s) by Edwin Lutyens and Herbert Baker, the style was supposed to synthesize Mughul, Hindu and Buddhist

elements. It was executed in red sand stone, an allusion to Mughul palace architecture. The spaces that were created were strictly hierarchical and communicated Britain's desire to build a lasting empire. The Indo-Saracenic and Travancore styles developed by colonial architects were eclectic hybrids: western institutional plans wrapped in decorative façades and embellished with motifs derived from Muslim and Hindu architecture. They were designed by colonial architects or engineers, often associated with the Public Works Department, to convey colonial institutional authority. A similar Buddhist-style aesthetic was introduced in colonial Ceylon (Sri Lanka) by the Welshman Neville Wynne-Jones. Scholars like Thomas Metcalf (1989) and Robert Irving (1981) explored the underlying politics of the colonial architecture involved in these projects.

THE INDIC STYLE

The design for New Delhi is undoubtedly the starting point for the history of new capitol buildings and capital cities in South Asia. The desire for a new beginning, the suppression of colonial associations, political cleavages and the ideological reinvention of a nation on the basis of both mimicry and authenticity were concretized in the architecture of the British colony. The pre-colonial itinerant capital would now be fixed in space, and Hindu and Muslim aesthetics used signal of the supposedly democratic nature of the state. The secular aesthetics of the new capital mark a pivotal moment in the transition from caste-based religious identities to an equally divisive class structure that was occurring in India at the time.

In his book, *Imperial Visions,* Thomas Metcalf describes architectural vocabulary as a means by which the British sought to reconstruct a version of India that remained governable within the imperial system. He describes how a 'traditional' India was constructed by the British to facilitate this new imperialism

through an architecture that perpetuated a timeless and parochial social structure and by relegating India to a craft-based village economy. Much of this rhetoric was addressed to the princely rulers rather than the western-educated elite, encouraging their patronage of the Indo-Saracenic style invented by the British for public buildings and princely palaces. Metcalf argues that the British were 'constructing themselves as legitimately Indian, while at the same time constructing a modern India of railways, colleges and law courts' (Metcalf 1989: 106). Paradoxically, an architecture conceived of as 'traditional' became a source for a modern eclecticism.

The plan of the buildings designed by Edwin Lutyens and Herbert Baker followed the European tradition and produced a neoclassical symmetry following an absolutist urban plan. Government buildings were raised on an acropolis at the end of a grand vista. A centralized and elevated vice-regal palace, at the end of a long axis and capped by an imposing domed roof was designed to manifest imperial authority. Lutyens initially showed scant regard for an Indian architectural tradition, but soon caved to pressure from both the government and his peers and embellished the European plans with details from Indian palatial and religious architecture, particularly from Muslim cities (Nilsson 1973: 54), with a resultant eclecticism that replicated the heterogeneity through which India was typically essentialized. Despite the generosity of the spatial organization, the government buildings and the residential quarters around them belied any concessions to the Indian majority. Delhi was a city sharply divided between old and new and the new was segregated by race and by class (Nilsson 1973: 72).

The politics of replacing the former capital at Calcutta, the hotbed of late nineteenth century nationalism, with a new interior center dominated by Mughul motifs and British imperialism has been fully explicated by authors like Jyoti Hosgrahar (2005) and Mrinalini Rajagopalan (2012: 73-101). The spectacular display of a racially inscribed and religiously differentiated culture of

imperialism played out its own divisive agenda on indigenous political identities. As discussed by Hosagrahar, Indian cities were not passive recipients of Western modernity via colonialism or blank templates on which to assert new urban planning ideals. They were hybrid environments where the changing values of modernity and indigeneity were negotiated. Influences travelled in both directions to produce *indigenous modernities.* Rajagopalan points out that certain monuments experienced similar issues to those of the cityscapes during the transition from colonial to postcolonial culture: their meanings were altered and adapted to service particular political narratives. The complexity of the scenarios examined suggests that colonial strategies and motivations were translated very differently in the postcolonial context.

Independence in 1947 halted the architectural extension of British Imperialism but failed to dispel colonial legacies of racial division. A train of violence accompanied Partition as the subcontinent was divided into three geographic territories with the vastness of India lodged between West and East Pakistan. The northwestern state of Punjab and northeastern state of Bengal were divided to create these new predominantly Muslim nation states. Partition created new theatres for the manifestation of modernism as distinct from the colonial past.

THE INTRODUCTION OF MODERNISM

The foundation of Chandigarh was the outcome of the violent encounter between Hindus and Muslims post-independence which resulted in the partition of the Punjabi state. The loss of the former capital Lahore to the new nation-state of Pakistan necessitated an administrative centre that could house the several thousand Hindu and Sikh refugees displaced by the new national boundaries. The desire for a modernist aesthetic focused towards India's industrial future framed the commission

made by the Indian premier Jawaharlal Nehru, an ideological modernist. The architects appointed to the project initially included Albert Mayer, P.L. Varma and P.N. Tharpa. The three worked on the urban plan before making way for the illustrious team of Swiss architects Le Corbusier and Pierre Jeanerette and British architects Maxwell Fry and Jane Drew. A series of monolithic tropical modernist public institutions, fiercely modernist and executed in the bare-faced concrete architecture for which Le Corbusier was famous, were housed within a rigid city grid. With their exaggerated scale, these buildings loomed large in a city designed for cars but inhabited by pedestrians. The population included the impoverished refugees of Partition.

As observed by Ravi Kalia, Chandigarh initiated a debate on architectural style and provided a training school for Indian architects despite its subsequent reputation as a failure (Kalia 1987: 162 and 164). In Metcalf's view 'the starkly modernist facades of Chandigarh show no trace of Indian architectural forms, not even any appreciable effort to accommodate the country's climatic and social requirements' (Metcalf 1989: 250). Le Corbusier's concession to the local culture was to organize the urban grid to represent the *Vasthu Purusha*, a geomantic template based on the human figure, formerly used in the South Asian building tradition. The figure was used to superimpose the traditional social hierarchy on the architectural plan. Le Corbusier's located the capitol at the *purusha*'s head in a shallow interpretation of an antiquated and socially divisive cultural construct. Its relevance to the democracy delivered at Chandigarh was never questioned, just as Lutyens never fully investigated the relevance of his borrowed eclecticism. Indigenous motifs were reduced to patterns devoid of meaning.

The dilemma of Chandigarh reinforced the dialectic between tradition and modernity, embodied in the competing political ideologies of Nehru and Mahatma Gandhi. Kalia paraphrases a comment by Malay Chatterjee (Regional Chief Housing and Development Corporation, HUDCO), who observed that

Before Independence, to many European administrators the question of style was the question of how much local style to allow without appearing to make political concessions to the subject people. But after independence, the question changed to how much 'indigenization' could a newly independent nation afford without appearing backward and weak both in its own eyes and in those of the rest of the world? (Kalia 1999: 162).

Kalia argues that whereas Mayer looked to India's past with an organic understanding of local history, Le Corbusier was focused on developing a new Indian architecture, appropriate to an industrialized future (1999: 163). Despite these objectives, the capitol followed the grand manner and was located at the head of the plan quite separate from the town grid, replicating New Delhi's authoritarian scheme (Nilsson 1973: 114).

The Government House was likewise placed within the capitol at the head of the plan. According to Nilsson, Nehru, who disliked this association, advised the governor to remain in the ministerial sector; the government house was redesigned as a Museum of Knowledge. Other unlooked for consequences resulted from a lack of understanding of the Indian context. The town, which was segregated into seven sectors, was designed on the basis of functionalism. It did not anticipate social differentiation between or within sectors and ultimately produced a new economic caste system (Nilsson 1973: 127). Just as in New Delhi, the housing type allocated to each sector reflected the social position of residents. The city's scale anticipated vehicular traffic, although the majority of residents could not afford private vehicles: the layout had drawn on Western urban considerations and was inappropriate for the largely pedestrian population (Nilsson 1973: 127). Due to these miscalculations the scale of the urban plan appeared exaggerated and overpowering when compared to the intimate activities of its resident population.

Vikramaditya Prakash argues that despite these obvious social issues, concerns regarding Chandigarh's physical successes and failures resulted from a deep-rooted ideological rift, a failure on the part of Nehru and the professionals gathered by him to make de-colonialization an architectural issue (Prakash 2002: 150). Quoting Spivak on this point he observes that respect for the representative Indian citizen, a product of Nehruvian hybridity, was absent from the agenda. Prakash comments,

> *The call to modernity, especially in architecture and urban planning did not usher in a revolutionary modern era as Nehru had hoped, because the people, the representative citizens, were not involved in the process, were not properly represented (Prakash 2002: 150).*

Prakash further argues that the appropriation of the city by the people of the surrounding villages wandered far from the nation-states' idealized expectation of redeeming the noble savage through western democratic traditions (Prakash 2002: 153-4). This ideal, which was shared by Corbusier and was manifested in his architecture was unable to translate to the rural peasantry of the Capitol village.

The philosophy behind the construction of India's two best known capitols raises the question of representation, of who is being represented and how, and highlights the gap between the ideal and operative cultural realities, which was repeatedly ignored during the design of the capitols. The similarities between these two early examples suggests that culturally disconnected 'experts' rushed to make use of the same aesthetic without properly considering alternatives.

ADVENTURES WITH MODERNISM

This is the starting point of the history of South Asian modernism: an aesthetic that would diverge sharply from this original intent. As populations grew disenchanted with monolithic architectural interventions and the world grew more cynical of utopian machines for living, the idealism of modernism became suspect. In South Asia, colonialism, modernism and westernization became conflated and demonized by anti-colonial nationalist sentiment. After a brief period under a post-colonial Commonwealth of Nations both India and Sri Lanka would embrace political ideologies on the socialist side of the Cold War division. From the mid 1950s onward non-alignment would become a political goal. These new economic experiments based on import substitution and self reliance would affect architectural choices. In short, the region's architectural history would develop many new threads beyond its colonial beginnings that would inform both professional practice and pedagogy. An early period of embracing and developing western aesthetic values would be followed by a new focus on indigenization.

Initially, interventions like the one at Chandigarh created pathways for foreign expertise to enter former colonies via new systems of patronage. These interventions were aimed at building democratic institutions on the ashes of the Empire. The political contest was now between Cold War powers seeking to reclaim the loyalty of nations they had once colonized. The radical socialist politics of anti-colonial nationalism had sewn seeds of skepticism in Asian nationalists no longer eager for friendship with the postcolonial Commonwealth. America too was a new player in the South Asian theatre, offering a brand of modernism without Imperial undertones.

The adventure at Chandigarh is recorded by many scholars among whom Vikramaditya Prakash (2002) and Ravi Kalia (1999) offer the most detailed accounts. Sten Nilsson contextualizes this nation-building era by surveying a number of experiments along

the same lines (1973). Through these surveys and Kalia's several books (1994; 1999; 2004), we can gain insights into a decade of frenetic capital building in the subcontinent. These new energies and their sources are further explored in a comparative analysis across international examples in *Architecture, Power and National Identity* by Lawrence Vale (1992; 2008). Collectively these scholars offer a comprehensive discourse that moves beyond empirical aesthetic investigations of the colonial and modernist traditions. Their respective approaches achieve an intellectual shift towards socially and politically tinted observations on architectural developments, critical for understanding the South Asian context. Their examples remind us that modernism was introduced into South Asia by outsiders and was as a laden discourse, supposedly a set of democratic forms for a new era of self-determination distinct from the colonial past. Modernism was supposed to suppress the noise and violence of Partition and the jostling of communal loyalties and to reconfigure new unities above these everyday concerns. Perhaps this partly explains the authoritarian imposition of the Breton Brut architecture and its distance from the everyday associations of Indian citizens.

ETHNICITY, RACE AND RELIGIOUS IDENTITIES

Modernist aesthetics did provisionally disassociate architecture from its connotations of Imperial rule, paving the way for homegrown versions of eclecticism. In this context Eclecticism disassociated with colonial roots and adulterated by modernist formal elements arose in India. But the specter of recurrent communal violence threatened the entire subcontinent. The dream of a secular nation was unlikely to be realized through regional aesthetics.

The ideology evident in the design of Indian capital cities points to the desire of the architects to maintain a democracy even if their schemes were not necessarily endorsed by the

local government. Although fluctuations from democratic to ethnocentric regimes in the Indian political landscape suggest that secular government is far from guaranteed, India's record for secularism is far better than that of its neighbors. On the other hand, instability in the neighboring regions is often a response to Indian hegemony. Political unrest in Pakistan, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka can be attributed to the intervention of India in regional politics. The lack of a coherent South Asian regional organization equivalent to ASEAN indicates the presence of an atomized political periphery. In fact, a specific brand of minority politics prevails at India's borders and is evident in the capitol complexes of the post-Independence nations, particularly in Pakistan and Bangladesh. In these countries the sectarian conflicts that exist within Indian Federalism are reproduced at a national scale in the form of linguistic, ethnic and religious nationalism in capital cities and parliament buildings. Here too the choice of architect, the plans of the cities and their new locations as distinct from colonial commercial entrepots spell out the politics of postcolonial urban planning. In both Pakistan and Bangladesh the inherited political template is altered to accommodate Islam.

As described previously, Chandigarh was created due to the loss of Lahore following the partitioning of India in 1947, when Pakistan claimed the Islamic populations on the East and West of the nation for its citizenry. Pakistan was an anomaly: a nation divided by the vast expanse of the northern Indian states (1600 km). The secession caused the displacement of a population totaling 14.5 mil and was accompanied by ethnic violence and deaths of around 500,000 people. The Partition included the division of the administration. In the years that followed, the rift between Pakistan and India was aggravated by cold war alliances and the growing U.S.-Pakistan relationship. American aid to Pakistan gave the United States a foothold in the region. The militarization of Pakistan in the context of this relationship inevitably led to a military coup under Ayub Khan

in 1958. It was Khan who inaugurated the two capitals for the West and for the East.

Created during extreme internecine conflict the capitol buildings of both Pakistan and Bangaladesh had multiple objectives: to indicate their physical and ideological separation from India, their self-definition through Islam and their vision of a future emerging from a complicated past . In short, there were sufficient reasons for embracing modernism. The choice of foreign architects in each case emboldened the nascent nation-states to make claims on a future otherwise burdened with political uncertainties. Perhaps it enabled them to turn their backs on the past. Conversely, the incorporation of Islam into the national self-identity as the point of differentiation with India demanded a physical display of the nation's religious affiliation. In the case of Pakistan, this contradiction was resolved through the creation of Islamabad, 'the city of Islam.'

THE CITY OF ISLAM

Imran Ahmed relates the motivations behind Islamabad to those that prompted the design of New Delhi, 'a nationalist narrative, Western in origin, which normalizes its own history and exploitation by inscribing all conflictual forces in a fixed hierarchy of civil progress (Ahmed 1992: 89).' Despite the city's name, however, it appears that secularism was the primary objective.

The isolation of the new capital in the Potwar plateau almost 1400 miles from Karachi and next to the Rawalpindi cantonment was ordered by Pakistani leader Ayub Khan, who came to power in a coup d'ètat in 1958. Nilsson suggests that the site was selected in a military spirit without studying socio-economic concerns (Nilsson 1973: 145). The same firm that was hired to work on the Pakistani town of Korangi, the Greek firm Doxiadis Associates, undertook the construction of the new capital in 1960.

A recent publication on Doxiadis reveals his economic arguments for Islambad (Kyrtsis 2006: 168-189). Doxiadis cites the over-congested state of Karachi post-partition, the ethnic homogeneity of existing cities and the problems of interventions in historic fabrics as reasons for creating a new capital. Doxiadis' final point on ekistics (the study of human settlements) projects the future urbanization of Pakistan through transformations from metropolis to megalopolis and finally ecumenapolis- the universal city.

Doxiadis's analyses are a curious mixture of structuralist science and biological metaphors. The dynamic settlement envisioned by the combination of Islamabad and Rawalpindi (which are called the nuclei-dynopolis) is compared to a newborn child, although the grid imposed upon the new city is calculated down to 2 kilometer squares. Within each square a rigidly geometric pattern of units at descending scales accommodates smaller and smaller social units in a strict hierarchy of space which stretches down to the individual family unit. Even more obsessively than in Chandigarh and New Delhi, plot size and building size demarcate income levels, except that in Islamabad this rigid geometry is said to be derived from Islam, a religion to which social equality is fundamental (Nilsson 1973: 153, 156).

Islamabad's location on the Grand Trunk Road, and consequently on the Asian highway proposed in 1959 (route 1 would go from Teheran to Saigon passing through Islamabad, Delhi and Dhaka), justifies its new location as part of a series of connected capital cities. The duo-dynopolis of Rawalpindi and Islamabad develops as an unrestricted parallel expansion thus avoiding the collision of concentric urban growth. The entire proposal is dependent on vehicular access, unavailable or unaffordable to the majority of the citizens (Nilsson 1973: 153). Doxiadis observes that

> *In such a dynamic city we do not have conflict of man and machine, we do not run the danger of moving in the vicious circle of the old city devouring its own self in order to grow (Kyrtsis 2006: 189).*

Nilsson is critical of Doxiadis, identifying him as a technocrat with a total vision, more utopian than Lutyens or Le Corbusier (Nilsson 1973: 150). Five hundred bulldozers were deployed in flattening out the site for the city and the landscape had to be re-sculpted (Nilsson, 1973: 156). From that expanse now rise secular buildings by Western architects like Gio Ponti, Gerard Brigden, E. Harvey Foster and Louis Kahn, as well as mosques designed by Pakistani architects (Nilsson 1973: 166). A special government committee determined architectural standards and was influential, it seems, in appointing and dismissing architects (Nilsson 1973: 178). Among those rejected was the parliamentary building designed by Arne Jacobson, a cylindrical form with a mosque beneath it with an International-style aesthetic. Louis Kahn proposed three different schemes with boldly cut profiles resembling the Muslim style, but it was Edward Durell Stone's interpretation of Mughul architecture streamlined into an international style response that proved most attractive. He would be commissioned to design the prize architectural commissions in the city, the Supreme Court, the national Assembly, the Foreign Office and Presidential Palace. Stone was described as '…the only leading architect of world fame who has imbibed the spirit of Mughul architecture with beauty (Ahmed 1992: 134).'

The President's House was positioned on an artificially created earthen mound, an acropolis like the one beneath New Delhi's Vice Regal Palace, with regulations prohibiting any building from surpassing the height of its roofline and bestowing it ' "divine authority" in a city of the "pure" (Ahmed 1992: 103).' It was located at the end of the capitol avenue signaling the authority of the Presidency (established by a new constitution in 1962) (Ahmed 1992: 130). The building, designed around a central courtyard and landscaped in the pattern of a Mughul garden, takes the form of a three tiered pyramid on a massive plinth and is reminiscent of the Buddhist monasteries at Taxila and the Mughul Emperor Akbar's tomb at Sikandra. According

to Ahmed the projected image of an impregnable fortress 'in its monumental affirmation of temporal power and self assurance bears testimony to a profound sense of insecurity' (Ahmed 1992: 135). In his view the dual legacies of Akbar the divine Emperor and the most significant historic site in the country wrapped in the rhetoric of American modernism 'epitomize this period of progress and self determination in Pakistan's history' (Ahmed 1992: 135). More importantly, the competition for and commission of a religious building of a comparable scale, the Faisal Mosque, did not take place until 1969 and was a response to rising discontent and fundamentalist sentiment. The winning entry by Turkish architect Vedat Dalokay was a tent-like granite structure with minarets at the four corners, a folded roof structure using innovative modern engineering.

DHAKA– SHER E BANGLA

The secularization of Islam through modernism was also evident in the design for Dhaka's capitol building. Dhaka rose to historical significance in 1906 when it was made the capital of the partitioned East Bengal by Lord Curzon in a bid to curtail the rising power of Bengali nationalism. As the capital of East Bengal, Dhaka had a Muslim majority and became fertile ground for the operations of the All India Muslim League. When the capital of British India was moved to Delhi in 1911, Dhaka lost its significance until independence, partition, and its emergence as the second capital of Pakistan. The design of the new capitol building was in fact conceived to deflect accusations of neglect of the eastern section of the country by West Pakistan. The decision to place the national assembly in a second capital seven miles away effectively separated the new and the old, a strategic

choice that was rapidly becoming common practice in new South Asian capitals (Nilsson 1973: 192).

The pressures of precedent in the region and the desire for foreign expertise undoubtedly influenced the choices made in Dhaka. The masterplan was drawn up by the English firm Minoprio, Spen and P.W. Macfarlane. Local master Muzharul Islam was soon replaced in designing the capitol building (Muzharilislam archive).

Kahn in many ways stands outside the lineage of foreign experts executing prominent commissions in South Asia, in that he was not ideologically linked to the colonial enterprise. Le Corbusier had envisioned civilizing the savage through architecture and Fry, Drew, and Koenigsberger were central to the climatic approach that revived colonial relationships and processes under the tropical label. Stone was undoubtedly influenced by this trend. Doxiadis with his grand plans for total environments was located between Europe and Asia, comparable perhaps with Costa and Niemeyer in his abstraction of modernist processes into universals. Kahn, in his own private pursuit of spirituality through architecture remained unaffected by these socio-political determinants.

Kahn's design, inspired by his love ruins, called for two citadels to house the assembly and other important institutions like the Supreme Court and a mosque (Nilsson 1973: 199). His objective was to capture the transcendental nature of assembly: 'the spirit of commonness.' The mosque woven into the fabric of assembly itself would capture the interweaving of religion and life in Pakistani (Nilsson 1973: 195). The whole complex, situated in a lake on the shores of the Buriganga, reflected the engagement between architecture and water which is inescapable in a nation located on the Gangetic plain.

Despite the very personal nature of Kahn's design and his undoubted egotism, the reception of the Dhaka Assembly contained none of the tensions so common in its colonial counterparts. In Bangladesh it is regarded as a gift, as noted by D.V. Doshi in Louis Kahn's biography *My Architect* written

by Kahn's illegitimate son, Nathaniel Kahn (Nesbit: 2003). Bangladesh provided a fitting setting for Kahn's life-long artistic obsession with ruins despite Kahn's complete ignorance of the complexities of the Bangladeshi socio-political context.

Sarah Ksiazek contextualizes Kahn's desire for communal symbolism through monumentality in post-war and post-CIAM 8 Europe, in which the two competing ideologies of new humanism and new regionalism were pitted against each other (1993). These ideologies were individually directed against the specters of communism and mass culture respectively, and helped shape the politics of architectural production during the Cold War. Stone, along with James Sterling and Paul Rudolph, was a proponent of regionalism and his interest in national and local identities served as a critique of Palladian humanism and the international style (Ksiazek 1993: 422). Kahn's architectural ambitions were more explicitly connected to democratic ideals: in his view well-constructed public spaces would foster patriotism among the general populace (Ksiazek: 1993, 424). His interest in the monumentalization of public space evolved into his interpretation of the role of governmental institutions (Ksiazek 1993: 427). Sher-e-Bangla Nagar was to be 'the Parthenon of the East' (Ksiazek 1993: 428).

The design of the capitol complex spanned a violent interregnum in East Pakistan's history and was imagined before and completed after the creation of an independent nation. The Bangladesh Liberation War, which lasted from 26 March to 16 December 1971, saw extremes of violence perpetrated by West Pakistan's army against the East Pakistanis. It is estimated that somewhere between two hundred thousand and three million people were killed, a further eight to ten million displaced and a large section of the intellectual community murdered. Following the involvement of the Indian military in support of East Pakistan, the nation seceded from West Pakistan and became Bangladesh.

If Islamabad referred to Islamic urban geometries which had also been exploited by Lutyens in New Delhi, then Kahn was referring to a tradition of fortifications associated with Mughul palaces. The congruence of mosque and palace space, evident in Fatehpur Sikri, is replicated in the Dhaka citadel of assembly, although their volumetric forms give the Dhaka building a secular modernist appearance. Nevertheless the use of reflecting pools, marble inlays, the octagonal plan and the formal contrast of a tall central building surrounded by low arcaded spaces are all derived from regional precedents. However, in Ksiazek's analysis, the separation of the site into two forums (one for the assembly and one for institutions and civic and private programs) 'reflects American concerns about the erosion of civic responsibility in the face of mass culture.' The Presidential Square and South Plaza were included in 800, 000 square feet of built public space (Ksiazek 1993: 433). The separation of church and state proved more difficult to maintain and Kahn resorted to typological articulation. There are four round towers on the outside of the mosque but only a single minaret towers over the legislature (Ksiazek 1993: 203). While it may in its transposition of Western humanist values indicate a colonial mentality, argues Ksiazek, the building has been reinterpreted by successive generations of Bengalis in order to express new aspirations (1993: 435).

Nilsson is critical of the citadel of institutions having been conceived along the lines of the Roman baths. In his view they envision a balance of health, culture and commercial life far beyond the expectations of the average citizen struggling for survival. The housing is likewise marked by class difference in terms of scale and spaces provided with the rigor of the Kahn's aesthetic adding an unlooked for severity to the built form. It is evident that Kahn's poetic vision is successfully abstracted into a democratic ideal overseen by Islam but like its predecessors discussed earlier in this essay lacks social coherence (Nilsson 1973: 204).

Whereas in the context of India, allusion to the Islamic architecture of a previous colonizer served a political purpose that was incongruent with the ideals of a Hindu majority, in Islamabad and Dhaka these allusions were more germane. However, the style of choice is modernism, the vocabulary of the future. The desire for differentiation from Hindu India and legitimation of an immigrant Islam deliberately diverted the national gaze toward the West. In the case of Dhaka however, the overtly secular form of the assembly was soon normalized and claimed by the popular imagination and has been cited as appearing on the backs of cycle rickshaws. It symbolizes a form of modernity concomitant with the urban aspirations of the citizenry and appears to gain currency in this manifestation.

THE LEGACY OF MODERNISM

The final South Asian capitol investigated in this essay deviates considerably from the others by reproducing its pre-colonial heritage through architectural form. While some of the examples touched on so far described selective applications of culture and others have displayed borrowed modernism as a politically benign aesthetic, all of them have demonstrated how the movement of political forms across different communities have altered their meanings. Local architects had to be trained to suppress these meanings and assume a kind of neutral aesthetic. In an impoverished society art for art's sake is an unlikely luxury and no built intervention (particularly a capitol building) is politically void, and the education of these architects in West or programs modelled after Western curricula has silenced questions of greater social significance. This education system produced a generation of local followers who idealised the European Masters through their interventions in the subcontinent. Capital city master plans and capitol buildings became new pedagogical theatres for architectural practice. Unlike their more affluent counterparts who had studied in the

tropical program at the AA, the architects who followed the masters learned their skills on site (Bhatt & Scriver: 1990).

Cumulatively these institutions projected a particular representation of South Asian architecture as global, cosmopolitan and progressive, values that would erase previous orientalist depictions of primitive and backward societies awaiting colonization. Yet these were aesthetic positions borrowed from the West, via Western architects and projected as outward signifiers of Indian modernity, more aspiration than reality. The horrors of partition, the agony of displacement, the internal inequities of a post-independent era were the subtext of these edifices which supposedly honored the democratic process.

A NEW GENERATION

Whereas the first generation of postcolonial architecture was completely assimilated into a western idiom, the next generation of postcolonial architects were more adventurous. Trained in the tropical style in schools like the AA, the JJ school of Art in India or the Regent Street Polytechnic, they were already indoctrinated into a particular perspective on modernism, architecture and the region. These perspectives carefully excluded issues disturbing to colonial governments like cultural, religious or racial identity or evidence of poverty. Turning this neutral lens towards such regional issues became the task of this generation.

Decolonization in the late twentieth century was a divisive process and gave rise to regional hostilities, an influx of displaced rural populations in cities and rapid industrialization. In every nation in Asia new institutional frameworks were applied to colonial structures, indigenizing the various administrative cultures. Accompanying this process was a repositioning of

ethnic and religious entitlements and the exclusion of minorities. democracy was the norm.

The affirmation of identity and search for cultural expression was reflected in a new movement in architecture which looked beyond universals to regional sources. It bore some of the formal attributes of Western postmodernism with regard to historicism and eclectic composition and recognized new factors like market forces and the creation of a middle class. The architectural buzzwords of the late twentieth century (which have spilled over into the new millennium) were vernacular, regional and tropical: agendas associated with earlier discourses but reinvigorated by global and environmental politics. It produced a stream of architecture precariously positioned between East and West.

The final example in this essay, the Parliament at Sri Jayewardenepura, marks a watershed in nation building architectures of the late twentieth century. Its authority and reputation has been largely constructed by a Western discourse on regionalism which saw in the place-specific architectures of this generation of professionals the redemption of modernist principles. 'Critical regionalism' as theorized by architectural historian Kenneth Frampton (1983) is contextual, derived from the location in which it is built. Place associations could be material and tectonic, they could respond to climate, to site and topography, any and all regional attributes. Yet while adhering to these tenets, the architects who adopted them were also aware of the need to engage with culture, not through monumental architectures but by identity and cultural confidence.

The introduction of the courtyard into the colonial city of Colombo is attributed to Sri Lanka's Geoffrey Bawa with his design of the Osmund and Ena de Silva House (1960-62), a house with seven courtyards, which was an anomaly in a city defined by colonial bungalows in gardens. The shift from an object in a landscape to a series of open spaces inserted into a built up area

marked an inversion of the figure-ground relationship. Bawa had previously tested this model with a clever amalgamation of several tenement houses into a single dwelling for his own use at Bagatelle Road. Bawa's reinvention of the courtyard complemented by his idealization of the picturesque made his work accessible to Western audiences. In his conversion of a fifty acre rubber estate into a private garden at Lunuganga, Bentota he incorporated elements and features from multiple cultures in one of the most appropriate examples of historical eclecticism. His approach to the landscape tradition, inspiration by the vernacular and regard for historicism combined in his design for the commission of the Sri Lankan Parliament building.

THE PARLIAMENT AT SRI JAYEWARDENEPURA

Bawa's parliament dared to be different from its South Asians predecessors that had called upon Western architects to legitimize their modernity. It was clearly derived from Asian precedents, although Bawa himself remained vague about its influences. 'Italian hill towns…English country houses… Greek, Roman, Mexican and Buddhist ruins, the Alhambra in Granada, the chapel in Ronchamp, the Mughul forts in Rajasthan and the marvellous palace of Padmanabapurum,' are cited as references (Lewcock, Özkan and Robson 1992). I have argued elsewhere that the ambivalence expressed by Bawa is typically postmodern, a refusal to be pinned down by a specific idiom. On the other hand, Bawa's equating an Asian example to a Western aesthetic approach is problematic. The form and spatial organization of the design as a cluster of five pavilions is reminiscent of wayside resting places, temple halls and other semi-enclosed architectural types.

This building would concretize Bawa's reputation as a regionalist. Shanti Jayawardene (1984: 218-19) traced the five pavilion plan to the monasteries at Anuradhapura published in Seneka Bandaranayake's book on monastic architecture (1974). She highlights the similarity between the pancayatana pirivena (monastic college composed of a large central building and four smaller ones surrounding it) and the spatial arrangement of the parliament complex. In the parliament, the central, five-story building is occupied by a three-storey chamber while ancillary spaces are located beneath it or in adjacent structures (Taylor 1986: 164). Jayewardene observes that while Bandaranayake's book on monastic architecture (1974) has no conjectural reconstructions of superstructure, several examples are cited. In her view, Bawa's design choices were determined by 'ideological" rather than "material considerations'(1984: 218-19).

Regionalism, or critical regionalism, as mentioned previously, was used to describe a contextual form of modernism, where specific regional attributes countered the hegemonic force of universal culture in the form of the International style. Respect for topography, natural light, climate, texture, tectonic features etc. helped locate a building in its geography and culture

without resorting to more overt religious or racially inflected characteristics. Bawa's choice of a vernacular derivative naturally distanced his architecture from temples and palaces most easily associated with race and religion. Nihal Perera, an urban historian of Lanka, cautiously ventures the label of critical vernacular, a style derived from the vernacular which is critical of globalization (1998: 147).

Bawa's commitment to the vernacular is evident in his study of vernacular architecture visible in many of his projects, like the de Saram terrace houses built alongside the southern coastal route to Lunuganga in 1973. In the body of the parliament, the vernacular suggests a democratic idiom for political expression, accessible to all. Whereas Sri Lanka's Hall of Independence was fashioned after the Kings Audience Hall in Kandy, for example, the parliament emulates pavilions unconnected to state authority. Similarly, when compared with the Neo-classical aesthetic of built parliament by A. Woodson of the Public Works Department, Bawa's solution is more palatable to an Asian polity.

The politics of place and space belie these simple gestures and challenge regionalist norms. The parliament's liquid setting is man-made, dredged from a marshland water retention area and an important wetland area for flora and fauna. The creation of an artificial lake and island to situate the parliament in, demanded considerable reconfiguration of the site.

The critical tenets of regionalism (the use of local materials, technologies and labour)are values that could not always be strictly adhered to in a building at this exaggerated scale. No local contractor was capable of executing such a building. The materials and technologies were imported; and the contracting firm was Japanese, the parliament with a grant from that government. The form of the pavilion, enlarged to accommodate an urban institution, mechanically ventilated and air conditioned and set apart from the city on its private island

was a far cry from the image of an accessible and democratic government. Since the parliament was completed in 1982, long before the escalation of violence, we cannot assume that the design responded to a security threat.

The parliament is by no means Bawa's best architectural work, in fact it is weaker in many respects than the institutional complexes of an earlier era. As argued by Lawrence Vale, creating a new capital reaffirming historic Sinhala-Buddhist ascendance was, on the part of Jayewardene, a tactical move to win favour with the majority Sinhalese (Vale: 1992: 192-3). Bawa unwittingly subscribed to this strategy of glorifying the president and creating a new capital on a politically sensitive site. Social equity was not the governing principle.

So why was this building hailed as the epitome of a regionalist architecture emerging from Asia? Perhaps it was due to its difference from the modernist examples that preceded it? Perhaps it was because the West, disgruntled with both its modernists and its postmodernists needed something else to focus on for aesthetic inspiration? The notion of indigenizing Western institutions through architecture had a regional and global appeal. But architecture is always political, and the designed artifact conveys meanings of cultural antiquity and modernity which have a life beyond that of the architect concerned. As evident in the designs for these five complexes from South Asia, this issue was addressed very differently in each respective context. Across the regional examples we witnessed the rejection of colonialism, the embrace of secular modernism, and the rise of religious, ethnocratic and authoritarian states. These changes were visible as static positions or future aspirations in the architecture of capitol buildings.

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