

WORLD RELIGIONS AND THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT IN THE PUBLICATIONS OF THE SOCIETY FOR THE STUDY OF ARCHITECTURE IN CANADA

> JAMIE S. SCOTT

JAMIE S. SCOTT is professor in the Department of Humanities and the graduate programs in English, geography, humanities, and interdisciplinary studies, York University, Toronto. His most recent publications include "Mosques in Canada: From the Qur'anic Masjid to Sharif Senbel's 'Canadian Islamic Regionalism[s]," in Jessica Mace (ed.), *A Medieval Legacy: The Ongoing Life of Forms in the Built: Essays in Honour of Malcolm Thurlby* (Montréal, Patrimonium, p. 373-401). His current research interests include the role of literary tourism in the sustainable repurposing of industrial heritage in Manchester, England; Newcastle, New South Wales, Australia; and Hamilton, Ontario, Canada.

Why, some regular readers of the *Journal of the Society for the Study of Architecture in Canada (JSSAC)* might ask, has an issue been devoted exclusively to world religions and the built environment in Canada? Though certainly not a definitive answer, a rationale may be found in the pages of the *JSSAC* and its precursors, the *News* (1975-1980) and the *Bulletin* (1980-1997) of the Society for the Study of Architecture in Canada (SSAC). Appearing in winter 1975, the first issue of the first volume of the *News* of the SSAC, founded the previous year, includes the program for the Society's "First Annual Meeting." Held in Edmonton June 2-8, 1975, the meeting's theme, "Ethnic Architecture in the Prairies," echoes in a wholly appropriate way the contemporaneous strengthening of political and legislative commitment to a multiculturalist agenda at both the federal and provincial levels of government in Canada.² In that respect, several papers at the SSAC meeting address issues arising at the intersection of the architectural, the ethnic, and the religious fields.

Perhaps not surprisingly, however, talk of "religion" at the Edmonton gathering seems only to have meant talk of Christianity. After all, in the early 1970s, the vast majority of Canadians self-identifying with a religious tradition named one form or another of Christianity.³ Papers presented at Edmonton's SSAC conference thus include "Ukrainian Greek Orthodox and Ukrainian Greek Catholic Churches," "Design Parameters in Ukrainian Church Architecture on the Prairies," "Doukhorbor Ethnic Architecture," "Architecture and Settlement Patterns of Hutterites and Mennonites," and "The Great Church at Stanley Mission."⁴ The architectural presence of other communities of faith upon Canada's Prairie landscapes fails to feature. None, for example, speaks about the Carpenter Gothic style of Beth Israel Synagogue (1906), built by settlers of the Edenbridge Hebrew Colony, near Melfort, Saskatchewan, or the way Edmonton's Al-Rashid Mosque (1938), funded mainly by Lebanese and Syrian Muslims, mimics the vernacular architecture of churches on the Prairies, let alone the adaptation of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Raymond, Alberta, for use as a Japanese Jōdo Shinshū Buddhist temple (1929). This pattern persists for the life of the *News*. Reports appear on numerous presentations at SSAC annual meetings discussing the look, layout, location, and architectural languages of Christian churches across urban,