

Transregional Connections: Architectural Monuments and the Construction of Early Modern Islamic Empires



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Focusing on the 16th and 17th centuries, this lecture presents comparative reflections on the architectural cultures of the Mediterranean-based Ottomans, the Safavids in Iran, and the Mughals in the Indian subcontinent, with an aim to highlight transregional interactions and inter-crossings. From such a perspective, the tri-continental landmass dominated by these three early modern empires can be conceptualized as an interconnected contact zone. The premise of the lecture is that in the realm of architectural culture, the physical, mental, and social spaces interrelate and overlap with one another. The intimate connection between empire building and architectural construction is exemplified by the differing socio-religious and palatial building types favored in each of the three centralizing empires as expressions of distinctive theories of dynastic legitimacy. By emphasizing the deliberateness of these choices, the lecture challenges prevailing assumptions about an unmediated and self-propelled evolution of regional architectural and ornamental forms in the early modern era.

