THE TRANSLATION
OF BELIEFS INTO BUILT FORM

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THE TRANSLATION OF BELIEFS INTO BUILT FORM

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Carol Iskandar Wakim
I dedicate my thesis book to my father Alexandre Toufik Wakim, whose love and support has inspired me, even after his death on June 10, 1985.
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PERSONAL INTRODUCTION

"Peace is the interval between two wars."

Jean Giraudoux.

It was only five o'clock in the morning when the shelling finally ended. Another sleepless night was added to our lives. The neighbors around me were tired and ready to sink in their beds. But first we had to hope that our beds were still there and that our apartments still existed. With a mixture of fear, exhaustion and hope we all picked up our blankets, pillows, candles and bottles of water and came out of our hideout to discover a beautiful sunrise. The sky was tinted with a mixture of pink and blue. It was ironical how nature continued every morning to display its beauty regardless of our miserable existence. On the streets tanks and jeeps were returning to their bases after a long and fruitful night. The soldiers, dirty, unhaven and tired, returned to their personal families after having accomplished their missions. As usual, there was no electricity, so we had to use the stairs instead of the elevator. The smell of dust and sulfur was overwhelming. Chips of paint, concrete and glass covered the floor and accompanied us to our apartments. It was only to my family's surprise and joy that our solid oak door greeted us.

It was a good sign. The apartment might still be behind it. Indeed it was. Of course not all of it but this was customary. Every night we lost part of it. This time all the glass and window frames had broken and popped out from the concrete walls. Under the impact of the shells, this was to be expected. When I finally saw my room, I jumped in my dusty bed and sank in it hoping for a couple of peaceful hours.

This night had nothing unusual. It was one of many that occurred in Beirut, Lebanon since April 1975 when I was only eleven years old. War was something I learned to survive with early in my life. It is difficult to live in or with a war, but survival is the key word. However, I can still remember days where Beirut was a beautiful and peaceful capital. It was often referred to as the window between the east and the west; the bridge between two different civilizations. Indeed it was a bridge, and the Lebanese people took great pride in that fact. However, this very cultural diversity that had built our civilization destroyed it later.

Beirut was a place where many cultures and religions co-existed in peace. Besides the Lebanese, we had the Americans, Europeans, and Arabs living in Beirut. All these different cultures and religions (Christian,
Moslem and Jewish mainly) lived in harmony. All kinds of foods, music, plays, newspapers, architecture, etc. could be found in Beirut. It was an open and progressive capital. What happened then, to arrive at such a catastrophic situation of hatred and destruction?

It is extremely hard in a paragraph or two to identify and explain the real cause behind a certain war. The reasons generally boil down to economic ones; however, my goal is not to resolve Lebanon's problems, but to explain the reasons that led me to choose religion as the catalyst for my thesis. Being from Lebanon, and having lived there until 1981, I experienced different cultures and religions in peace time as well as war time. I can honestly and rightfully claim that I prefer the first situation. It is not impossible to live in a society consisting of different cultures and religions; it has been done before. What is nearly impossible is to restore peace between different cultures and religions after a war or conflict between them has occurred. Everyone of us is an individual who believes in and adheres to some form of religious doctrine; however, we individual practitioners exist because of religious groups to which we have attached ourselves. We belong to them, affect them, and in a sense, create them as much as they create us. As new groups are created, they in turn affect existing groups just as existing groups affect their formation. The problem, however, is that these autonomous groups only react to each other and not interact with each other. Because of this lack of interaction most groups, consequently are suspicious of each other because they do not understand each other's goals. Being different becomes "bad" when the only bad and destructive thing is ignorance. Each group which eventually forms a mini-society must learn about how other religiously based societies feel and think to prevent any preconceived and prejudiced ideas which might settle into relations between the two. To open up society and make it more TOLERANT where a free exchange of ideas could occur is very important and critical to the very lives of the sub-societies which create it.
"Ask someone, "what's half of eight?" Receive the answer, "zero", and your first reaction is "Nonsense!" but stop a moment. The figure eight is composed of two small zeros piled on top of one another. Take it further. If a line were drawn down the middle of an eight, you would have two threes standing face to face.

By seeing things differently, we can make all kinds of discoveries. We can replace old perceptions with new ones and combine old ideas in new ways, bringing into being something which didn't exist before."

Christopher News Notes

It was a beautiful September day. The sun was shining and the trees offered their colorful autumn leaves to the scenery. I drove my car to the Architecture building because I was too nervous to walk. At three o'clock in the afternoon, I was going to present my thesis proposal. I tried to stay calm all day; after all it was a presentation and not my execution day. When my turn finally arrived, I gave my video tape with a mixture of assurance and reluctance. I then went behind the podium, cleared my voice, swallowed with determination and started with: "My name is Carol Wakim."

The presentation lasted one hour. My professors seemed to like my idea. I was on the right track. With a sense of accomplishment, I left the room and started to think about the questions raised by the jury. One of them was "Where are you going to find the information you need?" It is hard, when thinking about researching a certain subject—in my case the Jewish, Christian, and Muslim religions and architecture—to know where to start. The easiest place to start was the library. After reading numerous books and absorbing a "ton" of information, I still felt that something was missing. I felt that I was more comfortable with my own religion than with the other two. Why? It suddenly occurred to me that the reason was because I had not experienced or talked with anybody Jewish or Muslim. If I were going to design a complex where three different religious groups were to interact, it seemed only normal that I should be the first one to interact by starting to interview different religious people, in order to understand better the issue.

I started by interviewing Andrew Seager, a professor of Architecture. It was Thursday, September 18, 1985. We talked in the atrium for a long hour about the different kinds of Jewish denominations: Orthodox, Reform and Conservative. I found that the
Orthodox were the most conservative, while the Reform were more liberal in thinking, and theConservatists were inbetween, however, closer to the Orthodox. He mainly talked about his own personal experience of being Jewish. I discussed my thesis and asked him if he would go to sucha complex. After a smile he answered: "Why not?" He ended our conversation by inviting me to Yom Kippur.

Four days later, I went to the synagogue in Muncie for Yom Kippur. To my great astonishment, I soon acquired a feeling of belonging with the group. It was amazing how close the preaching of the Rabbi was to the one I had heard the previous Sunday at St. Mary's Church. This only reinforced my initial idea that even if we took different roads, we all had basically the same goal. Of course architecturally the synagogue did not look like a church or a mosque, but its purpose was the same; an extremely important point that strengthened my thesis that these diverse religious cultures could co-exist congenially.

Besides Mr. Seager, I also talked with Mrs. Judy Koor on Wednesday, October 2, 1985, and Mr. David Kenith eight days later. They both familiarized me more with the Jewish religion. Mrs. Koor and I read for two hours sections of the Judaica Encyclopedia, while Mr. Kenith talked more about the art and artifacts of the Jewish people.

My orientation and interest did not only focus of course, on the Jewish religion. On Monday, September 30, 1985, I interviewed Mr. Almoid from Syria and Mr. Khalid Zakaria from Malaysia. I was more familiar with the Muslim religion due to my Lebanese upbringing. I have had more contact with the Islamic religion and its culture. However, trying to put my past conceptions and pre-conceived ideas aside, I went to talk to Muslims. Mr. Almoid was extremely helpful. He first enumerated the different parts of a mosque, such as the Mihrab and Mimbar. Most important of all, he explained in detail the ceremony involved upon entering a mosque. He seemed extremely excited about the project and with confidence said that he would have no trouble going to such a complex to pray.

This was not the case with Mr. Saleh Al-Rebainan, the president of the Muslim Student Association (M.S.A.), from Saudi Arabia, and especially with Abdallah Srouji from Syria. I met both gentlemen on Tuesday, October 1, 1985 at the mosque in Muncie. They were both helpful in clarifying certain misconceptions that I had about the religion. Although Mr. Saleh
Al-Rebainan seemed sceptical about my project, it was very clear that Mr. Srouji was against it. He said it would never work and that he personally would not go and pray in a complex where Jewish or Christians had prayed before in such proximity. Of course at the beginning, I was on the defensive, but then I realized that the complex I was creating was not for everybody. Some people would dislike it but this proved that some would welcome it. After all, this conflict and alienation between different religions in Lebanon was what had motivated me to choose this specific subject for my thesis. I realized then that my task was not easy, but extremely interesting.

A number of talks followed with many different people. Talks not worthy of calling interviews, but nevertheless, extremely helpful. Communication in any major conflict is an open key to closed doors. The doors may not open wide, but communication does set them ajar.
"It is deep ignorance that inspires
dogmatism."

La Bruyère

It is often said that architects
have the tendency to design for
architects and not for the actual
client involved. Some architects
search for a project and a solution
having only one aim in mind: a
solution that would be accepted and
published by a leading architectural
journal. However, is this the only
criteria to evaluate a project's
success or failure? If we take this
one step further, we find that in
numerous instances, the users of a
particular building or complex are
outsiders and not the client involved.
This brings us to an important issue.
How does the future user feel about a
specific project? In my case having a
synagogue, a mosque, and a church in
one complex presented a dilemma.

To answer this question, I devised a
research plan which probed the public's
opinion of such an undertaking.
Enclosed are copies of questionnaires
which were completed by a number of
people from various backgrounds. The
questionnaire's intent was to get some
feedback on how the people, who
ultimately would use this facility feel
about such a complex. Although the
research cannot claim to represent
accurately the opinion of all the
people that might use the complex, it
gives us a general idea of how people
perceive religions as well as the use
of a complex that incorporates three
different ones.

If we look, for example, at the
first five questions, we notice that a
number of people do not know the
difference between a religion and a
denomination. This supports my initial
theory that a lot of problems are
created by ignorance rather than by
real, actual, and unsolvable
differences. If we do not even know
our own religion and denomination, how
do we expect to understand and accept
other religions. Ignorance is the main
barrier and obstacle to most of our
problems.

The complex will by no means
enlighten and solve all social
conflicts. However, it is one of the
first steps toward a solution to
decrease misconceptions and frictions.
"Religions are like different roads that converge to the same point. Whichever road we use is not important as long as we all reach the same goal."

Gandhi, Mohandas

Every human being is an individual who possesses certain beliefs and engages in certain activities as a means to express these beliefs. However, we do not live alone. We belong to societies that are created by collections of individuals. One of the pillars of our present society is religion. It unifies certain groups in peace, but on the other hand, it also creates friction between groups. As Jonathan Swift said: "We have just enough religion to hate each other, but not enough to love each other." What is in fact religion?

It can be said that it is a sedative, a set of beliefs that usually concerns a higher power. It makes us believe in a better future and sets a standard for living. Without religion, many say, that we would have no inner peace, security, guidelines and purpose for our existence. There are many different religions in our present world. Some are very old, while others are relatively new. A developed religion is an integrated system of beliefs, lifestyles, religious activities and organizations by which people give ultimate meaning to their lives by orienting them to what they believe to be sacred or of ultimate value.

The majority of us have been exposed to and understand at least one religion, usually our own. However, very few understand other religions. Some of us are not even aware that they exist and that even though they are different, they are not necessarily wrong. It is extremely important to understand other religions and to broaden our views on the subject. By getting more familiar with other religions, we have a better chance of understanding other cultures and political views, and ultimately we gain better insight into ourselves. There are two ways to study religion. The first is devotional study; the study of our own beliefs through exposure to different institutions such as family and church. It involves one's personal faith or religion which it claims to be the best. The context is the religious group. Finally the point of view of the participant of the religion being studied is claimed to be the only legitimate and worthy of interest. The second way to study religion, is academic study. It involves many different areas and approaches such as the sociologist who studies religion through the point of view of...
communities; the psychologist through individual dimensions; the philosopher through creeds and beliefs; and finally the anthropologist through codes, lifestyles and cultures. In general, the academic study involves more objectivity in approaching numerous and diverse religions. The context of the religion is academia. It aims at tolerance of a wide diversity. Finally the point of view of an outsider to the religion studied is taken very much into consideration and considered crucial to the research and understanding of a specific religion.

I personally chose academic study, in the sense that I tried to approach the study of religion in the most objective way. It is extremely hard at times to depart from one's own prejudice and preconceived ideas, however, not impossible. My personal beliefs and experiences, nevertheless, helped me reinforce and enrich my academic study. The study of religion through whoever's academic point of view is a fascinating subject; however, to what extent does it relate to architecture?

Form carries meaning and symbolically represents and provides "order" to experience. It is the result of a synthesis between what are face values, such as facts, and what are place values, such as ideas. Form, in most cases, derives originally from an idea; however, the critical question becomes: How is this idea translated or represented in a form? How does this communication between the idea and the form occur?

Representation as a communicative tool works as language does. Language is composed of morphemes which consist of semantics. In other words, the smallest unit to which one could attach meaning; and syntax which consist of the structural aspect. As Christian Norberg-Schulz wrote in Intentions in Architecture, language is a symbol system. A symbol system has to be constructed in such a way that easily adapts itself to regions of the object world. This adaptation is possible by means of a common logical form. "Symbolization", therefore, means representation of a state of affairs in another medium by means of structural similarity. We have the tendency to "...fix the object by means of signs...", describe experiences or objects. Norberg-Schulz's position and point of view on language reinforces the idea that representation works as a language. Representation, similar to language, has meaning and structure. This meaning and structure constitutes content. Content, in terms of meaning, asks the following questions. What did this particular designed form want to represent? What is the idea behind it?
A good example would be the dome of Hajia Sophia. This particular form was chosen to represent the idea of heaven. However, "heaven" could not have been represented without a good structural solution. When the dome collapsed the first time, although the meaning behind it was commendable, the structural problem had to be resolved. It is the synthesis of both meaning and structure that produces a form worthy of admiration. It is important at this point to note that when we talk about "structure" we do not only mean structure as a technical process. In addition, we mean anything related to the way these different forms work together, as a whole part of a content.

Beside content, as in language, representation must be articulated in context. The meaning, if not in context, cannot be interpreted. The sign, in other words, cannot be understood and assimilated. By context, we mean the environment where a belief is derived from and is being represented. Context involves concrete forms such as earth, sky, water, flowers, etc., which are understood through disciplines of thought known as ecology, geology, climatology, etc. In addition, and more complex to understand, context also involves the cultural environment—such as families, education, religion, government, etc. As Leon Krier wrote in *Classicism is Not a Style*, "The symbolic value which buildings must attain cannot be seen as the architect's personal and artistic problem. This value is always created by society, by the fact of inhabiting, by custom, and by mental activity of associating certain buildings with specific social activities. The architect can neither force nor dictate these associations, nor can he invent them as he wishes. He can only help them to take place, encourage them, make them apparent..." Leon Krier's statement supports the concept that an idea which has meaning and structure (content), if not in context, is invalid and inappropriate, since the idea must derive from context and be represented by content.

The issue of how symbolization works remained my main question. In order to answer it, a study involving a critical analysis of how particular beliefs are represented in built form was chosen. The study of representation was narrowed to three different religions: Jewish, Christian, and Moslem. These specific religions were chosen because their beliefs originated from the same area of the world (Middle East). In addition, they share numerous basic principles. Having a close content and context, it facilitates the study of representation of symbols, however, not being exactly similar in content or context, it leaves some areas in which
to compare and contrast the different ways of representation.

Upon studying Indianapolis, I quickly realized that it was a relatively new city, emerging and opening to new ideas. By hosting many different sporting events from last year's American Cup Gymnastics Finals to the upcoming Pan-American games, Indianapolis opens its doors to new people, new cultures, and new religions. It became apparent to me that a facility where an exchange of religious ideas could occur was needed. A complex involving a Synagogue, a Church and a Mosque, which would not be threatening to any particular religious group, but expose them at the same time to each other, became an idea that I felt needed to be looked into in more detail. As a designer, I felt that it would be challenging to integrate not only three different religious groups, but to interface three different traditional and historical buildings. These buildings have a history, a culture, a structure, and most important, an image of their own, a strong image of how they should look. This created the difficulty in the project, but also the challenge that I accepted early in September 1985.

The procedure that I chose to follow was:

1 - Understand the three religions: Jewish, Christian and Moslem.

- Form: Understand the symbolism, vocabulary, and built forms by studying the history of the three religions.

- Context: Understand the social/cultural issues which have led to the built form. In other words, the pattern of the vocabulary and the language created by the social groups.

2 - Design a project which combines the three religions and my understanding of these religions.

3 - Provide an opportunity to use an adaptive approach through the process by combining (in the process) research, analysis, design, and programming.

The Thesis:

Discover and understand the underlying ordering system and pattern of religious buildings; in particular, the synagogue, the church, and the mosque. In other words, find the underlying principles that govern these buildings. The main issue is REPRESENTATION.

How are particular beliefs represented in built form?
"The person who is learning must believe; the one who knows must examine."

Roger Bacon

To design a complex which involves a synagogue, a church, and a mosque without a clear and solid understanding of the religious beliefs and cultures of the people involved is an arduous task which eventually leads to a weak project. So it became obvious that very early in my thesis, I had to familiarize myself with the history of the three religions in terms of their cultural evolution of beliefs and of course, how those were articulated in built form. The following section involves a summary of the research that was done during Fall Quarter 1985 on the Jewish, Christian, and Moslem religions. It is worth noting that numerous basic ideas were taken into account in the final project which was presented to a jury on April 22, 1986.
THE MANDALA

Traditional architecture can be seen as a development of the fundamental theme of the transformation of the circle through the triangle into the square.

The square, the most externalized form of creation, represents earth-quantity whereas the circle represents heaven-quality. The integration of the two is through the triangle, which embodies both aspects.

The mandala is the most significant expression of the integration of the circle and the square in traditional art.
PRINCIPLES OF PAGAN* WORSHIP

The presence among men of a venerated God is identified with material representation in a given place.

This place becomes sacred as much as the whole temple encompassing it.

Worshippers and God do not communicate in a direct way. They have to go through the privileged and initiated class called the priests.

*Pagan: a follower of a polytheistic religion.
TYPICAL PAGAN TEMPLE

A. THE COURT: the public place reserved for all the community.

B. THE HOLY PLACE: the place of ritual where only the priests are admitted.

C. THE MOST HOLY PLACE: the sacred place, properly called a sanctuary, where the God is present, and in his presence is assured by the materialistic representation, for example a statue.
SOLOMON'S SEAL - THE STAR OF DAVID:

The "DYNAMIC" hexagon known as the seal of Solomon symbolizes various complementary aspects.

The triangle pointing upwards:
It symbolizes fire as well as a man active towards heaven and passive towards earth.

The triangle pointing downwards:
It corresponds to water or man passive towards heaven and active towards earth.

The triangle pointing upwards with a line through it:
It symbolizes air.

The triangle pointing downwards with a line through it:
It symbolizes earth.

Together they symbolize the synthesis of all the elements and the union of opposites or the unity of complements.

Notice the four major elements - fire, water, air and earth.
PRINCIPLES OF JEWISH WORSHIP

Jews never had an identifiable divine person who could be represented by a picture or statue. God must not be represented in any form. We notice that when talking about the prophets and patriarchs' encounter with God, it is always said that they "heard the sound of words, but saw no form" there was only a voice. No one could or can see him and live.

Jews believe in one God and life after death.
TYPICAL JEWISH TEMPLE.

A. THE VESTIBULE: the public place where the congregation stays.

B. THE HOLY PLACE: the place where priests celebrated the sacrifices of atonement. It was also the place where the communion of the priests and the Holy God occurred.

C. THE MOST HOLY PLACE: The place where the invisible God lived. God is a spirit, therefore, no statue could or can represent him. We notice in the plan that this room is a perfect empty cube, symbol of divine perfection.

It is worth taking note of the similarities between the pagan and the early Jewish temple.
HISTORY OF THE SYNAGOGUE:

It is to the period of the Babylonian exile that one must look, for the origin of the synagogue. The exile was lead by Ezekiel who was one of the four great Hebrew prophets (627 B.C.-570 B.C.). It is there that we find the first and closest reference to what we presently call and know to be a synagogue. The words are: "the assembly of elders before Him..." and more definite is the reference to "...the little sanctuary...".

It is not until the first century A.D. that the synagogue emerged as a well established and ancient institution.

Many of the customs and rituals of the temple were deliberately and consciously transferred to the synagogue, and on the other hand, some rituals were forbidden just because they belonged to the temple.

Prayer became regarded as the substitute for sacrifices.

The synagogue was essentially a creation of the people in response to their needs and during the exile it grew and developed in its function as a place where the sacred texts were read and the meaning enshrined.
HISTORY OF JUDAISM SINCE THE FIRST CENTURY AD:

FIRST TO FIFTH CENTURY AD:
A great period of borrowing seems to have happened between the Christians and the Jewish religion during these few centuries, however, around the fifth century A.D. came animosity between the two religions.

SIX CENTURY A.D.:
The talmud was completed. It forbided and still forbids pagan symbols.

SEVEN AND EIGHT CENTURY A.D.:
A great iconoclastic movement swept western and near eastern countries with Islam and Christian. The language for prayers changed from Greek and Latin to Hebrew.

MODERN PERIOD:
EIGHTEEN CENTURY: Hasidism had a definite effect on the synagogue. It downgraded the formality of the synagogue service, however, communal meals were stressed.

NINETEEN CENTURY - REFORMATION: A century later everything turned the opposite way. The ark became an impressive edifice with sanctuary and pulpit. There was no longer any differenciation between men and women in seating.

NINETEEN CENTURY - ORTHODOX: Some jews rejected the Reformation ideas claiming they were too liberal and against God's will. They continued to meet with the Halakhic requirements and in general could be considered very literal and strict in their beleifs and practices.
TYPICAL JEWISH SYNAGOGUE:

A. THE ENTRANCE:

B. THE NAVE: the place for the congregation. It is a physical meeting place with an invisible God.

C. THE READING DESK: the place where the scriptures are read by any member of the assembly.
PRINCIPLES OF EARLY CHRISTIAN WORSHIP:

The Christian believed that the only dwelling place of the living God on earth would be in the hearts of those men and women who were gathered together by His word and inspired by His Holy Spirit. The pagan concept of a holy place where God resided was rejected. It was and is in the community itself that God's presence lay.

The word church in Greek translates to Ecclesia which means assembly. Assembly meant not the building itself which housed the people but the gathered people themselves.

From the synagogue, the Christians inherited the reading of and meditation upon the word of God; and the custom was to corporate prayer both free and liturgical.
TYPICAL EARLY CHRISTIAN CHURCHES:

THE HOUSE CHURCH IN A GREECO-ROMAN
MANSION:
The Christian could worship anywhere since the congregation was more important than the place where the congregation met.
A. the vestibule.
B. the atrium.
C. the peristyle: the place where everyone gathered.

THE HOUSE ADAPTED FOR WORSHIP:
A. the vestibule.
B. the atrium.
C. the assembly room.
D. the dining room for the Lord's supper.
E. the baptistry.

THE CATACOMBS:
The persecution in Rome of the Christians by the pagan Romans brought the use of the catacombs by the Christians. These places where inherited or copied from ancient pagan funeral guilds.
A. the entrance hall
B. the atrium.
C. the sacrament was celebrated separately in the area with the three apses.
TYPICAL CHRISTIAN CHURCH BEFORE THE FIFTH CENTURY A.D.:

Despite the many basilicas in the form of the Latin cross, which was mainly a Western influence, the tradition of a circular church did not only survive mainly in the east but also in the west.
TYPICAL CHRISTIAN CHURCH DURING THE MIDDLE AGES:

Whereas in the past the community had gathered round the holy table in order to celebrate the joyful Eucharistic meal in the communion of the living risen Lord, the worshippers of this period now bowed before the altar from which they were kept at a distance. Everything called to their minds the bloody sacrifice of Christ, from which they had to gain pardon by virtue of their merits and penances, rather than the free grace and the final victory over death accomplished by the triumphant King.

The idea of community gradually faded away as fear and anxiety about individual salvation developed.
TYPICAL CHRISTIAN CHURCH DURING THE REFORMATION:

The ancient tradition of the circular church was re-discovered, thus expressing the gathering of the community.

The congregation faced center and the seats were set out in circular rows.

The pulpit was not set against a wall but placed near the center, suggesting that the preacher played an integral part in the community.

The circular plan, however, was not only done by the Reformation. The Catholics counter reformation also used it, adapting it to Roman liturgy.
TYPICAL CHRISTIAN CHURCH IN THE
TWENTIETH CENTURY A.D.:

Reason now prevails over faith
and secular culture triumphed.

The Christian church's propose to
give opportunities to the
congregation to listen and to have
contact with the living God
himself.

Whatever the liturgical
differences are, most denominations
show forth the rediscovery of
community spirit, which lead
architecture to the outward
expression of the convergent
gathering.

It is actually hard to label any
modern church as typical due to the
diversity in expression of our
present society.
MOHAMED'S BIOGRAPHY:

Mohamed was born in Mecca in April 569 or 570 A.D.
At the age of twenty five, he married a widow almost twice his own age and lived with her till her death.
At forty Allah's revelation came to him.
At first when he started preaching he had little success and a lot of opposition. He was soon violently persecuted which caused him to leave Mecca in 622 A.D. and go to Medina at the invitation of the people.
In spite of a lot of fights between the Meccans and the people of Medina, Mohamed was able to found a new religion, a new state and a new culture.
Mohamed died at the age of 63 in Medina.
Islam is an Arabic word which means peace, purity, acceptance and commitment.

Islam enjoins faith in the oneness and sovereignty of God, which creates an awareness of the unity and meaningfulness of the universe and of man's place in it.

The Qur'an is a comprehensive teaching on which sound systems of social justice, politics, economics, jurisprudence, law and international relations can be built from.

Islam does not teach ritualism. It places great emphasis on intention and action.

Man is the highest creation of God and he has a free will to make his own decision.

On the day of the judgement the entire human race will be resurrected; everyone will appear before the Almighty God and face the consequences of his deeds in his life.
ISLAMIC CONCEPT OF THE MANDALA:

In the Islamic perspective the concept of the mandala came to relate to the dimensions of the universe, the archetypes or divine names and qualities. When the prophet Mohamed described his ascent to heaven, he spoke of an immense mother-of-pearl dome resting on a square, with four corner pillars on which were written the four-part Qur'anic formula. "In the name of God - the compassionate - and the merciful" and from which flowed the four rivers of beatitude. The dome rested upon a square held apart by an octagon.
ISLAMIC SURFACE DECORATIVE PATTERNS

The basic geometric pattern most frequently used for the roofs, walls and floors in the mosque is the line.

The patterns of roofs tend to be developed by circular, centripetal lines symbolic of the cosmos, in difference to the generating lines of walls that tend to relate to the resolution of the circle to the square.

The floor is predominantly of square patterns symbolic of earth itself.

Because the surfaces generate infinite patterns, they combine space and time in endlessly repeated patterns.