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Eventfulness of Architecture: Teaching about Sacred Architecture *Is* Teaching about Ritual

Lindsay Jones

Architecture is definitely the most visible and arguably the most powerful means both for expressing and for stimulating religious sensibilities. Religious communities in all cultural contexts, so it seems, go to great pains to fashion built environments that are conducive both to their specific ceremonial activities and to otherwise meaningful daily lives. Where religion is concerned, architecture matters. But what does architecture, even explicitly religious architecture, have to do with ritual? Nothing? A little? Lots? Or perhaps everything?

There is, I suspect, little resistance to the claim that architecture plays an important role in forming the background ambience in which rituals are performed. Occasional open-air exceptions notwithstanding, the great majority of ceremonial occasions depend upon quite careful arrangements of the built environment. Just as the timing of rituals is an urgent matter, so too is the configuration of the space in which rituals are performed. In countless instances, then, architecture sets the stage for ritual. I would contend, however, that this stage-setting function hardly exhausts the connections between architecture and ritual. The interactivity between built forms and ritual activities is both more intimate and much more complex. Nuanced discussions of religious architecture or, for that matter, *any* architecture, at least in my experience, invariably lead one into explorations of ritual. In fact, if exploring the multifaceted connections

between architecture *and* ritual is an important and productive line of inquiry, to take that next step—and to conceive of architecture *as* ritual—can prove even more rewarding. In short, teaching about sacred architecture *is*—or ought to be—teaching about ritual.

Appreciation of this inextricability of religious architecture and ritual is the driving concern of my *Hermeneutics of Sacred Architecture: Experience, Interpretation, Comparison* (Jones 2000a, 2000b). This essay closes a circle insofar as that two-volume study evolved in large part out of classroom teaching experiences, and now this discussion draws on that work to make suggestions for a course on religious architecture. Both written and classroom cogitations on this set of issues rely on the foundational concept of what I term a "ritual-architectural event." That concept (to which I will return midway through this chapter) arises as an alternative to those very widespread interpretations of art and architecture that presume to retrieve *the* meaning of this ancient sanctuary, *the* intention of that megalithic henge, or *the* significance of some iconographic image (Jones 2000a: 40ff.). By contrast, instead of imagining that sort of stability between built forms and their meanings, I venture that the architectural meanings, like those that arise in ritual, are situational or "eventful." That is to say, architectural meaning is not a condition or quality of the built form itself; works of architecture, and the meanings they evoke, are not once-and-for-all. Instead, the significances and meanings arise from situations, or "ritual-architectural events," wherein people engage works of art and architecture in a kind of dialogical exchange, and the circumstances in which these human-monument conversations most often transpire are precisely those occasions that are routinely designated as "rituals." Accordingly, proceeding on the basis of the so-termed eventfulness of architecture, a course that is ostensibly about religious architecture is no less an exploration of ritual.

The Pedagogical Merits of Comparison: Two Course Conceptions

The mixed merits of comparison, especially cross-cultural comparison, are, aptly enough, much debated. Nonetheless, where pedagogy is concerned, the virtues of comparison are, I've found, beyond question. Accordingly, comparison, actually comparison of several sorts, would play a central role in any course that I did on religious architecture and/or ritual. Regarding the overall conception of a comparative sacred architecture course, I have exercised this commitment to comparison in two quite different ways. Both depend upon students' completion of one major project, but one has proven much more successful than the other.

Option 1: Comparing the Ritual Uses and Apprehensions of One Specific Site

The losing option, as it were, requires students to select one specific site or building on which they will concentrate for the whole term, and then to work to appreciate the diversity of ways in which that one work of architecture has been used or understood. In other words, the comparison at issue in this formulation of the course entails consideration of the similar and different means by which various audiences have used, understood, and interacted with the same place or building. In this scenario, then, students are encouraged to appreciate, and to take seriously, not only the standard or "orthodox" ways in which religious buildings are used and understood—say, the "official" interpretation of Christian doctrines and artistic symbolism that is intended by architects and then reinforced by Church authorities—but also the unplanned uses of works of religious architecture, which may be variously reverent, subversive, exploitative and/or eccentric.

A comparative sacred architecture course arranged to this end could carry the subtitle "New—and Unanticipated—Uses of Old Religious Buildings," in which case the comparative initiatives are of two sorts. At one (largely synchronic) level, students are encouraged to appreciate that consequential ceremonial occasions (e.g., parades, masses, initiations, or coronations) invariably involve numerous social constituencies, each of which will have a distinctive apprehension of the proceedings as well as the relevant architecture. In other words, instead of simply presuming homogeneous and generalized apprehensions of architecture, students are urged to appreciate much greater specificity—and diversity—in the ways in which a single ritual-architectural event is experienced by various audiences and participants. To invoke a very blunt example, certainly the victims of an Aztec human sacrifice, their families, their captors, the ruling elite, and the assembled onlookers each have quite different experiences of the occasion and the relevant built forms. Those discrepancies ought to be acknowledged rather than blurred into some generically idealized description of the (supposed) meaning of the ritual and architectural symbolism.

Alternatively, at a second (and more diachronic) level, students are challenged to chart and appreciate how the uses of a single place or building have changed over time. This sort of initiative works best via a focus on very prominent and long-standing architectural forms; among countless possibilities, Stonehenge, the Parthenon, Hagia Sophia, or the Buddhist monument of Borobudur in Java—all monuments that have endured very long and rich "histories of reception," as it were—provide promising case studies. The student assignment in this case is to fashion something like a "ritual-architectural reception history," which is, in a sense, like the biography of the "life" of a building (Jones 2000a: 187–208). In other words, again urged to focus on the situational and transient status of architectural meanings, students are charged to retrieve a timeline that

begins with the "birth" or creation of the monument and then chronicles the career of the structure with special attention to the various sorts of ritual activities in which that structure has been involved. Another very blunt example: the infamously sturdy old church of Santa Cruz de Bravo in Yucatan endured stints first as a Spanish Catholic sanctuary, then as the headquarters for the brutal cult of the Santa Cruz (who took their name from this monument), and, finally, in revolutionary times, as a prison. Instead of simply dismissing those ancillary usages as eccentric and meaningless abuses or misuses, those unanticipated appropriations are appreciated as moments in the reception history of the structure—they did, after all, actually happen—which speak again to the complex interplay of buildings, meanings, and rituals.

Comparison undertaken in either of these ways—that is, trained on the different apprehensions of a single architectural form that emerge either (a) simultaneously among different constituencies or (b) over time—remains, to my mind, *in theory*, a viable and interesting undertaking. But, as a matter of practical pedagogy, I have to admit that it has not worked very well. It is simply too difficult for undergraduates in a single term to familiarize themselves adequately with a previously unfamiliar place in ways that enable them to undertake this sort of critically nuanced work. Also, this assignment requires a level of abstraction that only some students can master in such short order; it is one thing to convince students that women's architectural perceptions are different from men's, or that the "orthodox" perceptions of a learned elite are different from those of less educated, less enfranchised constituencies, but it is quite another to guide students in articulating those sorts of differences with respect to particular cases studies. Moreover—and this may actually be the greatest and most telling obstacle—it is highly revealing of how limited are most written treatments of standing architecture that the library resources at students' disposal very seldom attend to the diversity of uses that a building engenders; instead, most of those sources presume a kind of generic, idealized user who, in my view, does not really exist. That is to say, the great majority of scholarly treatments of sacred architecture commit exactly the theoretical error that this course conception encourages students to avoid. Ironically, then, the pervasiveness of this interpretive deficiency provides both an incentive for doing a course that focuses on subversive and unanticipated usages of religious buildings and, disappointingly, an explanation for why it is so difficult for such a course to succeed.

Option 2: Comparing the Ritual Usages of Two Works of Architecture

Alternatively, then, the conception of the course that has proven more fortuitous requires that early in the term students select not one, but two specific buildings or sites on which they will concentrate for the remainder of the course. This option entails, in other words, a somewhat more obviously comparative initiative. Regarding the selection of those two sites, positively they do *not* need to be

historically related; to the contrary, that they are distant from each other both in location and time invariably proves to be an asset. (That is to say, the goal here is largely synchronic, nonhistorical comparison.) Often the juxtaposition of one site about which the student already knows quite a lot, preferably from a personal visit, with another place about which she has minimal familiarity eventuates in a happy combination. Likewise, based on the principle that every course in comparative religion ought to stretch students' awareness of other cultures, my inclination is to require that at least one of the cases be non-Western, but strict enforcement of that rule could at times be counterproductive.

Moreover, although students often feel an inclination to select two sites that bear some obvious resemblance, I urge them *not* to try to anticipate the play of similarities and differences; it is among the theoretical initiatives of the course to demonstrate that no two works of architecture are, in principle, beyond compare. The sole mandatory criterion of commonality is that the two cases share a roughly commensurate scale. That is to say, they could be two cities (e.g., Beijing and Teotihuacán), two pilgrimage centers (e.g., Lourdes and Benares), or two buildings (e.g., the Khandariya Mahedeva and the Baha'i House of Worship in Evanston, Illinois). Also as a strict rule, the two cases should be *specific* buildings or sites, not general types or classes of buildings; for example, Chartres Cathedral and the Temple of the Emerald Buddha are excellent choices, but the wider categories of French cathedrals or Thai Buddhist temples are not acceptable. (There are important theoretical as well as logistical reasons for that mandate [Jones 2000a: 190–192].) Furthermore, although the hermeneutics of sacred architecture that I have in mind is deliberately anti-elitist, and, in principle, modest and unrenowned works of architecture are fully deserving of serious consideration, there are strong practical advantages to choosing relative high-profile places, in large part because both the available materials and the issues of interest are liable to be more ample. Angkor Wat, the Dome of the Rock, and Ise Shrine may, in some respect, constitute the trite and overexposed in studies of sacred architecture; but their renown is well-founded, and for the purposes of a class like this, these sorts of five-star sacred sites provide excellent project topics.[1]

Foundations on Which to Build: Experience, Meaning, and "Eventfulness"

Presuming that one elects to proceed with this two-case project model, the program of study could unfold in three broad, if very uneven, segments. The first two or three weeks—before students choose their specific project topics— ought to be devoted to consciousness-raising about very large matters concerning space, place, architecture, and ritual. Issues that I regard as most salient in this regard are addressed in the first volume of *The Hermeneutics of*

Sacred Architecture, especially chapters 1–6. But many viable resources engage these large issues (e.g., Tuan 1974, 1977; Lane 1988; Harbison 1992; Gallagher 1993; and Lippard 1997), and what a teacher chooses to use is, of course, contingent on her goals for the remainder of the class. Be that as it may, if the basic concern is to appreciate the links between architecture and ritual, I recommend raising, in succession, three foundational sets of issues.

Architecture and Experience: Focusing on the Use and Apprehension of Buildings

First, work to shift the study of architecture from a focus on buildings per se to the *human experience* of buildings. We can anticipate that students enrolling in a course titled something like "Comparative Sacred Architecture" bring with them an expectation that they will be concentrating on built structures—temples, mosques, pyramids, and so on. Premonitions of dim-lit classrooms with countless slides of famous and not-so-famous monuments, coupled with expectations of having to digest ample terminology about column styles and cornice details are perhaps inevitable—but they ought to be resisted. The more of that technical and art historical information that one can master the better; for this course, however, the focus of concern (and the ground of comparison) are *not* what buildings look like but rather how they are used and experienced, especially in the context of ritual.

This shift of attention from "objects" to experience (which is the subject of the first three chapters of *The Hermeneutics of Sacred Architecture*) is the sort of move that one could associate with the philosophical hermeneutics of Hans Georg Gadamer or perhaps even with John Dewey's *Art as Experience*, though either of those dense works seems a poor vehicle to get a college course out of the gate. Alternatively, geographer Yi-Fu Tuan's *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience*, although not new (and not explicitly concerned with religion or ritual), remains a very serviceable book for raising these issues. Much of what Tuan has to say, particularly his basic distinction between "space" and "place," resonates with students' own intuitive sensations of space but also challenges them to nuance their thoughts about interactions between people and the built environment. Open discussion of these issues can expand horizons, and, at this point, no firm conclusions are required.

Be that it is may, it is crucial to pose at the outset of the course the challenge of interpreting—and comparing—religious buildings *not* primarily on the basis of what they look like, *nor* what they are made of, *nor* their eras of construction or geographical locations, *nor* even on the basis of the respective religiocultural orientations of their builders. All of these are, of course, viable as well as very common means of organizing and comparing religious architectures. But for the purposes of this course—and for the purposes of holding in the fore the connections between architecture and ritual—the great chal-

lenge is to shift (actually *lift*) the frame of reference to the level of experience, especially experience in the context of ritualized action. Though this theoretical aspiration is decisive for this course, it is a goal that will be constantly undermined by more standard accounts of sacred architecture that are preoccupied with matters of physical appearance, style, structure, and materials. Again, although these are perfectly respectable ways to constitute the study of sacred architecture, they are *not* the means that will lead to an appreciation of a somewhat venturesome formulation like architecture *as* ritual. In short, convincing students of the crucial difference that this reformulation of the study of sacred architecture makes will be a term-long pedagogical challenge.

Architecture and Meaning: Appreciating the Superabundance and Autonomy of Religious Buildings

The second very broad set of concerns focuses on the not-so-obvious connections between works of architecture and meaning. That buildings have meaning, even many meanings, seems self-evident. But all too often, either among lay audiences or in academic writing, the working presumption is that "the real meaning" of a building is that which was intended by the original architect or builders; all other understandings, usages, and construals are dismissed as *mis*understandings or *mis*construals, therefore undeserving of serious attention. By contrast, students ought to be encouraged to take a more fully democratic—and more accurately empirical—stance based on the observation that virtually every built form of consequence operates like a multivalent symbol insofar as it evokes different meanings and responses from different audiences. Moreover, built forms, especially long-enduring monuments like cathedrals and pyramids, are, to a significant extent, "autonomous" insofar as they invariably exercise a kind of freedom that enables them variously to transcend and/or undermine the original intentions of their builders. Just as "the sense of a text in general reaches far beyond what its author originally intended" (Gadamer 1975: 335), so religious structures, like rebellious children coming into adulthood, embark on lives of their own and engage in conversations of their own, over which their creators can exercise little or no restraint. As architectural theorist Charles Moore contends, "A building itself has the power, by having been built right or wrong or mute or noisy, to be what it wants to be, to say what it wants to say" (quoted in Cook 1973: 242).

   Again, viable classroom resources for raising this issue about the diverse and fluctuating meanings of buildings are abundant. Few, I think, are better than David Chidester and Edward Linenthal's introduction to their edited volume, *American Sacred Space*, in part because they provide a very articulate little summary of scholarly debate concerning the timeworn question of what makes a space sacred and in part because they accentuate the notions of "reinterpreted sites" and "contested sacred space" (1995: 1–42). Chidester and

Linenthal provide, in other words, both a theoretical basis and some tangible historical examples for helping students appreciate that, irrespective of the careful planning of architects and designers, long-lasting and large-scale religious buildings—for example, Hindu temples, Catholic cathedrals, Muslim mosques, and Maya pyramids—nearly always have complex, independent, and largely unpredicted careers. Moreover, in addition to specifically religious functions, enduring religious constructions often work as sites for the expression (and contestation) of political authority, as foci for national identity, as "data" for various academic theorists, as tourist attractions, and so on. In short, the meanings of religious buildings are never confined to the deliberate intentions of their builders and are virtually always "contested."

Thus, where the prevailing tendency is to dismiss unintended usages and apprehensions of a building as "corruptions" or mistaken abuses, an alternate stance would be to celebrate such departures from original design expectations as "creative revalorizations" of an old architectural form. But, in either case, those unanticipated engagements with architecture happen and they are, to that extent, not less—to my view, as a historian of religions, they are actually *more*—deserving of attention than the idealized expectations of architects and builders.

Architecture and Conversation: The Concept
of a Ritual-Architectural Event

The third component of this introductory phase of the course entails the exposition of a concrete strategy whereby students can respect those two preceding principles—namely, (a) that the study of sacred architecture is best served by shifting attention from buildings per se to the experience of buildings, and (b) that the meanings of buildings are situational, contingent, and invariably contested. That is to say, if students are to do more than pay lip service to these alternative ways of conceiving of the relations between buildings, experience, meanings, and ritual, they will require a tangible means of operating—and this is where I contend that we benefit enormously by constituting the interpretation of religious architecture, not in terms of buildings or objects, but instead in terms of "ritual-architectural events."

It is possible, albeit tedious (and probably not necessary in a classroom context) to build an elaborate philosophical basis for the "eventfulness" of sacred architecture by calling into question the still widely operative modernist assumption that if one cultivates the proper intellectual disposition, presumably a neutral or disinterested stance that will guarantee a "certitude of vision," she can lay hold of the once-and-for-all (or "real") significance of a work (or "object") of art or architecture (Jones 2000a: 38–58). Scholars working in this mode (more often by default than by decision) endeavor to disengage themselves from the works of art under consideration, to wipe away all preconceptions (or by *epoché* hold them in abeyance) so that they might achieve, in

Husserl's terms, "pure seeing" and, thus, an untainted grasp of "the meaning of the absolutely given." Interpreters who persist in this positivistic tact—whether explicitly or, more often, implicitly—constitute buildings as "objects" of study with the hope and expectation of revealing the authoritative meanings of those buildings via thoughtful and self-conscious reflection.

Alternatively, I want to position students' interpretive inquiries more in that tradition of (postmodern) hermeneutical philosophy that mounts a radical challenge to this entrenched notion of Cartesian "seeing" and, in so doing, provides a foundation for a more flexible (and, I'd argue, decidedly more empirically accurate) approach to the historical use and apprehension of sacred architecture. Heidegger, then Gadamer, and now a host of other critical theorists have, for instance, convincingly refuted the claim that interpreters can ever thoroughly disconnect themselves from their particularistic "life-worlds" and, likewise, that the world can ever be adequately conceived as a realm of neutral things or objects. They claim instead that truth is always an opposition of revealment and concealment, and thus that interpreters are naïve, and perhaps even irresponsible, in believing that they ever really see the total disclosure of any phenomenon, works of architecture included. From this perspective, the locus of meaning resides neither in the building itself (that is, a physical object) nor in the mind of the beholder (that is, a human subject), but rather in the negotiation or the interactive relation that subsumes both building and beholder—that is, in the ritual-architectural event in which buildings and human participants alike are involved. Meaning is not a condition or quality of the building, of the thing itself; meaning arises from situations. The meaning of a building, then, must always be a meaning for some specific audience, at some specific time, on some specific occasion.

Persuasive as this sort of discursion into postmodern hermeneutical philosophy may be (at least for a few of us), a little of that can go far in the undergraduate classroom. Thus, as a more simple and serviceable alternative to this sort philosophical abstraction, I recommend raising the same basic issues by leaning very heavily on the metaphor of dialogue or conversation—and then applying that metaphor at two levels (Jones 2000a: 38–58). At the first level, argue that the *experience* of sacred architecture, especially in the context of ritual, can be conceived as a kind of conversational situation wherein people engage built features in a to-and-fro exchange, bringing to those occasions their own distinctive concerns and questions, and, therefore, deriving from those situations their own distinctive results and understandings. Instead of imagining Hindu devotees, for instance, silently watching, pondering, or even "reading" various elements of their temples, we are much better served by conceiving of those occasions as conversational exchanges in which those devotees, in a sense, interview and interrogate the built forms, peppering them with questions and then listening to the multiplicity of replies that the temple offers. That is to say, the very notion of a so-termed ritual-architectural event,

which shifts attention from buildings to the experience of buildings, is best conceived as an occasion of conversation.

Moreover, if the metaphor of conversation works at one level to describe the (indigenous) *experience* of sacred architecture, it can be invoked again at a second level to describe the (academic) *interpretation* of sacred architecture in which the students are involved. In other words, if the productivity of devotees' experiences of religious architecture depends upon the fact that they bring to those situations not disinterested objectivity but, to the contrary, a host of very specific questions or concerns (in Gadamer's language, "preunderstandings"), then, by the same token, the prospect of rewarding academic interpretations of sacred architecture also depends upon students bringing a compelling set of issues and questions to the interpretive conversation. Thus, instead of encouraging students toward supposed objectivity—that is, to approach their project topics without preconceptions and expectations—we ought to be encouraging them to exhaustively question what might be going on in ritual-architectural situations. Of course, there is a danger in overdetermining the outcome of their interpretive analyses, and they must be prepared to admit that their preconceptions were wrong; but the far more serious obstacle is that students will embark upon their analyses with a limited set of possibilities in mind, which is certain to lead to similarly limited interpretive results. The next big block of the course is, therefore, primarily concerned to alleviate that problem by providing students the sort of sustained and strategic pattern of questioning that can indeed lead to productive interpretations with each of their project topics.

Interpretation and Comparison via Worksheets: A Strategic Pattern of Questioning

Once that foundation is laid, and once students have committed themselves to the two sites on which their individual projects will focus, the second and, by far, largest block of the class will be devoted to progress on that comparative project via the completion of a series of eleven so-termed worksheets (Jones 2000b). (The list at the end of this chapter outlines the eleven-part configuration of topics.) This component of the course plays, in other words, on that notion of interpretation as a kind of conversation—a questioning and listening for answers—wherein each of the worksheets outlines a fairly general cluster of questions that students will then bring to bear on their select cases. That is to say, each of the next eleven sessions will be devoted to some general theme, and, in each case, students will be charged with asking: How and to what extent is that theme relevant to their two respective sites?[2] Intimations of a kind of eleven-stage checklist, or maybe even a cookbook recipe, are not altogether unwarranted. But where students invariably enter the course with a quite limited

oeuvre of ideas about how religious architecture can work, especially in relation to ritual, this extended slate of provocative questions and possibilities, in my experience, always substantially widens their interpretive horizons; it makes them, as it were, much stronger conversation partners in the analysis of architecture and ritual. Moreover, the cumulative results of students' participation in this eleven-stage interpretive exercise can serve as the basis of their final comparative papers. In fact, that students will, in an important sense, be composing that final paper from this phase of the course forward explains, I think, why this worksheet regiment has consistently issued in ambitious and well-considered papers (not something that I can say about every course that I teach).

This portion of the course is, in other words, an attempt to guide students through an initiative in morphological or synchronic comparison. As a rule, there will be no attempt whatever to link their two cases historically; nor will the resemblances and differences in the outward appearances of the two sites be of much consequence. Instead, the goal is to assist students in undertaking a comparison of their two respective sites that operates at the level of ritual-architectural events rather than that of buildings' structural or formal attributes. Via that focus on ritual occasions—or ritual-architectural events—the goal is, in one respect, to ascertain similarities and differences between two built forms; but, in another equally important respect, this is no less a comparison between the approaches to ritual that obtain at the two respective sites.

As regards the specific configuration of the subsequent pattern of questioning, I draw on the second volume of *The Hermeneutics of Sacred Architecture*, which outlines a so-termed morphology of ritual-architectural priorities (see list at end of chapter). In fact, that volume opens with an introduction that explains this notion of comparison via sustained and strategic interrogation, which is then followed by eleven chapters that precisely match the eleven topical worksheets that I have in mind here; synopses of each of those eleven worksheets appear, albeit in a somewhat over-elaborate form, in the appendix to that volume (Jones 2000b: 295–332). Relying throughout on the notion that ritual-architectural events have a dialogical character, the first three worksheet assignments deal with various means for initiating those sorts of conversational exchanges between people and built forms; the next four worksheets address the content or sorts of topics that are addressed in those exchanges; and the last four worksheets explore various modes of presentation that are used to choreograph such ritual-architectural exchanges. For the purposes of the present discussion, a brief comment on each of those three sets of assignments with have to suffice.

Architecture as Orientation: The Instigation of Ritual-Architectural Events

This first set of three worksheets is dedicated to reflection on the alternative means whereby ritual-architectural events are instigated or initiated. In other

words, though productive engagements with architecture operate in ritual circumstances, these sorts of transformative exchanges are nonetheless the exceptions rather than the norm; in most instances, people pay little explicit attention to their architectural surroundings. Consequently, to override indifference and get the conversation started, as it were, is often the architect's (and the ritual choreographer's) greatest challenge. Cross-cultural studies of sacred architecture demonstrate, however, that there are a myriad of ways in which designers of buildings and ceremonies can light that spark and summon the involvement of perhaps reticent onlookers. These first worksheets, then, are intended to explore the wide range of what I have termed "strategies of ritual-architectural allurement" whereby people are variously encouraged, enticed, and/or coerced into productive and transformative conversational exchanges with architecture by considering three quite distinct variations on the theme.

The first of the worksheet assignments in that vein—launched under the rubric of "homology (priority I-A)"—requires students to give serious consideration to Mircea Eliade's (in)famous model of sacred space (1957, 1976). Several aspects of that renowned scheme are especially germane to analyses of sacred architecture: the notion of hierophanies, which speaks to the possibility of architecture that is understood to mark the site of a manifestation or showing of "the sacred"; the concept of *imago mundis*, whereby Eliade draws attention to the very widespread notion of architectural configurations that are conceived as microcosmic replicas of the wider cosmos; and the idea of *axis mundis*, that is, architectural configurations that participate in the symbolism of the center, and thus mark privileged points of access between earthly and otherworldly realms. In some respects outdated and overworked, Eliade's celebrated terminology and commentaries on sacred space nonetheless continue to provide an exceptionally useful line of inquiry with respect to specific ritual-architectural configurations, especially for students not previously familiar with Eliade's work. For many undergraduates, these variations on homologized architecture raise provocative and challenging prospects that had never occurred to them before.

Thus, while no longer serviceable as a complete theory of religious architecture (as if it ever was), Eliade's timeworn formulations can be transformed into a set of heuristic questions whereby students are requested to ask, for instance, whether either of their selected architectural cases is located at the site of a supposed hierophany. Is either of their selected cases configured as an *imago mundi* or downscaled replica of the universe? Or is either of their cases understood to mark an *axis mundi* or sacred center? Moreover, where such questions eventuate in affirmative replies, I would wager that that those homologized architectural configurations are best conceived not as the full design agenda (as Eliade might imply), but rather as strategies of ritual-architectural

allurement that work to persuade audiences of the legitimacy and seriousness of the context (Jones 2000b: 25–32). That is to say, this line of questioning—whether initiated via readings from Eliade or others (e.g., Wheatley 1967; Cohn 1981; or Eck 1981)—directs attention to a strategy of allurement wherein architectural configurations are depicted as synchronized with transhuman cosmic patterns and thus demanding of serious attention. In short, homologized architecture issues a persuasive invitation, perhaps impossible to refuse, to involve oneself in the subsequent ritual proceedings.

The second variation on this theme is a worksheet labeled "convention (priority II-B)," which raises the prospect of ritual-architectural circumstances that are made compelling and alluring because the relevant forms explicitly conform to standardized and/or conventionalized stipulations and rules (Jones 2000b: 47–65). Again, cross-cultural and cross-disciplinary surveys reveal numerous permutations—each of which can be transformed into a heuristic question. Students can be encouraged to consider, for instance, the possible relevance to their cases of: (a) the notion that there are certain universally applicable rhythms and proportions, observable in the workings of nature and mathematics, that are being replicated in architecture (e.g., in Italian Renaissance architecture that obeys the mathematical precise proportioning outlined in the rule books of Vitruvius or Alberti, or in Hindu temples that conform to the design stipulations articulated in the *Shilpa Shastras*); (b) the possibility that a god, variously conceived, has decreed certain ritual-architectural prescriptions that are being observed in architectural design (e.g., in Islamic design standards that are understood to have been delivered directly by Allah); and (c) the host of cases in which the claim to legitimacy, and thus serious attention, is based on the claim that prestigious forebears, "the Ancients" as it were, have established definitive patterns that are being replicated in the architectural design (e.g., in the abundance of Sikh temples that have been directly modeled after the Golden Temple in Amritsar).

Whereas virtually every ritual-architectural circumstance participates in one way or another in some version of this convention priority (I-B), the third worksheet—labeled "astronomy (priority I-C)"—raises a prospect that has far more limited application (Jones 2000b: 66–81). At this point, students are asked to consider whether either of their cases deploys a strategy of allurement wherein architectural configurations and/or ritual timing are correlated with respect to the movements of celestial bodies, e.g., a spring equinox, a helical rising of Venus, or an appearance of the moon on the horizon (Aveni 1982; Eddy 1977). Though in a few cases (e.g., arguably at Stonehenge or at numerous astronomically aligned Maya pyramids and monuments) these sorts of celestial cues can serve as crucial means of persuading audiences of the auspiciousness of a ritual-architectural event, in most cases, such sky phenomena are largely irrelevant. Be that as it may, it is worthwhile here—as

with respect to all of the other worksheet assignments—to have students question their project topics in ways that lead to wholly negative replies. To give serious consideration to an interpretative possibility that is subsequently rejected is, to be sure, a fruitful exercise.

Architecture as Commemoration: The Content of Ritual-Architectural Events

Whereas the first three worksheets venture questions about the instigation of ritual-architectural events—that is, means to get the conversation started—the next four raise questions about the content of those subsequent ceremonial occasions. This block may provide somewhat smoother going not only because students ought by now to have caught on to the protocol of interrogation via worksheets and have become fairly familiar with their respective sites, but also because these are the most straightforward of the eleven worksheet topics. The first one—"divinity (priority II-A)"—asks students to search after ways in which either of their cases variously houses, commemorates, and/or represents a deity, divine presence, or conception of ultimate reality (Jones 2000b: 92–108). This set of prospects is complicated but also enlivened by the enormous diversity of culturally specific conceptions of gods and other supernatural entities and presences that emerge in various contexts (Mitchell 1988; Van der Leeuw 1963; Lane 1988: 103–124). Salient permutations on the divinity theme include: (a) circumstances in which built forms are actually identified as or equated with a deity (e.g., Cretan palaces, which are conceived as the body of the Minoan earth goddess and thus as "living organisms"); (b) the more obvious and prevalent notion of architectural configurations that are imagined as residences or houses of a god (e.g., oracle temples in ancient Greece or China); or (c) the more subtle notion of architecture that is conceived as a built expression of the *attributes* of a divinity (e.g., triangular or three-tired architectural allusions to the three elements of the Christian Trinity).

The second worksheet query in this group—"sacred history (priority II-B)"—requires interrogation of the many ways in which ritual-architectural events can be occasions to (re)tell a story or to commemorate an important mythical, mythicohistorical, or miraculous episode (Jones 2000b: 109–128). Of numerous overlapping variations on this theme, students should ask: (a) Does either of their cases constitute an architectural embodiment of a cosmogony (e.g., in the way that the moat-encircled Angkor Vat is a direct expression of a Southeast Asian creation story)? (b) Does either case commemorate a mythical narrative (e.g., in the way that the configuration of the Aztecs' Templo Mayor facilitates reenactment of the story of the birth of the war god Huitzilopochtli)? Or perhaps a miraculous episode (e.g., in the way that countless structures memorialize the apparition of a god, angel, or vir-

gin)? Or (c) is either of their sites largely preoccupied with the commemoration of a specific mythical or mythicohistorical individual (e.g., in the way in which Sikh shrines or *Gurudwaras,* that is, doors or seats of the *guru,* are, in almost every case, associated with some particular individual sage)?

The third worksheet of this set—"politics (priority II-C)"—demands consideration of the means whereby ritual-architectural events variously commemorate, legitimate, or challenge socioeconomic hierarchy and authority (Jones 2000b: 129–152). With the current vogue for cultural studies, students could, these days, get lots of messages suggesting that it is in these socioeconomic considerations that they will find "the real (political) meaning," which resides behind the idealized (religious) meanings of their respective sites. Though there is merit in that hermeneutic of suspicion, I would encourage them instead to treat this political dimension as simply one, albeit an important one, among the numerous forces that are at work in most ritual-architectural choreography. Be that as it may, of the many permutations deserving consideration, three stand out: (a) ritual-architectural configurations that, either subtly or unmistakably, reflect and perpetuate the prevailing social hierarchy (e.g., the relative heights of houses that denote various Hindu castes); (b) architectural configurations that challenge, undermine, and (maybe) change the prevailing social hierarchy (e.g., Muslim mosques inside which the social distinctions that obtain in the outside world are erased); and (c) configurations that serve functions that are more explicitly governmental (e.g., countless religion-civic structures that are designed to impress and/or intimidate as well as to facilitate day-to-day decision-making).

The last worksheet in this group—"the dead (priority II-D)"—requires students to search after ways in which their respective sites may commemorate revered ancestors and/or other deceased individuals or groups (Jones 2000b: 153–182). Insofar as commemorations of sacred history (priority II-B) and politics (priority II-C) very often entail venerations of the honored dead, here especially one can observe that there is considerable overlap between the various categories in this framework; but instead of a liability, that seeming imprecision can become an occasion to remind students of the heuristic and contingent status of these categories. The goal of this patterned interrogation is, after all, a nuanced comparison of their two specific sites, and what lands under which heading is, in the end, not very important. In any event, at least three variations on the commemoration of the dead deserve serious consideration: (a) ritual-architectural configurations that commemorate the dead irrespective of any actual bodily remains (e.g., chapels, stadiums, hospitals or public monuments that are dedicated to, and maybe named for, specific individuals); (b) the not-so-obvious prospect of built or carved forms that are imagined as the actual embodiment or transmutation of the dead (e.g., British megaliths that, according some interpretations, serve to keep ancestors alive

by embodying them in stone); and (c) the far more common, if spectacularly varied ways in which architectures are designed for the assiduous treatment and accommodation of the actual bodily remains of the deceased (e.g., cemetery and burial configurations of nearly endless variety).

Architecture as Ritual-Context: The Presentation of Ritual-Architectural Events

Whereas the first set of worksheets focuses on various means of initiating ritual-architectural events, and the second set concentrates on the content or subject matter of those ritual occasions, this third and final group explores the "modes of presentation" that are issue in various ritual-architectural situations. These last worksheets, in other words, organize and explore different ways in which architecture participates in concocting an efficacious context for ritual or, to phrase it somewhat differently, they present four alternative ways of describing the interactive relationship between human ritual participants and built ritual contexts (Jones 2000b: 183–187). By contrast to the quite direct line of questioning in the previous four assignments, this group again challenges students to engage fairly abstract ideas (ideas that are, I admit, difficult to summarize in the present context). One compensation is, however, that by this late stage in the course, students ought to be quite familiar with their two case studies; and, again, precision is less important than evoking serious reflection on possibilities not otherwise considered.

The first presentational option—"theater (priority III-A)"—uses that term in a distinctive way to direct attention to ritual-architectural configurations that serve as backdrops or stages for the performance and spectator viewing of ritual dramas (Jones 2000b: 188–212). The hallmark of this mode of ritual-architectural presentation, which might appropriately connote glitz and/or gore, is an incentive toward inclusiveness (as opposed to exclusiveness) insofar as the designer's aspiration is usually to invite, cajole, or sometimes force even reticent onlookers into involvement in the ritual proceedings. Students should entertain the possible relevance of at least three variations on this sort of aggressive solicitation of involvement: (a) configurations that facilitate the presentation of ceremonial performances on a fixed podium or stage for a similarly stationary assembly of onlookers (e.g., as in the case of spectacular pageant spaces or arenas as well as countless more modest church and classroom layouts wherein a seated audience faces a speaker, screen, or ensemble of singers, dancers, or actors); (b) configurations that facilitate ceremonial movement along processional ways or parade routes past a largely fixed audience or reviewing stand (e.g., outdoor civic or religious parade routes or indoor, longitudinal Christian basilicas like that which hosted the sumptuous liturgical processions at Cluny); and (c) configurations in which onlookers are compelled to become ritual actors insofar as they themselves

also are moving along in promenade or parade (e.g., at a very large-scale pilgrimage, say to Mecca, wherein all participants are on the move, or, at a more modest scale, Christian liturgies that require people to walk to the altar space to receive the host).

The second option in this group—"contemplation (priority III-B)"—again deploys a somewhat distinctive use of a broad term, this time to encourage consideration of circumstances that involve the purposeful and direct (as opposed to *indirect*) reliance on architectural features as foci of meditation or concentration (Jones 2000b: 213–236). In other words, beyond the use of architecture to create an ambience or backdrop for ritual performance, which entails an indirect experience of the built forms, this option entails cases in which architectural features become the explicit objects of contemplation, broadly conceived. Of numerous variations on this theme, students should consider the possible applicability of two contrasting possibilities: (a) voluntary and somewhat esoteric ritual occasions wherein people enthusiastically elect to participate and focus their attention on architectural features because they perceive the occasion as an opportunity for spiritual growth (e.g., in the practice of Tibet monks who fix their attention on mandala diagrams or building layouts as guides and supports to their meditations); or (b) less rarified, more plainly didactic and probably more manipulative occasions wherein indifferent or even resistant participants are forced into contact with partisan symbols and images (e.g., Abbot Suger's famous architecturalization of the theory of "anagogical illumination" in the Gothic cathedral of St. Denis—that is, his confidence that concentrating directly on splendid architectural forms and stained glass could somehow transport worshipers from the material world into a blissful immaterial realm—also served the more prosaic function of educating unlettered devotees on the history and rules of the Christian faith).

The third component of this set relies on the rubric of "propitiation (priority III-C)" to raise the prospect of sacred architecture designed and built to please, appease, or manipulate "the sacred," however variously conceived (Jones 2000b: 237–263). Again, the manifold range of possibilities that deserve consideration can be arranged under two large categories: (a) propitiatory ritual uses of standing architecture, which could entail any number of architectural configurations that facilitate ritual negotiation and bargaining with deities (e.g., especially in relation to Abrahamic conceptions of a covenant or contract, a prime purpose of many sanctuaries is to provide a context in which to exercise a give-and-take relationship between human communities and a powerful but not entirely unreasonable God); or (b) architectural construction processes that are themselves conceived as propitiatory ritual (e.g., any number of Christian churches built in fulfillment of a promise made to a god or saint who helped one through a crisis or, from a more Asia frame of reference, the similar abundance of Buddhist, Jain, and especially Hindu temples that were built with the express intention of improving one's rebirth status).

The last entry to the framework returns to a perhaps more obvious set of possibilities under the heading of "sanctuary (priority III-D)." This mode of presentation stands in opposition to the inclusiveness of the so-termed theater mode (priority III-A) insofar as the main incentive here is one of exclusiveness or restricted access in the form of ritual-architectural configurations that provide refuges of purity, sacrality, and/or perfection (Jones 2000b: 264–293). This may, in cases, involve the appropriation of some sort of natural sanctuary space, most notably caves, or it may entail the (ritual) transformation or sanctification of a seemingly ordinary place into one of special sanctity. Students should consider, among literally countless variations on the theme, the possible applicability of at least three possibilities: (a) sanctuaries that effect a complete rejection of society (e.g., in Anabaptist or Shaker communities, or Hezychast or Cistercian monasteries, any of which may be conceived as fabricated "foretastes of heaven"); (b) sanctuaries that display an exemplary model of society (e.g., in experimental communities or long-established monastic orders, which then serve as museum-like spaces for showcasing those alternative approaches to life); or (c) sanctuaries that provide a mechanism for hierarchical exclusion (e.g., as in the Jerusalem Temple's rigorously enforced separation of Jews from gentiles, clergy from laity, men from women, etc.).

Synthesizing Worksheets: Student Presentations and Final Comparative Papers

Forcing students through this eleven-stage gauntlet of questioning may seem variously tedious, baffling, and exhausting; and I concur that, when summarized in this staccato fashion, the scheme may appear inordinately elaborate. But this is a proven plan. When stretched out over a full term, the exercise virtually always leads students into deeper and more expansive interpretations of their respective project topics than would issue from more conventional, less programmatic research strategies. Moreover, one of the most exciting results is the way in which architectures that bear no obvious resemblances in appearance, geography, or religious tradition—say, Mexico City's Basilica of Guadalupe and the Kasuga Shrine in Nara, Japan—emerge as both similar and different at the level of ritual-architectural events. That is to say, in addition to insights into architecture and ritual, this class has often served to convert students to the viability and merits of comparison, including the embattled prospect of nonhistorical cross-cultural comparison.

In any case, once students have completed the eleven pairs of worksheet assignments, the final stage of the process would be to synthesize those individual assignments into a final comparative paper. This is where the notion of ritual-architectural priorities becomes salient. The rubric of priorities is intended to acknowledge that any ritual-architectural situation reflects a kind

of competition, or a set of trade-offs, between various factors (or priorities). In some cases, for instance, the strategy of allurement via the synchronization of ritual timing with celestial phenomena such as equinoxes or moon risings (i.e., astronomy, priority II-C) is exceptionally important (that is to say, it is a high priority), while, in other cases, it is almost wholly irrelevant (which is to say, it is a very low priority). Or in some ritual-architectural situations, the principal incentive is to facilitate communication with a deity (i.e., divinity, II-A, is the dominant priority), while other configurations are focused almost wholly on the commemoration of a specific deceased individual (i.e., the dead, II-D, is the dominant priority). Therefore, at this point, students would be required to revisit their individual worksheets to ascertain which of the eleven ritual-architectural priorities have emerged as especially significant and which have proven considerably less important or perhaps even irrelevant. In fact, as one last heuristic exercise, it is worth having them assign numbers to each of the eleven priorities as a means of suggesting a relative order from most important to least important for each of their two cases.

Upon completing that ranking of the priorities, the composition of the actual paper very well might be a kind of narrative rehearsal of the student's consideration of each of the eleven possibilities, which is then complemented with assessments as to which of those priorities are most significant as well as observations about the similarities and differences between their two sites. There is, of course, the unhappy prospect of essays that resemble laundry lists, devoid of compelling conclusions; but it is also possible that perfectly capable papers may follow very closely the regiment of the worksheets. The best papers, however, will transcend the simply formulaic by adducing from the long heuristic exercise some more broad hypotheses as to the similarities and differences between their respective cases. In those somewhat more daring instances, the papers venture a strong thesis at the outset, and then the inventory of the respective priorities is undertaken—and shaped—in the service of advancing that thesis. Final essays of that sort have, in other words, greater unity and sharper edges, and thus issue in more rewarding, if perhaps more tentative, conclusions. In either case, though, as I noted earlier, no course with which I have been associated has issued in consistently stronger and more thoughtful student papers than this one.

As a very last step in the course, consider allowing each student the opportunity to present her comparative project in class. Class size, schedules, and teachers' feelings about the merits of student presentations would all figure in, and I concede that the quality of the class presentations will be as uneven as the students giving them. But, in my experience, allowing myself and others in the class a chance to talk to individual students about their projects has proven very rewarding. Thus, on balance, risking the prospect of an anti-climax, I am inclined to devote the final sessions of the term to student presentations. Give them the last word.

A MORPHOLOGY OF RITUAL-ARCHITECTURAL PRIORITIES

I. Architecture as Orientation: The Instigation of Ritual-Architectural Events

   A. Homology: Sacred architecture that presents a miniaturized replica of the universe.

   B. Convention: Sacred architecture that conforms to standardized rules and/or prestigious mythicohistorical precedents.

   C. Astronomy: Sacred architecture that is aligned or referenced with respect to celestial bodies (e.g., the sun, moon, planets, or stars).

II. Architecture as Commemoration: The Content of Ritual-Architectural Events

   A. Divinity: Sacred architecture that commemorates, houses, and/or represents a deity, divine presence, or conception of ultimate reality.

   B. Sacred History: Sacred architecture that commemorates an important mythical, mythicohistorical, or miraculous episode.

   C. Politics: Sacred architecture that commemorates and legitimates (or challenges) socioeconomic hierarchy and/or temporal authority.

   D. The Dead: Sacred architecture that commemorates revered ancestors and/or other deceased individuals or groups.

III. Architecture as Ritual Context: The Presentation of Ritual-Architectural Events

   A. Theater: Sacred architecture that provides a stage setting or backdrop for ritual performance.

   B. Contemplation: Sacred architecture that serves as a prop or focus for meditation or devotion.

   C. Propitiation: Sacred architecture and processes of construction designed to please, appease, and/or manipulate "the sacred," however variously conceived.

   D. Sanctuary: Sacred architecture that provides a refuge of purity or perfection.

NOTES

1. Three more words of caution concerning the selection of project topics: (1) In principle, it is compelling to endorse a very broad designation as to what constitutes "sacred" or "religious architecture" so that football stadiums and shopping malls are contenders, but for the purposes of this class, more plainly and explicitly religious works of architecture serve better. (2) Additionally, I would, in principle, endorse the

possibility of working with virtual or imaginary architecture (e.g., the steel and microchip jungle of *Blade Runner*), unbuilt architecture (e.g., St. Gall, which provided a kind of utopian model of an ideal Carolingian monastery but was never built), or strictly mythical architecture (e.g., Mt. Meru). But in practice, allowing students to focus on those sorts of imaginal cases creates a set of skews and challenges that, in the end, are counterproductive; it is better to have them working on tangible historical (or contemporary) places. (3) By the same token, while the so-termed architecture of nature (e.g., caves or maybe landscape features in Australian outback) could likewise qualify, in principle, as sacred architecture, more plainly constructed architectural forms (e.g., temples and mosques) will, in the end, provide more pedagogically beneficial project topics.

2. In other words, if students complete the eleven topical worksheets for each of their two selected sites, they will eventually complete a total of twenty-two worksheets. Note also that, if time permits, it would be even better to devote two sessions to each of these eleven themes. In that case, the first session could be devoted to a general (lecture) presentation of the respective topic at hand (i.e., this is the common concern of all of the students), and the second (discussion) session could be devoted to more individualized reflections on the ways in which that topic is or is not relevant to students' specific project topics.

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