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Sandy Isenstadt, Kishwar Rizvi, eds. *Modernism and the Middle East: Architecture and Politics in the Twentieth Century.* Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2008. x + 303 pp. $80.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-295-98821-4; $30.00 (paper), ISBN 978-0-295-98794-1.

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Whose Modernity?: Modernism, Modernization, and the Architecture of the Middle East

Emerging from the milieu of competing discourses on modernism and its relationship to "non-Western" contexts, *Modernism and the Middle East: Architecture and Politics in the Twentieth Century* (2008) is an attempt to bring this debate to the discipline of architecture. Co-edited by Sandy Isenstadt and Kishwar Rizvi, and following from their 2003 conference at Yale University, its ten essays are primarily by architectural historians yet the resulting collection is markedly interdisciplinary. The editors define modernization both as "the extension of industrialized building processes," and as an ideology in the form of "ideals of progress and standards of comfort" (p. 3). Modernization is demonstrated throughout the book to take a variety of forms–some of which have been, in various contexts, recognized as "modernism." This dates to the dismantling of the Ottoman Empire, the decline of European colonialism, and the rise of the nation-state in the Middle East. The book's main arena of analysis is the relation between modernization, architecture, and society in the Middle East throughout the twentieth century.

As signaled by its ambitious title, this collection seeks to cover a wider range of topics than that of modernization processes alone. Central to the book is the question of how "modernism"–a notion that the contributors typically conceive as that first conceptualized in a Western framework, i.e., dependent upon industrialization and capitalism–was used in defining national identity within the process of state formation. From the first pages the editors imply that modernism depended on industrialization and capitalism and was foreign to the Middle East, though simultaneously they set up the possibility for other "versions" of modernism (p. 3). The tension between these understandings of modernism sets up an interesting dialectic throughout the text. And despite the burdensome dichotomy of East/West, the specter haunting the essays is the continuing debate about whether modernism is a Western phenomenon, or whether it can be found in non-Western contexts either before or during its development in the West. This raises questions regarding the existence of either a "plurality" of "modernisms" as well as the idea that non-Western contexts developed "*alternative* modernisms" entirely different from their namesake in Europe. One of the appealing approaches of this compilation is that it brings questions about modernism from postcolonial theory squarely into the discipline of architecture and discussions of spatial politics. These questions are entirely relevant to architecture since it is one of the primary physical means of expressing culture or identity, and thus a great deal can be discerned from what and how a society or group decides to build. Additionally, these essays attempt to connect more intimately the theoretical work on modernism and its interpretation and expression in the built environment.

Surprisingly, some of the most compelling cases for the discussion of modernism in its Middle Eastern context are missing from this study. Iran is discussed briefly in the introduction and Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and Lebanon only in Gwendolyn Wright's insightful and comparative essay. Egypt's very long, rich, and complicated relationship with modernism is underaddressed, and little attention is devoted to Syria, Lebanon, and the Gulf States. This is not to say that any one essay in some way falls short of addressing the book's main theme, but rather this selective coverage is partially due to the idiosyncratic nature of the survey, which would be strengthened by including more of the geographical area it purports to represent.

The first of the book's three parts contains two chapters on the colonial era demonstrated through the British

Mandate in Palestine and Italian colonialism in Libya. These essays effectively set up an opposition between modernism and the "traditional," where the modernization of "indigenous" architecture validated colonial rule. Annabel Wharton's essay explores the attempts by Jerusalem's governor Ronald Storrs to keep the city from becoming "modern" under the British Mandate through the guise of preservation. Brian McLaren argues that due to the Roman legacy in North Africa, the Italians saw Libya as their "fourth shore," and felt an ancestral claim to the territory. Italian colonial architects who traveled to Libya used what they argued were Roman motifs in their "modern" architecture to legitimize their colonial claim. In both Jerusalem and Libya, colonial authorities defined the modern in opposition to what it saw as "traditional."

The second section of the book contains six essays that focus on the use of architecture as the visual expression of the national modernization process. The two essays by Magnus T. Bernhardsson and Panayiota I. Pyla outline how the Hashemite kings of Iraq attempted to modernize Baghdad through the Iraqi Development Board (IDB) in the 1950s, hiring foreign experts and thus importing modernism. Bernhardsson describes the IDB's relationship with architects such as Le Corbusier, Walter Gropius, Alvar Aalto, and Frank Lloyd Wright and articulates Iraq's growing desire to express something of the "nation" in its new architecture. He shows that while Iraqi architects were simultaneously trained abroad, bringing modernism from elsewhere, the efforts to express the nation were more complex. Rifat Chadirji, for instance, conflated a modern planning aesthetic with "local" and sometimes ancient "traditions" in order to effectively express an "Iraqi identity" through Baghdad's architecture, and challenged Western architectural definitions of the modern. Pyla's chapter focuses on Greek architect and planner Constantinos Doxiadis' master plan for Baghdad and how it was appropriated by different political entities, an example of how modern architecture and planning were politicized.

This section allots considerable attention to the struggle with modernism as a component of nation-building in Israel and the Occupied Territories (the subject of four out of the volume's ten chapters). Building upon Wharton's discussion of British-Mandate Jerusalem, Roy Kozlovsky's chapter on Jewish immigration and housing centers around the Israeli government's use of the prefabricated housing unit and *ma'abara* (transit towns) in the 1950s. He provides the reader with a critical insight into Israel's housing problems after the Second World War by questioning the controversial relationship they had to expanding settlement communities by positing that the *ma'abara* were not merely created to accommodate the large number of new immigrants, but were rather a physical expression set up "in order to naturalize the artificiality of the Zionist nation-state" (p. 148). Alona Nitzan-Shiftan focuses on Jerusalem mayor Teddy Kollek, and his attempts to modernize the city following the 1967 war through the 1968 master plan, which included American and European input. Central to Nitzan-Shiftan's analysis are the different interpretations, or forms, of modernism, which she classifies as "developmental" and "situated." She explores the meanings of the two modernisms in Jerusalem as seen by the planners and the hired consultants who criticized their plan due to its "institutional modernist urban planning" schemes, highlighting the role of modernism in occupied East Jerusalem (p. 171). The essay by Waleed Khleif and Susan Slyomovics tells the story of the 1956 massacre at Kafr Qasim, which at the time was on the border of Israel and the West Bank, and the different interpretations and methods in how it was and still is remembered. Delving into spatial politics, the essay questions modernism's role in memory and its physical manifestations through an analysis of poetry and its relationship to a place.

Sibel Bozdogan's contribution on Turkish architectural culture in the 1950s is the most effective at revealing the fascinating intricacies of a nation-state's relationship to "international modernism" and "modernization theory." Set in Istanbul, it takes the Hilton Hotel as one example of modernization and Americanization in architecture. She explores the broader cultural implications of this building in the city, which was designed by the American architectural firm Skidmore Owings & Merrill in collaboration with Sedad Hakki Eldem, a Turkish architect famous for his leadership of the national architecture movement in the 1930s and 40s. Exploring the complex conflation of "local" Turkish identities with forces of American modernization, Bozdogan offers examples that explore the relationship between modernism and the city, the fluctuations in support for the movement, as well as how its legacy continues today.

The final chapters by Gwendolyn Wright and Nezar AlSayyad conclude the book, while demonstrating the fecundity of the topic for future research. To illustrate this, Wright expands the analysis to Riyadh, Cairo, and Beirut, which were not discussed elsewhere in the book. Interrogating the role that history and location play in the process of modernization in each of these distinct cities, she concisely and convincingly illustrates how modernism was introduced in each city, revealing the complex meanings of modernism in the Middle East. AlSayyad offers a regional overview of modernism, which he divides into

three periods: the colonial phase, the era of independence and nation-building, and finally the era of globalization. He explores the problematic notion of a "universal modernism," maintaining that it is impossible to accept a universal application due to the "permanently hybrid nature of architecture" in the Middle East (p. 263). His discussion of hybridity and national identity, and their role in modernism, alludes to the variety of modernisms to be found in the Middle East and to their relation to modernity. This term is conceptually different and has an entire genealogy of its own, shifting the discussion away from the role of modernism, its expression in the Middle East, and its origins and varieties. Modernism, especially as articulated in the introduction, has, until this point, been used to either define the technological, ideological, and aesthetic twentieth-century movement, or to define the process of modernization in the twentieth century that affected the Middle East.

This conceptual problem of the relationship between modernism and modernity, briefly alluded to in the introduction and only dealt with in this last essay, comes perhaps too little, too late. The editors have situated the book precariously between advocating for alternative versions of modernism and acknowledging modernism as a Western phenomenon that was subsequently translated to non-Western contexts. Isenstadt and Rizvi do discuss the Middle East's "shared experience of modernity" (p. 7), but do not dwell on it as a condition and are content to espouse its expression in the form of modernization. Despite the book's sometimes confusing position (no doubt due to the multifaceted nature of the concepts involved), the editors do not theorize how these "Middle Eastern forms of modernity" might be possible, instead leaving the task to the individual authors. Certainly, they note that several essays profile individuals who led to the creation of "Middle Eastern forms of modernity," suggesting that distinct forms indeed are possible (p. 4).

In the end the reader is left to decide whether a singular concept of modernism is applicable (and modified by local contexts), or if "alternative modernisms" exist for each unique local context. For the most part, despite the many voices, the book seems to indicate not that there are different types of modernism, as described, but rather that a Western modernism is experienced differently in different contexts. In other words, modernism means different things to different people and "alternative modernities" are rather expressions of modernism appropriated or adapted to different contexts.

In conclusion, the book provides valuable context to debate the meanings of modernism. Due to the rich content of its case studies, it would make a fine addition to theoretical seminars, and a valuable tool for the general scholar or student of the Middle East or postcolonial studies. Many of the chapters demonstrate that modernism can be appropriated, translated, reinvented, utilized, or modified, yet they also suggest that its agents are still dealing with a single conceptual entity despite its variety of definitions. From a pedagogical standpoint, such convergence on relatively stable terminology may be necessary. And while the editors acknowledge the problems associated with almost inescapable essentialist language associated with discussions of the "Middle East," "Europe," and "modernism," they nonetheless align the essays in terms of their understanding of modernism and its meaning and significance in the Middle East and carve out a greater space through which to engage these topics in the field of architecture and beyond.

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