



## **A Comparative Study of Mosque-Life Between the East and West: The Islamic Society of Greater Houston (ISGH) as a Case Study**

Mohammad Husni Abumelhim<sup>[a].\*</sup>

<sup>[a]</sup>Associate professor. Sociology and Social Work, Ajloun University College, Al-Balqa' Applied University, Jordan .

\*Corresponding author.

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### **Abstract**

This article draws comparison between sociological uses of mosques between the East and West, using ISGH – the largest network of mosques in North America as a case study. Specifically, it highlights how – whereas in the East, mosques are typically solely associated with prayer, contrarily, in the West, mosques are used as centers of familial influence within the community, encompassing not only prayer life but also recreational and social life as well.

**Key words:** Sociology of Islam; Mosques; Masjid; Comparative studies; Mosque theory

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### **INTRODUCTION**

A mosque is an area for prayer for devotees of Islam (Sayed, n.d.). There are strict and point by point necessities in Sunni law (fiqh) for a position of prayer to be viewed as a mosque, with places that do not meet these prerequisites viewed as musallas. There are stringent limitations on the employments of the region formally differentiated as the mosque (which is regularly a little part of the bigger complex), and, in the Islamic Sharia law, after a region is formally assigned as a mosque, it remains so until the Last Day (Baharudin, 2014). Numerous

mosques have expanse vaults, minarets, and petition lobbies, in changing styles of design. Mosques began on the Arabian Peninsula, however are currently found in every single possessed landmass. The mosque fills in as a place where Muslims can meet up for salah and also an inside for data, instruction, social welfare, and debate settlement (Collins, 2011). The imam drives the assembly in petition (CAIR, 2016).

The primary mosque in the world is regularly thought to be the region around the Kaaba in Mecca now known as the Masjid al-Haram. Since 638 AD, the Masjid al-Haram has been developed to oblige the expanding number of Muslims who either live in the region or make the yearly journey known as hajj to the city. Others respect the principal mosque in history to be the Quba Mosque in show day Medina since it was the main structure worked by Muhammad upon his migration from Mecca in 622. The Great Mosque of Kairouan, in Tunisia, is the most established mosque in the Muslim West. The Islamic Prophet Muhammad went ahead to build up another mosque in Medina, which is currently known as the Masjid a Nabawi, or the Prophet's Mosque. Based on the site of his home, Muhammad took part in the development of the mosque himself and helped pioneer the idea of the mosque as the point of convergence of the Islamic city. The Masjid al-Nabawi presented a portion of the highlights still basic in the present mosques, including the specialty at the front of the supplication space known as the mihrab and the layered lectern called the minbar. The Masjid al-Nabawi was likewise built with a vast patio, a theme basic among mosques worked since then.

### **1. MOSQUES IN THE EAST**

Mosques had been worked in Iraq and North Africa before the finish of the seventh century, as Islam spread outside the Arabian Peninsula with early caliphates. The Imam Husayn Shrine in Karbala is allegedly one of the most

established mosques in Iraq, in spite of the fact that its present frame – run of the mill of Persian engineering – just goes back to the eleventh century. The hallowed place, while as yet working as a mosque, stays one of the holiest destinations for Shia Muslims, as it respects the passing of the third Shia imam, and Prophet Muhammad’s grandson, Hussein ibn Ali. The Mosque of Amr ibn al-As was apparently the main mosque in Egypt, filling in as a religious and social community for Fustat (show day Cairo) amid its prime. Like the Imam Husayn Shrine, however, nothing of its unique structure remains. With the later Shia Fatimid Caliphate, mosques all through Egypt developed to incorporate schools (known as madrasas), doctor’s facilities, and tombs.

The Great Mosque of Kairouan in contemporary Tunisia was supposedly the principal mosque worked in northwest Africa, with its present shape (dating from the ninth century) filling in as a model for other Islamic areas of prayer in the Maghreb. It was the first to consolidate a square minaret (rather than the more typical roundabout minaret) and incorporates naves similar to a basilica. Those highlights can likewise be found in Andalusian mosques, including the Grand Mosque of Cordoba, as they had a tendency to mirror the engineering of the Moors rather than their Visigoth predecessors. Still, a few components of Visigothic design, similar to horseshoe curves, were implanted into the mosque engineering of Spain and the Maghreb.

The main mosque in East Asia was apparently settled in the eighth century in Xi’an. Be that as it may, the Great Mosque of Xi’an, whose present building dates from the eighteenth century, does not duplicate the highlights frequently connected with mosques elsewhere. Indeed, minarets were at first restricted by the state. Following customary Chinese design, the Great Mosque of Xi’an, in the same way as other different mosques in eastern China, takes after a pagoda, with a green rooftop rather than the yellow rooftop regular on royal structures in China. Mosques in western China will probably consolidate components, similar to vaults and minarets, customarily found in mosques elsewhere.

A comparable mix of remote and nearby impacts could be seen on the Indonesian islands of Sumatra and Java, where mosques, including the Demak Great Mosque, were first settled in the fifteenth century. Early Javanese mosques took configuration prompts from Hindu, Buddhist, and Chinese building impacts, with tall timber, multi-level rooftops like the pagodas of Balinese Hindu sanctuaries; the omnipresent Islamic vault did not show up in Indonesia until the nineteenth century, this influenced the contemporary world massively. In turn, the Javanese style affected the styles of mosques in Indonesia’s Austronesian neighbors—Malaysia, Brunei, and the Philippines.

Muslim domains were instrumental in the development and spread of mosques. In spite of the fact that mosques

were first settled in India amid the seventh century, they were not ordinary over the subcontinent until the entry of the Mughals in the sixteenth and seventeenth hundreds of years. Mirroring their Timurid beginnings, Mughal-style mosques included onion vaults, pointed curves, and expound round minarets, highlights basic in the Persian and Central Asian styles. The Jama Masjid in Delhi and the Badshahi Mosque in Lahore, worked in a comparable way in the mid-seventeenth century, are still two of the biggest mosques on the Indian subcontinent.

The Umayyad Caliphate was especially instrumental in spreading Islam and building up mosques inside the Levant, as the Umayyads built among the most venerated mosques in the district—the al-Aqsa Mosque and Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem and the Umayyad Mosque in Damascus. The plans of the Dome of the Rock and the Umayyad Mosque were affected by Byzantine design, a pattern that proceeded with the ascent of the Ottoman Empire.

A few of the early mosques in the Ottoman Empire were initially houses of worship or churches from the Byzantine Empire, with the Hagia Sophia (one of those changed over basilicas) advising the design of mosques from after the Ottoman triumph of Constantinople. Still, the Ottomans built up their own building style described by huge focal rotundas (once in a while encompassed by different smaller vaults), pencil-formed minarets, and open facades.

Mosques from the Ottoman time frame are as yet scattered crosswise over Eastern Europe, yet the most quick development in the quantity of mosques in Europe has happened inside the previous century as more Muslims have relocated to the mainland. Many real European urban communities are home to mosques, similar to the Grand Mosque of Paris, that fuse arches, minarets, and different highlights regularly found with mosques in Muslim-greater part countries. The main mosque in North America was established by Albanian Americans in 1915, yet the landmass’ most established surviving mosque, the Mother Mosque of America, just goes back to the 1930s. As in Europe, the quantity of American mosques has quickly expanded in late decades as Muslim outsiders, especially from South Asia, have come in the United States. More noteworthy than 40% of mosques in the United States were built after 2000.

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## 2. MOSQUES IN THE WEST

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Dr. Movahed, an Iranian scholar, discusses “Mosque Theory” as a vehicle for communal life and change. Before discussing the role of mosques in the East, it will be beneficial to discuss Dr. Movahed’s theory, as it encapsulates the same role present in the East.

### 2.1 Mosque Theory

Distinctive people have distinctive conduct in their group. The principle reason of individuals carry on is a result

of their identity and it comes about because of inner and outer living condition. By interior we mean for the most part home and by outside we mean group. Without a doubt, outside living condition has more effect on molding a man than his home. Improvement is known as an upward directional development from lesser to more noteworthy level. Group advancement is not just a matter of one individual be that as it may, is an arrangement of helpful exercises. Communities can be produced by its tenants who add to its exercises and furthermore in light of the contact and cooperation between people. From this point of view, a person turn into a group's part if s/he impart and coordinate with other groups' individuals and take an interest in the group.

Individuals coordinated effort does not happen unintentionally; it must be arranged. In the event that individuals joint effort is accomplished, the human relations inside a group will develop rationally. Community cannot be constrained or completed by authoritative or outer organizations for the benefit of the populace. Individuals are a definitive asset and extreme determinant of the improvement procedure. Improvement happens within the Muslim community, then, when people come together out of their free volition to initiate and maintain common bonds (Mohaved, n.d.).

## 2.2 Mosques as Community Centers: ISGH as a Case Study

The Islamic Society of Greater Houston (ISGH) was built up in 1969 in the core of the City of Houston. In the late 1960s a gathering of Muslim understudies from the University of Houston and additionally other youths and their families used to meet and implore at everybody's homes. It was a small group at that point and the primary Eid was supplicated in the place of one of the originators of the general public. However as the group developed in measure, this recently shaped society chose to get a Center to oblige the development. Finding the suitable area was a test because of the restricted monetary assets and different reasons. Notwithstanding these difficulties, and with the assistance of numerous different Houstonians, ISGH now speaks to 21 groups from everywhere throughout the Greater Houston territory. All Muslims living in the Greater Houston region are viewed as normal individuals from ISGH; nonetheless, to vote or hold an office a man must be a qualified voting part and document an enrollment application. People who apply for ISGH participation do as such entirely on an intentional premise. ISGH is represented by a Board of Directors which comprises of nine choice individuals, four of whom are chosen everywhere by the qualified voting individuals from ISGH and are known as the Executive Body. They are: The President, the Vice President, the General Secretary, and the Treasurer. The five outstanding

individuals are Zonal Directors who speak to five zones of the Greater Houston zone and are chosen by qualified voting individuals dwelling in their separate zones. In each zone that has more than one Islamic Center, each Islamic Center has an Associate Director chose by the qualified voting individuals from that Islamic Center. ISGH's vision is to give religious and social administrations to all Muslims and to give channels of comprehension and correspondence amongst Muslims and the Houston people group by and large (ISGH, n.d.).

## CONCLUSION

From the above-mentioned description of the ISGH's impactful role within the Houston community, it is clear that whereas in the East, mosques are traditionally viewed as solely places of worship, mosques in the East are viewed as community centers (King, et al., 2017; Mahmud, Rahman, & Rawshon, 2016; Spahic, 2014). Accordingly, this article drew comparisons between sociological uses of mosques between the East and West, using ISGH – the largest network of mosques in North America as a case study. Specifically, it highlighted how – whereas in the East, mosques are typically solely associated with prayer, contrarily, in the West, mosques are used as centers of familial influence within the community, encompassing not only prayer life but also recreational and social life as well.

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