

INCORPORATION OF ISLAMIC ARCHITECTURAL FEATURES IN NEPALESE ARCHITECTURE

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ABSTRACT

To identify the adopted Islamic architectural design elements in the religious and secular buildings of Nepal, the studied parameters are confined to mosque and temple complexes, which show the reflection and amalgamation of borrowed architectural style from neighbouring countries. Islamic design principles and elements of Mughal architecture from North India due to the migration of Muslims have been integrated into the building design in Nepal. This architectural characteristic is visible in the master plan, layout plan, roof (dome) and elevation as well as arches and window openings with window screen, niches, and geometric design patterns used in the decoration of building facades, floorings, roofs, ceilings, landscapes and water bodies. Being a land-lock between India and China, the country's architecture has evolved with an exchange of regional art, culture, and tradition.

Disciplinary: Architecture, Construction Technology, World History.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Nepal is famous for natural beauty and distinctive architectural features that can be observed in religious, public and private buildings. Nepalese Architecture is commonly known as Vastukala, which is Nepali term to denote Nepalese Architecture. It plays a significant role in the cultural recognition and heritage art of Nepal mostly with an expression of the religious temples. Other buildings are palaces, monasteries, public and residential houses, water elements (Dhungey-dharas and Hitti), Pati and Powhas, which also have distinctive Nepalese architectural features. In Nepali term, Dhunge means stone and Dharas means water spouts. It refers to water spout made of stone. Hitti refers to city water reservoirs. Patis means a covered rest place's platform with a rear wall leaving three to two sides open. Powhas is a rest house, which has a hall often with an upper storey and is usually located adjacent to a temple where pilgrims may stay for a few days.

This research main objective is to display the gradual process of establishment of Islamic features and building structures blended within the built environment of Nepalese culture and

tradition. During the Malla period, mosque architecture was established in Nepal, which is the cultural heritage of the Muslim community. The Malla Dynasty ruled Kathmandu from 1201-1779. In the first half of the 19th century, Islamic architectural features were integrated by Mughal architects in the Nepalese temple architecture. Famous buildings were Janaki Mandir in Janakpur, Kal Mochan temple in Durbar, Bhimbhatkeswora temple in Bagh Durbar and Rani Pokhari in Kathmandu.

2. ISLAM, FOLLOWER OF ISLAM AND ISLAMIC BUILDINGS OF NEPAL

Islam is an Arabic word; the verbal noun originated from the trilateral root S-L-M, which relates to the concept of wholeness, submission for peace. In the context of religion, it means “voluntary submission to Almighty God (Allah)”. Muslims are the believer of Islam, who follows the teaching and beliefs written in the Holy Quran. Islam believes in justice and fairness, based on five pillars of Islam: faith, prayers, pilgrimage, fasting, and charity (zakat). Since the 15th century, Muslims have been living in Nepal. According to the 2001 census, the Muslim community consisted of 4.4% of the total population of Nepal, is the second-largest religious minority group whose ancestors migrated from different parts of South Asia, Central Asia, and Tibet. Kashmiri traders were the first Muslims who arrived in Kathmandu during the King Ratna Malla’s reign (1484-1526), followed by Afghans, Persians, and even Arabians. Many Muslims had also migrated to Nepal from northern India at the time of King Pratap Malla (1641-74) (Sharma, 2004). They were engaged in the business of carpets, shawls and woolen garments between Kashmir, Ladakh, and Lhasa.

Besides trades, Muslims from Afghanistan and India were experts in manufacturing guns, cartridges and cannons while others were useful in international diplomacy because of their knowledge of Persian and Arabic language. Pratap Malla was interested in the Persian Language that he included it in his inscription at Hanuman Dhoka. Persian was also a lingua franca for correspondence with the British during colonial times. During the 16th and 17th centuries, Muslims also had trained Nepalese soldiers on how to use firearms and ammunitions. Many Persian and Arabic words were used in the local Newari language in the 16th and 17th centuries (Ardalan, 1973 & 1980). The Malla Kings were deeply influenced by Mughal culture, especially Mughal art, architecture, weaponry, attire and language.

Muslims had also migrated from India due to the violence of the Indian Revolution against the British rule in India (Sepoy Mutiny) in 1857 and settled down in Tarai, a region at Southern Belt of Nepal. They had engaged in selling leather goods and working as agricultural labourers. In 1959, Tibetan Muslims migrated to Nepal when the Chinese took over Tibet. Migration of Bihari Muslims from India as well as refugees from Bangladesh in the post-1971 period also added the Muslim population in Nepal (Bista, 1985; Sharma, 1994). Nepal Civil Code 1854 (Muluki Ain 1854) categorises the migrated Muslims as ‘impure and untouchable’ (Hofer, 1979), the new legal code in 1963 has provided equal rights for all the population regardless of ethnic origins and faith.

They have started to practice their religion freely only after the enactment of the new civil code in 1963. As a result, Muslims also felt like an integral part of societies. They started voluntarily practising their customs and religious activities, including the construction of many new mosques in different parts of Nepal. The recent political transformation, changing Nepal from the official Hindu state to a secular system has further liberalised development, conservation, and prosperity of Muslim cultural heritage.

2.1 ISLAMIC BUILDINGS

Among religious and secular structures of the Muslim community, a mosque is the most sacred place for worship. The name of the mosque derived from the Arabic term 'masjid', defined literally as a 'place of prostration'. The art, design and construction of mosque architecture provide a way of understanding the relationship between Islam and regional culture. This small community has a cultural origin and ethnic homogeneity (Shrestha, 2014; Fadzakir, 2001). The three essential elements exist in a basic layout of a mosque- the courtyard, the 'qibla wall' and the roofed prayer hall. In mosque architecture, three aspects are interrelated and significant –form, meaning, and function. It has a rectangular prayer hall characterised by a qibla wall perpendicular to axis to Mecca (west).

It also comprises a recessed niche in the wall (mihrab) denoting the direction of prayers, and a pulpit (minbar) from which a sermon (khutba) is delivered at congregational prayer during Friday prayer. Islamic sacred textbook is kept in the bookshelves in the prayer hall. Fountain, located on the ground floor near the main entrance is for ablution purposes. Ornamentation in the exterior and interior is fabricated with the analogous colours, geometric figures, patterns, and calligraphies of Quranic texts creating distinct sensations. The elements such as arches, domes and columns create a continuous sense of peace. Mosque illustrates a character of the prayer hall (interior space and the orientation of the prayer's direction/qiblah), outer form (dome and minarets), the symbolic meaning of colour (green, blue, gold) and calligraphy.

Mosque has become the centre of practicing Islamic culture, promoting brotherhood among Muslim communities, learning place of Islamic education, besides their sentimental attachment. Muslim structures are grouped into two characters which are religion (mosques, tombs, and mausoleums) and non-religion (forts, palaces, gateways, and garden) entities. In Kathmandu valley, one of the oldest mosques is Kashmiri Masjid located at Durbar Square, Ghanta Ghar and another one is Nepali Jami Masjid located at the junction of Baghbazar.



Figure 1: Inner View of Kashmiri Mosque

2.1.1 KASHMIRI MASJID

Kashmiri masjid (Figures 1 & 2) is the first mosque in Kathmandu under the reign of King Pratap Malla (1641-1674). Siddika (1993) wrote a book 'Muslims of Nepal', Kashmiri masjid advocates the 'Barelwi' School of Thought. Barelwi is a movement following the Sunni Hanafi School of jurisprudence. Located at the northern end of Ghanta Ghar near the junction of Jamal, Kashmiri mosque is accessible from a narrow gate to street. The mosque has three complexes; the main prayer hall, the annex and Madrasa (school). The annex is a three-storied building with graceful arches facing the pond where ablutions are performed before prayer. Adjacent to the annex is the madrasa.

2.1.2 THE TOMB WITHIN KASHMIRI MASJID PREMISES

There are two tombs (Figures 3 & 4) located within the premises, one near the entrance of the mosque and the other situated on higher ground next to the madrasa. The upper tomb of Haji Mishkin Shah is accessible through a series of gates and steps that lead the visitors to the garden. Haji Mishkin Shah is the first Muslim who had arrived in Kathmandu. His tomb is under the shade of a large tree, and at the base of the tree are receptacles where incense places, lending the perfumes to the air. The grave is raised concrete mound with a border of white tile and mound is covered with velvet and flowers. The lower tomb is Khwaja Gyasuddin Shah, the nephew of Haji Mishkin Shah, and his tomb is similar to the tomb of Haji Mishkin Shah. The only difference on the premises of his tomb is two graves of his closest relatives, a reminder to the time when Muslims were buried around the mosque.



Figure 2: Exterior View of Kashmiri Mosque



Figure 3: Exterior View of the Tomb



Figure 4: Inner View of the Tomb



Figure 5: Exterior View of Nepali Jame Masjid

2.1.3 NEPALI JAME MASJID

Nepali Jame Masjid (Figure 5) was built by Muslims who migrated from northern India during King Pratap Malla (1641-74). The present mosque was reconstructed in the old site in 1995, advocated the 'Deobandi' School of Thought. The mosque comprises a rectangular prayer hall which consists of the qibla wall, mihrab, minbar. All the three floors together with open terraces at two levels are used for prayer areas. The three-story minaret of Jame Masjid is at the corner of the mosque. Dome, which is another element of the mosque, is not visible, covered by the floor slab.

Green colour has been considered as the superior colour and has been extensively used in mosque decoration. Jame Masjid has rented its three and a half story structures for commercial uses to support the running cost of mosque and madrasa (school). Beside the Jame Market is a small enclosure of a low iron fence with shrubs and flowering plants that surround the tomb of Hazrat Begum Mahal, the wife of the Sultan of Oudh. The other tomb is Hazrat Mahal located at a corner of the busy junction of Baghbazar, making it one of the stops for those who wish to visit the tomb. Apart

from praying in the mosque, space could be used for other activities, such as reading, learning, lecturing, discussing, playing, and resting.

3. NEPALESE TEMPLE ARCHITECTURE

Nepalese temples are associated with an enclosed space made out of stone, brick or wood and single or multi-tiered roof where the statue of god or goddess resides called Mandir. In the Newari language, 'Degah' is a word used for the temple. The plan of the temple is either square or rectangular shape. The most common temple plan is squarely based on Vastu Purusha Mandala, an integral part of Vastu Shastra which is the ancient Hindu design principles of architecture and town planning. The three-dimensional structure arises from the two-dimensional plane with the mandala as the blueprint. The mandala (Figure 6) has 9 x 9 grid patterns in which each grid and cardinal direction resides a god or goddess (Dangol, 2011). In each grid, the central space is Bhrahma sthan for God state and Brahma Pada is kept empty. Devika pada is circulation area, Manusha pada is for livable structure and Paisachi pada for extra ambulatory spaces. The inner area of the ground floor is a sanctuary and does not have internal floors in the upper levels nor stairways to reach there, and it remains empty. The element of Nepalese temple architecture is gilt pinnacle, roof, struts, cornice and strings course, windows (Ga Jhya and Pashukha Jaya), niches, Torana (archway), door and door frame, columns and plinth. Gilt pinnacle or Gajura is a crowned umbrella at the top part of the temple. Ga Jhya is a blind window specially used in temples and Pasukya Jhya is a monastic window, which has three or five openings located at the first floor. Torana is a semicircular, flat object made of wood or wood plated with metal, placed above the doorways in the temple. It has several miniature deities, animals, devotes, floral motifs carved on the background.

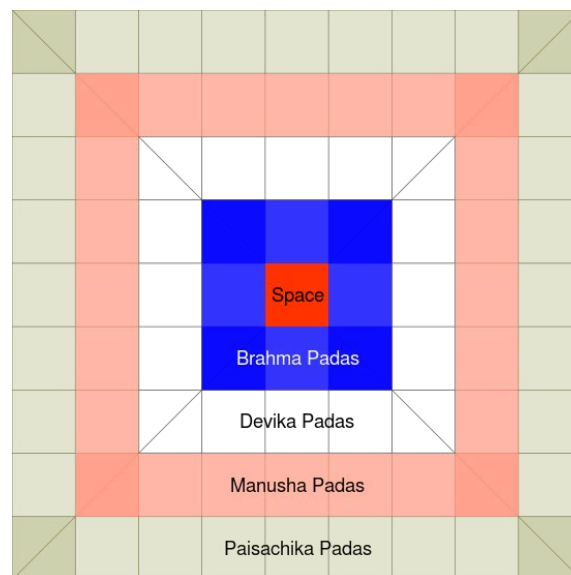


Figure 6: Mandala plan of 9 x9 grids.

3.1 CONSTRUCTION MATERIAL AND TECHNOLOGY

The existing traditional Nepalese temple (Figure 7) was made of load-bearing brick walls enclosed with timber frame construction like wall plates, corner posts and rafters which are connected by timber pegs and lap joint. They were single or multiple levels of plinths. Timber was used as a structural material in the temple for the construction of pillars, beams, Brackets, Struts openings (door and windows, roofing). Special moulding bricks are used for decorative windows and cornice supporting the lower end of the slanting roof struts. Wall openings reflect iconic and symbolic

aspirations more than ventilation or lighting the interior space. Most of the openings are small, with decoration and sculptural frames (Tiwari, 2009).

The Nepalese architecture style is divided into two major groups: Religious (temple, monasteries, etc.) and non-religious buildings (palaces, residential, public, etc.). The temple is categorised as a roof structure, or other associated architectural details which are similar in both the horizontal plans and vertical elevations. At this roof structure, there are locations of Gavakshya, a blind window; Kuta, the sloped roof of the upper shrine; the Agam, sanctum room for tantric worship, and a bell under the Gajur, a finial crowning element of temples. They all show the unity of ritual purpose behind the geometric fabric.

Earlier Islamic architectural features were initiated to public places (Bagh Darbar); monuments then to the religious structure. Mughals had introduced the domical roof structure during King Shah and Rana period during the 19th century, with a bell-shaped roof at Ghantakar temple, and the Gumbaz temple. Janaki Mandir, a temple located at Jankpur exhibits certain Mughal architectural features in layout plan and elevation treatment (Tiwari, 2009). The sloped roofs create tiered temples with a domical roof in the construction, a symbol dedicated to Siva. The temples were built on a square plan over three-terraced plinths and topped by a dominating dome. The walls had finishing with pilaster designs in light reliefs course and blind cusped arches. The domical style roof was typically used in temples enshrine the votive set up by the elite rulers of the King Rana period. Some of the prominent existing examples are Jang-Hiranya Hemnarayan Temple, Bhim Bhakteshwora temple, Bhaidegah Temple in Patan Durbar Square (Dangol, 2011).

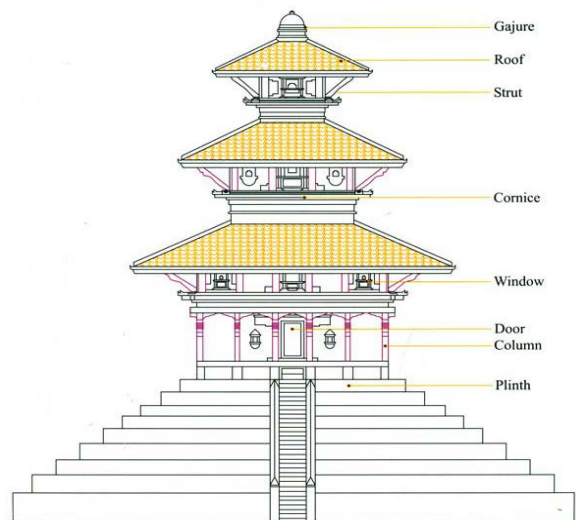


Figure 7: Elements of Nepalese Temple **Figure 8:** Exterior Views Of Kal Mochan Temple

3.1.1 KAL MOCHAN TEMPLE

Kal Mochan Temple (Figure 8) also known as Janga Hiranya Hemnarayan temple, located at the Kal Mochan ghat in Thapathali, earlier was a part of the Durbar Complex. It was constructed by Jang Bahadur Rana around the mid-19th century in the Mughal architectural style. The shrine in the centre has a proportioned square shape with a small domical roof. The corner turrets in the terrace on the first floor are replaced by cast Bronze sculpture of rearing Lions. The overall composition on the walls and cornice reliefs is also much simplified.

3.1.2 BHIMSEN THAPA TEMPLE

Bhimsen Thapa constructed the temple of Bhim Bhakteshwora at Bagh Durbar in 1823. It is also called a Gumbaz temple as it has a domical roof. It was erected with the brick in lime Surkhi (brick

dust). Mortar is plastered with the same material. The temple stands on three-stage plinths and brick-paved court, and the sanctum (Garvagriha). It is a square room with small entrance doors in all four directions and enclosed by an internal circumambulatory (circulation area). It can be accessed by axially-placed arched openings in the outer wall. The exterior entrance doors are done elaborately in stone with the standard post and sill system and a trefoil Torana (archway) with Makara (crocodile motif symbolising Ganga holy water) and Chhepu (mythical animal figure) with motifs arching above. Fluted pilasters with floral capitals divide the outer walls of the circumambulatory into three parts as per tradition. In the lower walls is the typical Muslim cusped and engrailed arch.

The cornice has a low relief painted pattern strip with standard projecting string layers of different motifs. Inner sanctum walls are raised over the first floor, and a slightly sloping terrace is formed over the space occupied by the circumambulatory below. The first-floor recess is one-fifth of the width of the outer wall below. Small miniature turrets are placed at the four corners of this unapproachable terrace. The upper wall is composed of a large projected vault with a cusped arch design on the outside that is supported on pillars, and the narrow vault frames a small window on all four sides. Corners of the upper wall are embellished with a less decorative pilaster. The top of the wall is topped by black paint on white pattern relief in plasterwork. An onion dome with a lotus leaf pattern circling its base crowns of the upper floor. The overhanging dragon (Naga) shapes snaking down and out into the four cardinal directions provide additional motifs for the gilded metal finial.

3.1.3 BHAIDEGAH TEMPLE

Bhaidegah temple in Patan Durbar Square was destroyed in the 1934 earthquake. It was constructed during Malla-era Pagoda, with Shikhara style architecture on the square base made of wood, mud and indigenous roof tile. It had a three-storied pagoda architecture. To protect the Shiv Lingam, it was reconstructed after the earthquake. A Mughal dome was built on the temple plinth. Now, Baidegah temple has embedded with a design of Mughal style.



Figure 9: Exterior and Interior View of Janaki Mandir

3.1.4 JANAKI MANDIR TEMPLE

Janaki Mandir temple (Figure 9) located in Janakpur, which covers an area of 4860 sqft, is one of the most prominent and finest examples of synchronistic art in Nepal. Most Mughal architectural features can be visualised both in the layout plan and building facades. Queen Vrishna Bhanu of Tikmgarh built this temple in 1910. The temple is also known as Nau Lakha Mandir as the construction cost of the temple was about nine lakhs. The massive structure is made of wood and bricks, a joint by lime mortar and plastered by brick dust and lime. There are two entry doors to enter the complex. The north-east entrance has an animal figure as a guardian. The east and north-east entrances have a tall arch opening door.

The main entrance of this temple is the eastern one, while the lion door is on the north where two lion statues are standing in front of the gate. It consists of two parts: The outer part is known as Sis Mahal, and the Inner part is called Tahakhana, which has a courtyard and a temple. The main temple is located at the centre where the ancient idols of Ram and Sita are worshipped. The height of the main temple is fifty meters, and it is a three-storied structure made entirely from stones and marbles. There are sixty rooms within the temple complex. Each room is decorated with the flag of Nepal, coloured glass, engravings and paintings with beautiful lattice windows and turrets. Just in front of the main temple, there is a small fountain.

The height of the entrance door is 30 meters. It has a small circumambulation and sanctum sanatorium or cella. There are numerous domes and gold plated pinnacles having carvings of different birds and animals, plants and flowers. There are also towers in the four corners of the temple and several small towers scattered in the structure. The front yard of Janaki temple is a large area of free and open spaces. In these open spaces, people can freely move. The front wing is symmetrical and has a design with a white façade and four towers-like-structure called turrets. Small shrines and temples have a dome roof structure located near the temple periphery. Various types of arches and struts have been used for the exterior façade elements. The lattice windows and parapet walls have a dome-shaped design to create a barrier space between the exterior and interiors. Also, the connecting bridge connects the central temple complex. It looks like a rose window with a frame of coloured glasses.

Through the detailed analysis, we concluded that certain design elements used in Nepalese architecture are similar to Islamic architecture, as illustrated in Table 1.

Table 1: Similarities of design elements between Nepalese and Islamic architecture

Elements	Nepalese Architecture	Islamic Features
Call for prayers	Bell	Minaret
Layout Grid 9x9	Vastupurusha mandala	Hasht-behesht
Openings/Windows	Ga Jhaya Pashukya Jhya Niches	Mashrabiya Dakkah Niches
Religious places	Mandir	Mosque
Water Elements	Pokhari, Dhunge Dhara Canals Hitti	Fountain, Reflecting pools Watercourses, Water spouts Qanats (sloping tunnels wells) Aquifers Water Wheels (Norias) Pumps, Hydraulics
Private Spaces	Darbar	Palaces
Public Spaces	Bazar	Caravanseries Hammamas Souq
Educational Building	Vidhyalay	Madrasa
Ornamentation	Moulded decorated bricks Iconography in relief work Religious Motifs Caring on wooden members, i.e. window and door frame, brackets, columns struts, jamb, cornice, Torana.	Muqarnas Mashrabiya Arabesque Calligraphy Geometric Pattern
Material	Brick, wood, stone	Brick, stone, Lime mortar
Structure	Trabeated	Arcuated
Roof	Pitched	Dome
Courtyard	Aagan	Sahn iwan
Light	Lamps (artificial)	Natural (windows, screens) Lamps (Artificial)

4. CONCLUSION

Nepalese architecture apart from the religious belief and structure has certain similarities with Islamic architecture. The difference is only the way of expression of ideology. When Muslims migrated to Nepal, they had introduced Islamic architectural features in the Nepalese architecture. They proposed the principle of symmetry in the building plan and facade treatment. Referring to Islamic architecture, Nepalese temples have geometric and floral motifs patterns and shapes in religious motifs in the form of iconography. To create three-dimensional optical effects, the temples have interlacing design to create the illusion of different planes, geometric patterns that enable to manipulation of two-dimensional figures. They also have incorporated arches in the design of entrance and wall pillars which are used as structural and decorative elements. Dome roof is constructed over a cubic space that inspires the symbol of heavens above the earth. The symbols used in architectural designs are either an expression of cultural or religious belief. Not only in religious buildings but once can also visualise the Islamic features in other non-religious buildings in Nepal. This integration has embedded the livelihood of people, tradition, culture, and originality.

5. GLOSSARY

Muqarnas - a three-dimensional decoration of Islamic architecture. Its physical form characterised by fluidity and replication of the Honeycomb pattern.

Calligraphy - Arabic quotation specially used for reference from the holly Quran and teaching of Prophet Muhammad.

Dakkah - A seat in front of the windows

Foliage - a frequent motif typically stylised.

Ghats - a series of steps leading down to a body of water, particularly holy river or lake

Gopuram - (Gopura) is a monumental entrance tower, usually ornate, at the entrance of a Hindu temple.

Grandiose Forms - large domes, towering minarets, large courtyards intended to convey power.

Kunda - a part of the temple for ablutions.

Iwan - a rectangular hall or space usually vaulted, walled on three sides with one end entirely open.

Mashrabiya - a type of outer projection window enclosed with carved wood

Masqurah - an enclosure, box or wooden screen near the mihrab or the centre of the qibla wall

Mihrab - a semicircular niche in the mosque that indicates the qibla (the direction of the Kaaba)

Minarets - a spire or tower-like structure featuring small windows with an enclosed staircase. The primary function is to allow the muezzin to call for worship.

Muqarnas - Honeycomb, used in domes, transitional zones in cornice and frieze

Pendentives - a tapered structure that allows a circular base for a round or elliptical dome placed on a square or rectangular room; decorated with tiles or muqarnas (i.e. sculptural decorations)

Pishaq - a Persian term for a portal projecting from the façade of a building, usually decorated with calligraphy bands, glazed tile-work and geometric designs) a rectangular frame around an arched opening, associated with an iwan. A formal gateway to the iwan is called 'pishtaq'.

Stamb - denotes a pillar or column exists at the entrance of the temple with the image of the lingam and sacred animals.

Tombs - (Samadhi) may or may not contain the body of the deceased, built to honour people regarded as saints.

Toranas - a free-standing archway for ceremonial purposes in front of the temples, monasteries etc.

Turrets - is as an architectural element used for fortification. A turret is curved, allowing those inside to view the world at nearly 360 degrees. A small, slit-like window allows those inside the turrets to see out and shoot arrows at the enemy on the ground. The walls of most turrets are curved; turrets typically don't start at the ground level but cantilever out from another upper level. A turret is simply a small, circular tower attached to a larger structure, usually on a corner or angle.

6. AVAILABILITY OF DATA AND MATERIAL

Data can be made available by contacting the corresponding authors.

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