

Architecture: a reflection of ideology.

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How important have the roles of religion, economics, politics been in shaping our buildings?

The Catholicism came over to our society because the European influences, and these new beliefs brought a different way of thinking and acting, making necessary the construction of a spiritual place where people could share their beliefs to God. The main characteristic of the Catholic establishment was based on the idea of having the church as the center of everything. It was the reason why churches are located in the main square of each town as a manifestation of power and domain.

The Catholic Church was the most important entity in Colombia during many centuries; it controlled the economics, social and politic organizations of the country due to the faculty given by the State. Together with the Spanish domain, it started the consolidation of an Architectural language which was expanded around the territory during many time.

It was after many years when the state legally separated the church from the political and economic matters, therefore, the church became weaker in taking decisions related to the Nation. However, the society did not abandon their religiosity and the Catholic traditional rites are still very important in the Colombian society faith.

The architecture comes together with the purchasing power of the state. It generates social growing with more jobs and consolidating the Real State as a great economical point in the economic situation, the political ideologies have helped to consolidate the idea of organize the 21th century cities like Bogota, our capital. Due to the inequality of our society the big cities has grown rapidly without any control. It has created disorganized cities with mobility, pollution and security problems. Nowadays the government is working on the idea of constructing cities which help the inhabitants to have a better quality of life. Most families have been beneficiaries with new political strategies in order to give Colombians the right of having a worthy home.

Do capitalist skylines redolent of old cathedrals indicate the displacement of religion by economic forces?

The Catholic Church played a primordial role in the political and economic development in Latin America. The State handed over faculties of participation in all the governmental terms. However, this participation was unstable and it depended directly on the interest of the nation, example, during the colonial period the Catholic church was the head of the education in our society. The education was taught under the catholic beliefs and it was directed by the different religious communities that came together with the Spanish domain (Augustinian, Dominicans, Franciscan and Jesuits) also the church participated drastically through the practice of the Holy inquisition which gave a supreme power under the political domains.

However, it was unstable as well, because it depended on the political leaders in each development stage of the nation, the Liberal and Conservative ideologies that would change the direction of the political and economic aspects in Colombia; example, the Jesuits, landed their domain during the colonial time and they were expelled from the new Granada because of their ideologies which were against the national politics.

The old Colombian buildings which were built since 1500 a.d. to 1810 a.d., are still important part of the architectural profile that identify our society, the old “**Claustros**” that were built in adobe, Spanish tile, with a central courtyard surrounded by pillars and arches typical of the colonial period are nowadays a legacy and the center of many cultural, educational, and political activities.

How much do the architectural project of the 20th secular religions of communism and fascism reveal inner beliefs/official orthodoxies?

Colombia has been an Catholic country due to the evangelization process made by Spanish during the Colonial time. Most of the population in the whole territory practice the faith to the Catholic church and all its places are known for having churches created since century XV.

Since the beginning of our history we cannot see much about secular religions establishing their creed and domain. Due to the second world war, many Muslims and Jewish who escaped from that conflict arrived to Colombia, crossing the Atlantic ocean and landing by the North of Colombia establishing their little community in a Latin American context, because of it, few little mosques were built to continue their beliefs in a foreign territory. However, this community was not as strong as the Catholic community was.

From the Colombian constitution in 1991 that promotes the creed freedom, many new secular religions have started to establish their congregation in the big cities in Colombia. However, nowadays there is not any important architectural evidence which could be compare with the whole traditional heritage and monumental of the catholic architecture.

Have social bonds been weakened or strengthened by modern architecture?

Colombia passed from being a conquered and domain land to be an evolutional one, architectonically speaking. The new models of Modern architecture came over thanks to the different immigrants: Spanish, Italian, and German architects who came to find shelter in the peaceful Colombia of that time. All these European patterns brought a new model of architecture that brings new models of development based on Urbanism. These new tendencies strengthened significantly the relationship between society and modernism, the new models of urbanisms changed the way of perceiving the idea of public spaces, the creation of boulevards, avenues, parks and other cultural centers that help to strengthened the social bonds.