



Authenticity in islamic sacred spaces: Case studies of distinctive regional mosques

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ABSTRACT

This paper delves into the authenticity of Islamic sacred spaces through an architectural and cultural examination of distinctive regional mosques, specifically Bait Ur Raiyan Mosque, The Mamluki Lancet Mosque, and mosques in Sub-Saharan Africa. By exploring these mosques as case studies, the research aims to highlight the unique aspects of Islamic architectural authenticity that reflect the cultural, historical, and regional diversities within the Islamic world. Utilizing a comparative analysis method, the study investigates the architectural elements, design principles, and contextual significance that contribute to the mosques' authenticity. The findings reveal that despite geographical and cultural variances, these mosques share a common commitment to Islamic architectural traditions while also adapting to local influences and needs. This study underscores the importance of preserving architectural authenticity in maintaining the cultural and religious identity of Islamic sacred spaces. It contributes to a broader understanding of how Islamic architecture has evolved across different regions, offering insights into the delicate balance between tradition and innovation in the construction of sacred spaces.

KEYWORDS: architectural authenticity; comparative analysis; cultural identity; islamic architecture; regional mosques

1. Introduction

Mosque architecture plays a significant role in Islamic culture, reflecting the evolution of Islamic societies and their cultural and religious values (Wolper & Behrens-Abouseif, 1999). The design of mosques, particularly their interior, is crucial in creating a spiritually uplifting environment (Othman & Zainal-Abidin, 2011). The architecture of mosques in the US and Britain also serves as a reflection of the Muslim community's identity and aspirations (Biondo, 2006). The historical development and regional diversity of mosque architecture have been extensively studied, with a focus on the physical form, religious role, and modern significance of mosques (Khan, 1990). The classification of mosque architectural styles in Malaysia and the influence of these styles have been explored, emphasizing the need for a reevaluation of the architectural message of Islam (Rasdi and Tajuddin, 2007). The importance of maintaining the symbolic and spiritual value of mosque architectural elements, while incorporating contemporary inputs, has been highlighted (Asfour, 2016).

Islamic architecture, a manifestation of divine worship and communal identity, offers a rich tapestry of styles and forms that vary significantly across different regions and epochs.

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This diversity not only reflects the geographical and cultural contexts in which these structures were conceived but also illustrates the adaptability and innovation within Islamic architectural traditions. At the heart of this architectural diversity are mosques, which serve not just as places of worship but as community centers, educational institutions, and symbols of Islamic identity. This study focuses on the authenticity of Islamic sacred spaces, through a detailed examination of Bait Ur Raiyan Mosque, The Mamluki Lancet Mosque, and distinctive mosques in Sub-Saharan Africa. These case studies represent a broad spectrum of architectural responses to environmental, cultural, and historical influences, providing a fertile ground for exploring the concept of authenticity in Islamic architecture.

The notion of authenticity in architecture often invokes discussions around the preservation of original design elements, materials, and construction techniques, alongside the adaptation of these spaces to contemporary needs and contexts. In Islamic sacred architecture, authenticity also encompasses the adherence to religious and cultural values, manifesting in the spatial organization, ornamentation, and symbolic aspects of mosque design. This paper posits that the authenticity of a mosque extends beyond its physical attributes to include its ability to reflect and accommodate the evolving religious, social, and cultural practices of its community. By examining the architectural characteristics and contextual relevance of Bait Ur Raiyan Mosque, The Mamluki Lancet Mosque, and mosques in Sub-Saharan Africa, this research aims to uncover the layers of meaning that contribute to their perceived authenticity.

The significance of studying these mosques lies not only in their architectural uniqueness but also in their representation of the broader trends in Islamic architecture across different regions. This research is guided by the hypothesis that while each mosque embodies distinct regional characteristics, they collectively illustrate a common Islamic architectural language that is both diverse and unified in its expression of faith and community. Through this comparative analysis, the paper seeks to contribute to the ongoing discourse on architectural authenticity, specifically within the context of Islamic sacred spaces, and to highlight the importance of these structures in the cultural and religious landscape of their respective communities.

2. Methods

The research methodology employed in this study is rooted in a qualitative architectural analysis, augmented by a comparative case study approach that focuses on Bait Ur Raiyan Mosque, The Mamluki Lancet Mosque, and distinctive mosques in Sub-Saharan Africa. These mosques were selected based on their architectural significance, geographical diversity, and their representation of different historical and cultural contexts within the Islamic world. Data collection involved an extensive review of architectural documentation, scholarly articles, and historical records, complemented by visual analysis of design elements, ornamentation, and spatial configurations. This multi-source data collection strategy was designed to provide a comprehensive understanding of each mosque's architectural features, construction techniques, and contextual relevance. The criteria for authenticity in architectural elements included originality in design, adherence to Islamic architectural principles, materials used, and the incorporation of regional characteristics.

The analytical framework applied in this study is based on both descriptive and interpretive analyses. Descriptive analysis was used to catalog the physical and aesthetic characteristics of each mosque, including layout, materials, decorative schemes, and structural innovations. Interpretive analysis, on the other hand, examined how these mosques reflect the cultural, religious, and historical narratives of their respective regions. This dual approach allowed for a nuanced understanding of architectural authenticity, considering both tangible and intangible attributes. Comparative analysis was pivotal in identifying commonalities and differences among the case studies, thereby illuminating the

diverse expressions of authenticity in Islamic sacred architecture. This methodology not only facilitated a deeper appreciation of each mosque's unique architectural identity but also contributed to the broader discourse on the preservation and interpretation of Islamic architectural heritage.

3. Results and Discussion

The concept of authenticity in architecture is a complex and evolving one, particularly in the context of preserving modern and recent heritage. Fixler (2008) and Levine (2008) both challenge traditional notions of authenticity, suggesting that it should be more flexible and consider the impact of interventions on a building's meaning (Fixler, 2008; Levine, 2008). Prudon (2017) and Grubbauer (2017) further complicate this by highlighting the dichotomy between material authenticity and the need for innovation and adaptation in preserving modern and post-modern architecture (Prudon, 2017; Grubbauer, 2017). The role of the architectural vernacular in socially engaged architectures is critiqued by Grubbauer (2017), who warns against its fetishization (Grubbauer, 2017). MacDonald (1996) and Martínez (2019) both explore the philosophical and practical difficulties of conserving modern buildings (Macdonald, 1996) with Martínez (2019) proposing verisimilar interventions as an alternative to verifiable authenticity (González Martínez, 2018). Plevoets and Van Cleempoel (2011) emphasize the importance of a common vocabulary and the need for adaptation in the preservation of historic buildings (Plevoets and Van Cleempoel, 2011).

3.1 Architectural Features and Authenticity of Bait Ur Raiyan Mosque

The Bait Ur Raiyan Mosque stands as a testament to the nuanced blend of traditional Islamic symbolism with contemporary design techniques, nestled in the serene landscape near the Arial Kha River in rural Bangladesh. This mosque, designed by Cubeinside, is a compelling example of modern architectural endeavors that maintain the essence of Islamic spiritual and communal spaces while innovatively interpreting traditional motifs. Through a meticulous application of abstract semiotics, the mosque embodies the profound symbolism inherent in Islamic architecture, utilizing geometry not just as a design tool but as a medium for spiritual and conceptual expression.

At the core of the mosque's design is the abstraction of conventional Islamic architectural elements — the dome, minarets, and arch. Rather than adopting these features in their traditional forms, Bait Ur Raiyan Mosque reimagines them through a contemporary lens, embodying the principle of "Abstract Semiotics." The dome, described as floating, permits daylight to penetrate the interior, creating an immersive experience of the sky's vastness above. This innovative approach not only enhances the mosque's spatial quality but also deepens the spiritual connection of the individuals within. Similarly, the minarets are not just structural but sculptural, reaching towards the heavens, while the entrance arch is volumetrically redefined to be more welcoming, thereby fostering a sense of community and openness. The mosque's materiality further contributes to its authenticity, with the use of red brick and stone drawing on Bangladesh's rich mosque heritage. The choice of materials not only respects the traditional palette but also introduces a timeless quality through the contrast of the deep red bricks against the lush green surroundings. The integration of marble for flooring serves a dual purpose: it remains cool even during the intense summer heat, enhancing the environmental sustainability of the building, and adds a tactile dimension to the spiritual experience. Natural ventilation and lighting play crucial roles in the mosque's design, with large apertures and a strategically placed skylight ensuring a well-lit and airy prayer space, emphasizing the mosque's harmony with its natural surroundings.



Fig. 1. Bait Ur Raiyan Mosque. Photos by Archdaily
(*Bait Ur Raiyan Mosque / Cubeinside, 2024*)

Bait Ur Raiyan Mosque exemplifies a holistic approach to architectural authenticity in Islamic sacred spaces, where tradition and innovation coalesce. Through its abstract semiotics, thoughtful material selection, and human-centric design, the mosque illustrates how contemporary architectural practices can reinterpret traditional symbols to create spaces that resonate with spiritual significance and communal identity. This case study underscores the evolving nature of authenticity in Islamic architecture, where maintaining the essence of sacred spaces involves a dynamic interplay between historical reverence and contemporary expression, see fig 1 above.

3.2 Architectural Features and Authenticity of The Mamluki Lancet Mosque

The Mamluki Lancet Mosque stands as a testament to the rich architectural heritage and enduring influence of Mamluk architecture, distinguished by its ingenious blend of form, function, and spiritual symbolism (Keller, 2021). This mosque, while embracing the historical essence of Mamluk design, introduces modern interpretations that respect and revitalize its traditional roots, thereby contributing to the discourse on architectural authenticity in contemporary Islamic sacred spaces (Juvin, 2019).

At the core of The Mamluki Lancet Mosque's design philosophy is the reinterpretation of classic Mamluk architectural elements—most notably, the lancet arch, which serves as both a structural and symbolic component. The lancet arch, characterized by its pointed apex, has been ingeniously adapted in the mosque to create a sense of verticality and divine

ascent, drawing both the eye and the spirit upwards. This architectural feature not only echoes the celestial aspirations of Islamic spirituality but also integrates natural light in a way that enhances the mosque's sacred atmosphere. The strategic use of lancet arches in windows, doorways, and interior spaces fosters a play of light and shadow that changes throughout the day, reminding worshippers of the transient nature of earthly existence and the eternal presence of the divine (Fragai, 2019).

In a nod to authenticity, the mosque employs traditional materials such as stone and wood, carefully chosen for their historical significance and durability. These materials are used not merely for their aesthetic qualities but also for their ability to connect the structure to its historical and cultural context, thereby grounding the mosque in the rich legacy of Mamluk architecture (Farr, 2017). The use of intricate geometric patterns and arabesques, a hallmark of Islamic art, further embellishes the mosque's interior and exterior, creating a visual narrative that speaks to the unity of creation and the infinite nature of God. These decorative elements, while adhering to traditional Islamic artistic principles, are applied in a manner that reflects contemporary sensibilities and technological advancements, ensuring the mosque's relevance and appeal to modern worshippers.

The authenticity of The Mamluki Lancet Mosque is not solely derived from its architectural features and material choices but also from its response to contemporary environmental and social concerns. In embracing sustainable design principles, the mosque integrates green spaces and water features not only to enhance its aesthetic and spiritual ambiance but also to promote environmental stewardship, an important aspect of Islamic ethics. The incorporation of advanced ventilation systems and energy-efficient lighting further underscores the mosque's commitment to sustainability, marrying the wisdom of the past with the innovations of the present, see fig 1 below.

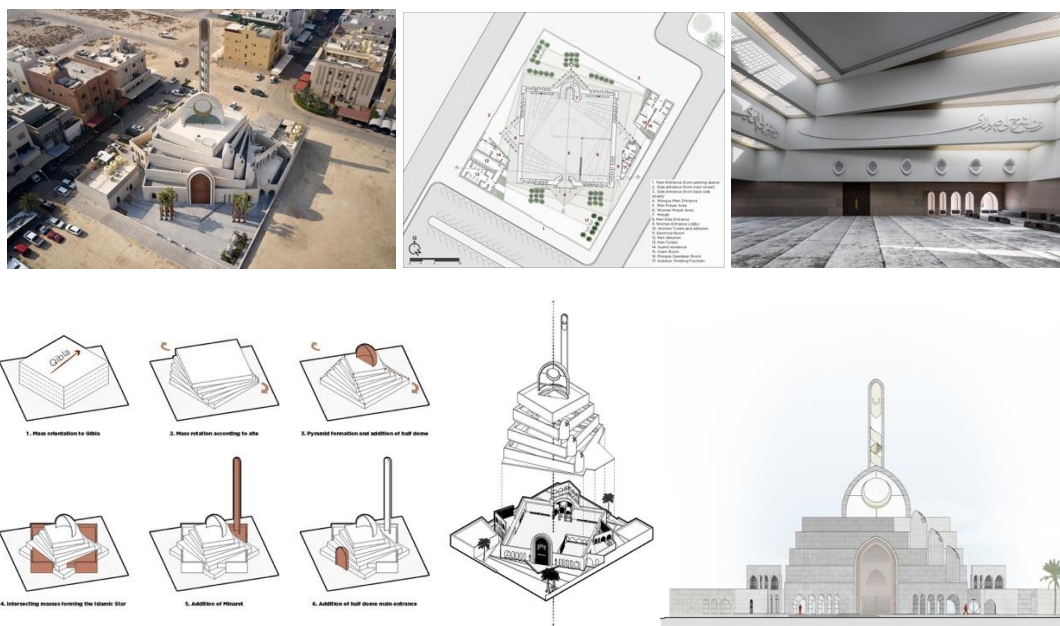


Fig. 2. The Mamluki Lancet Mosque. Photos by Archdaily
(*The Mamluki Lancet Mosque / Babnimnim Design Studio, 2024*)

The Mamluki Lancet Mosque represents a harmonious blend of historical authenticity and modern innovation, embodying the spirit of Mamluk architecture while addressing the needs and aspirations of today's Muslim community. Its thoughtful design, which respects traditional forms while embracing contemporary challenges, serves as a compelling example of how sacred architecture can honor its heritage while forging a path toward a sustainable and spiritually resonant future, see Fig 2 above.

3.3 Architectural Features and Authenticity of Distinctive Mosques in Sub-Saharan Africa

The mosques of Sub-Saharan Africa stand as a vibrant testament to the region's rich cultural tapestry and Islamic heritage, distinguished by their distinctive architectural features and authenticity (Nissanke & Sindzingre, 2006). These structures, deeply rooted in the local environment, community practices, and Islamic tradition, exemplify a unique synthesis of function, faith, and culture. Their architectural diversity reflects the adaptation to various climates, available materials, and the influence of local art and construction techniques, resulting in a remarkable variety of styles that are uniquely African yet universally Islamic (Adahl, 1993). A hallmark of Sub-Saharan African mosque architecture is the use of earthen materials, such as mud bricks, adobe, and thatch, which not only provides natural insulation but also connects the structures to their natural surroundings (Pradines, 2022). This choice of materials demonstrates a profound respect for the environment and a commitment to sustainability that predates modern green building practices. The Great Mosque of Djenné in Mali, with its massive adobe walls and wooden toron spikes, serves as an iconic example, embodying the region's architectural ingenuity and the community's collective efforts in maintenance and restoration, known as the Crepissage de la Grande Mosquee ceremony (Adogame, 2007). This practice not only preserves the physical structure but also reinforces the mosque's role as the heart of the community, illustrating a living tradition of communal care and spiritual devotion, see fig. 3 below.



Fig. 3. The Distinctive Mosques of Sub-Saharan Africa. Photos by Archdaily
(*The Distinctive Mosques of Sub-Saharan Africa*, 2023)

Innovative design features adapted to local conditions are another defining characteristic of Sub-Saharan African mosques. Large, overhanging roofs provide shade and reduce heat, while strategically placed ventilation openings ensure airflow, cooling the interior naturally (Ludovic, S. J., 2021). The use of vibrant colors and intricate patterns in some regions adds a visual dimension to the mosques, reflecting local artistic traditions and enhancing the spiritual ambiance. For instance, the painted mosques of northern Nigeria, adorned with elaborate frescoes and motifs, integrate Islamic calligraphy and geometric patterns with indigenous symbols and narratives, creating a unique visual language that speaks to the confluence of faith and local identity (Quinn & Quinn, 2003). Moreover, the adaptive re-use of space within these mosques reveals a dynamic approach to religious and community life. Many mosques serve multiple purposes, functioning as educational centers, meeting halls, and places of refuge, thereby underscoring the mosque's role as a community hub. This multifunctionality not only demonstrates the versatility of Islamic architecture but also reflects the adaptability of Islamic practices to local social contexts, highlighting the

intrinsic connection between architectural form, function, and the community's evolving needs.

The distinctiveness of Sub-Saharan African mosques, with their innovative use of materials, adaptation to environmental and social conditions, and integration of local art forms, offers a compelling narrative of architectural authenticity (Ellis & Ter Haar, 1998). These mosques articulate a profound understanding of Islamic architecture as a dynamic expression of faith, culture, and environmental stewardship, showcasing a unique dialogue between tradition and adaptation that continues to evolve, enriching the global tapestry of Islamic sacred architecture. The distinctive mosques of Sub-Saharan Africa embody a rich legacy of architectural authenticity that is both grounded in Islamic principles and deeply interwoven with the fabric of local cultures and environments. Through their form and function, these mosques narrate stories of faith, community, and creativity, contributing uniquely to the diverse world of Islamic architecture (Bompani, 2015).

Table 1 below provides a comparative overview that highlights the diversity and commonalities among the mosques in terms of architectural design, historical context, and their roles within their communities. It serves as a concise reference point for discussing the intricate balance between maintaining architectural authenticity and embracing regional characteristics or modern necessities.

Table 1. Comparative analysis of architectural authenticity and cultural significance

Analysis Aspect	Bait Ur Raiyan Mosque	The Mamluki Lancet Mosque	Distinctive Mosques in Sub-Saharan Africa
Location	Bangladesh	Kuwait	Various locations across Sub-Saharan Africa
Architectural Style	Contemporary with traditional influences	Mamluki with modern adaptations	Diverse, ranging from Sudano-Sahelian to modern interpretations
Historical Period	21st Century	Blends historical Mamluki elements with contemporary design	Varies, with some structures dating back to the 13th century
Key Architectural Features	Minimalist design, use of natural light, water elements	Lancet arches, intricate geometric patterns, stone, and woodwork	Earthen constructions, wooden beams (toron), large conical towers
Cultural Significance	Reflects modern Islamic architectural trends while respecting traditional forms	Merges historical Islamic architectural elements with contemporary needs	Demonstrates adaptation to local climates, materials, and social customs; serves as a symbol of Islamic presence and community identity
Construction Materials	Modern (concrete, glass, steel) with traditional elements (wood, stone)	Traditional materials (stone, wood) with some modern enhancements	Predominantly local materials (mud brick, wood, thatch) with some modern adaptations
Spiritual & Social Role	Community center, prayer space, educational functions	Historical preservation, community gatherings, religious education	Central to community life, serving religious, social, and sometimes political roles

Table 1 above serves as a succinct synthesis of the architectural and cultural distinctions and commonalities among three significant Islamic sacred spaces situated within diverse geographical and cultural contexts. By examining variables such as location, architectural style, historical period, key architectural features, construction materials, and the spiritual and social roles of these mosques, the table facilitates an understanding of how authenticity in Islamic sacred architecture manifests in response to both universal Islamic principles and local traditions. This comparative framework underscores the dynamic interplay between adherence to Islamic architectural heritage and the innovative adaptations necessitated by regional influences and contemporary challenges.

In exploring the concept of architectural authenticity, the analysis extends beyond the mere preservation of historical styles and materials, proposing a more nuanced understanding that also encompasses the intangible aspects of architecture, such as the embodiment of community identity, spiritual values, and continuity of tradition. For instance, while Bait Ur Raiyan Mosque and The Mamluki Lancet Mosque illustrate how contemporary and historical design elements can be seamlessly integrated, the mosques of Sub-Saharan Africa exemplify the adaptation of Islamic architecture to local environmental conditions and materials, thus enriching the Islamic architectural tradition with unique regional expressions. These case studies reveal that authenticity in Islamic sacred spaces does not solely reside in replicating traditional forms but also in the ability of a structure to convey spiritual significance, foster community cohesion, and reflect the cultural heritage of its surroundings.

Adding a new dimension to the discourse on authenticity, the analysis suggests that the authentic preservation of Islamic sacred spaces in the modern world may also involve sustainable practices and ecological considerations. For example, the use of local and sustainable materials in the construction and renovation of mosques not only adheres to Islamic principles of stewardship of the Earth but also ensures the environmental sustainability of these sacred spaces. This perspective on authenticity emphasizes the importance of integrating ecological sustainability with architectural design, thereby redefining traditional concepts of authenticity to include environmental ethics as an integral component of Islamic architectural heritage. Through this lens, the case studies serve as exemplars of how mosques can embody authenticity by harmonizing traditional architectural principles with contemporary environmental and social concerns, thereby contributing to the evolution of Islamic sacred architecture in the 21st century.

The concept of authenticity in architecture, particularly in relation to the preservation of original design elements, is a complex notion that involves maintaining the integrity and genuine characteristics of architectural structures. Numerous studies have explored different facets of architectural authenticity and preservation. A critical aspect of preserving authenticity lies in striking a balance between retaining original features and accommodating modern needs and materials. This challenge is especially prominent in the conservation of traditional architecture, where the availability of historical materials may be restricted, necessitating innovative solutions to uphold authenticity (Zain & Putro, 2021).

Authenticity in architecture is intricately linked to cultural heritage and historical significance. The conservation of original design elements is vital for conveying the historical and cultural identity of a building (Seo, 2017). This conservation not only helps in preserving the architectural integrity but also contributes to reflecting the collective memory and poetic lives of residents and visitors. Moreover, the process of adaptation in architectural preservation enables a dynamic form of permanence, where the essence of honoring the past is integrated into architectural concepts (Herwindo, 2023). Within the realm of tourism, authenticity in architecture also holds significant importance. Some sites utilize staged authenticity, where new architectural elements are introduced to convey the authenticity of historical spaces (Walby & Piché, 2015). Visitors often associate authenticity with the aesthetics and spatial characteristics of carceral facilities, underscoring the significance of conserving the architectural and built environment despite contextual changes (Tiberghien & Lennon, 2019). The preservation of original design elements in

architecture is paramount for upholding authenticity, cultural heritage, and historical significance. It requires a delicate equilibrium between safeguarding historical materials and adapting to contemporary challenges, all while embodying the essence of the past and upholding the architectural integrity of the structures.

3.4 Discussion

The comparative analysis of the architectural features and authenticity of Bait Ur Raiyan Mosque, The Mamluki Lancet Mosque, and distinctive mosques in Sub-Saharan Africa reveals a profound interplay between Islamic architectural principles and regional adaptations. This study highlights how mosques, despite their geographical and cultural disparities, adhere to a core set of Islamic architectural elements while also embodying local traditions and environmental considerations. The findings underscore the importance of abstract semiotics, geometric symbolism, and the utilization of local materials as key factors in maintaining architectural authenticity. These elements not only fulfill functional and spiritual needs but also reinforce the mosque's identity within its community. Moreover, the innovative adaptations observed, such as sustainable practices and community involvement in maintenance, reflect a dynamic understanding of authenticity that is both rooted in tradition and responsive to contemporary challenges.

The interpretation of these results underscores the versatility and resilience of Islamic architecture, illustrating how it evolves to meet the needs of diverse communities while preserving its spiritual and cultural essence. The case studies exemplify how architectural authenticity is not a static concept but a living practice that encompasses historical fidelity, cultural expression, and sustainable adaptation. This approach provides a deeper understanding of the mosque as a multifaceted institution that serves religious, social, and environmental roles, highlighting the mosque's significance beyond its physical structure. The findings of this research resonate with existing literature on Islamic architecture, which often emphasizes the significance of regional diversity, materiality, and the symbolic use of space and light in creating authentic Islamic sacred spaces. However, this study contributes to the discourse by offering a detailed comparative analysis of how these principles are manifested uniquely in different regions. It aligns with scholarly discussions that argue for a broader interpretation of authenticity, one that includes not only architectural form and ornamentation but also social function and environmental sustainability. Furthermore, the emphasis on community participation and ecological considerations in mosque design and maintenance presents a novel perspective that enriches the current academic narrative on Islamic architecture, suggesting a shift towards more inclusive and sustainable approaches in preserving architectural heritage.

This comparative approach underscores the interconnectedness of cultural identity, environmental stewardship, and architectural innovation in the creation of sacred spaces, offering new insights into the adaptability and enduring relevance of Islamic architecture. It challenges traditional notions of authenticity that prioritize historical accuracy over practical adaptation, advocating for a more holistic understanding that embraces change and innovation as essential components of architectural authenticity, see Table 2 below.

Table 2. Comparing Aspect Case Studies

Aspect	Bait Ur Raiyan Mosque	The Mamluki Lancet Mosque	Distinctive Mosques in Sub-Saharan Africa	Connecting Insights
Interpretation of Results	Showcases a modern interpretation of Islamic architecture with a focus on abstract	Integrates historical Mamluk elements with contemporary design, emphasizing the lancet arch	Utilizes local materials and designs adapted to the environment, emphasizing community involvement	All cases demonstrate a balance between traditional Islamic architecture and regional adaptation, underlining the dynamic nature of architectural authenticity.

	semiotics and local materials			
Comparison with Existing Literature	Aligns with discussions on modern interpretations maintaining authenticity	Builds on the historical significance of Mamluk architecture and its modern relevance	Adds to the narrative on the importance of environmental adaptation and community roles in architectural authenticity	Highlights the contribution of each case to a broader understanding of authenticity in Islamic architecture, emphasizing sustainability and community engagement.
Cultural and Historical Significance	Reflects contemporary Islamic architectural trends while respecting tradition	Serves as a bridge between historical heritage and modern needs, enhancing cultural continuity	Represents the rich cultural tapestry and Islamic heritage of Sub-Saharan Africa, with a focus on communal identity	Each mosque serves as a custodian of cultural heritage, showcasing how authenticity is a conduit for historical and cultural narratives within the Islamic world.
Limitations of the Study	Limited by its focus on a single contemporary mosque and its geographical and cultural context	May overlook the diversity within Mamluk architecture and its varying influences	Concentrates on regional styles, potentially missing the nuances of individual mosques	Points to the need for broader research scopes and methodologies to fully capture the complexity of architectural authenticity in diverse Islamic contexts.
Suggestions for Future Research	Further exploration into how modern mosques worldwide balance tradition and innovation	Comparative studies of Mamluk architecture across different regions and periods	In-depth studies on the impact of environmental and social changes on mosque architecture in Sub-Saharan Africa	Encourages a multidisciplinary approach to studying mosques, incorporating socio-cultural, environmental, and technological perspectives to enrich our understanding of architectural authenticity.

Architectural authenticity in the context of Islamic sacred spaces is deeply intertwined with cultural and historical identity. The mosques studied encapsulate a rich tapestry of Islamic architectural tradition, showcasing how authenticity is manifested through adherence to Islamic architectural principles while engaging with local traditions and innovations. This interplay between universal and regional expressions of faith highlights the mosque's role not just as a place of worship but as a custodian of cultural heritage and a marker of community identity. The careful balancing of traditional and contemporary elements in these mosques serves as a testament to the resilience of Islamic culture and its ability to adapt to changing circumstances without losing its essence. The historical significance of maintaining architectural authenticity extends beyond preservation. It encompasses the transmission of knowledge, values, and artistic expression across generations, fostering a sense of continuity and belonging among the community. This study reveals that the authentic architecture of mosques acts as a tangible connection to the past, enabling worshippers and community members to engage with their heritage in a meaningful way. Through their architecture, these mosques narrate stories of faith, migration, trade, and cultural exchange, enriching our understanding of Islamic civilization and its diverse manifestations across different regions and epochs.

This study, while comprehensive in its comparative analysis, is subject to several limitations. Firstly, the selection of case studies, although diverse, represents only a fraction of the architectural diversity within the Islamic world, potentially overlooking other regions and styles that contribute to the discourse on authenticity. Additionally, the reliance on architectural analysis and secondary sources may not fully capture the socio-cultural dynamics and the lived experiences of the communities associated with these mosques. The interpretation of architectural authenticity, deeply subjective and influenced by cultural, religious, and personal perspectives, poses a challenge in establishing a universally applicable framework. Furthermore, the rapid urbanization and modernization in many Islamic regions pose a threat to the preservation of traditional mosque architecture, a factor that requires further investigation. Given the limitations noted, future research could expand the scope of study to include a broader range of mosques from different Islamic regions, incorporating more contemporary examples to understand how modern challenges are being addressed. A multi-disciplinary approach that combines architectural analysis with ethnographic research could provide deeper insights into the relationship between mosque architecture and community identity. Investigating the impact of urbanization and technological advancements on the preservation of architectural authenticity in mosques offers a fertile ground for exploration. Additionally, studies focusing on the role of mosques in promoting environmental sustainability and community resilience in the face of climate change would contribute to the evolving discourse on the social and ecological dimensions of architectural authenticity. Finally, comparative studies with sacred architecture from other religious traditions could enrich our understanding of universal themes in the creation and preservation of sacred spaces.

4. Conclusions

This study has embarked on a comparative analysis journey through the architectural and cultural landscapes of Bait Ur Raiyan Mosque, The Mamluki Lancet Mosque, and distinctive mosques in Sub-Saharan Africa, unraveling the multifaceted dimensions of authenticity in Islamic sacred spaces. The investigation reveals a harmonious blend of adherence to Islamic architectural principles and the nuanced adaptation to local contexts, underscoring the dynamic interplay between universal Islamic traditions and regional architectural expressions. Each mosque, in its unique way, embodies the essence of architectural authenticity, not merely through its structural and aesthetic elements but through its profound engagement with the community, environmental sustainability, and the preservation of cultural heritage. These case studies collectively highlight the resilience and adaptability of Islamic architecture, demonstrating how mosques can maintain their spiritual and cultural significance while responding to contemporary challenges and embracing innovation.

In envisioning the future of mosque architecture, this analysis opens new avenues for exploring the integration of cutting-edge technology and sustainable practices within the framework of traditional Islamic design principles. The concept of architectural authenticity is thus expanded to include not only the preservation of historical elements but also the adoption of green building techniques, renewable energy sources, and smart technologies to enhance energy efficiency and reduce environmental impact. This forward-thinking approach aligns with the Islamic ethos of stewardship of the earth, offering a model for future sacred spaces that are both authentically Islamic and environmentally responsible. By embracing this holistic view of authenticity, future mosque designs can serve as beacons of cultural identity, spiritual solace, and environmental sustainability, reflecting the evolving aspirations and values of the Muslim community in the 21st century and beyond.

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Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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