From:

Patrick A. Desplat, Dorothea E. Schulz (eds.)
Prayer in the City
The Making of Muslim Sacred Places and Urban Life

May 2012, 314 p., zahlr. Abb., 34,80 €, ISBN 978-3-8376-1945-4

This volume envisions social practices surrounding mosques, shrines and public spaces in urban contexts as a window on the diverse ways in which Muslims in different regional and historical settings imagine, experience, and inhabit places and spaces as »sacred«. Unlike most studies on Muslim communities, this volume focuses on cultural, material and sensuous practices and urban everyday experience. Drawing on a range of analytical perspectives, the contributions examine spatial practices in Muslim societies from an interdisciplinary perspective, an approach which has been widely neglected both in Islamic studies and social sciences.

Patrick A. Desplat (Dr.) is lecturer at the Department of Social Anthropology in Cologne.
Dorothea E. Schulz (PhD) is professor for Social Anthropology at the University of Cologne.

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Introduction

Representations of Space, Place-making and Urban Life in Muslim Societies[1]

PATRICK DESPLAT

In 2009 a referendum that led to a ban of minarets in Switzerland stirred a heated public debate about Islam and religious freedom in Europe. The controversy brought to the open old-standing fears about Islam, but also, in some factions, outrage about this vivid demonstration of xenophobic sentiment. To substantiate their claims against or in favor of the Muslim call for prayer, politicians, journalists and others involved in the debate referred to various manifestations of increased Muslim presence in European societies, most notably female 'veiling' in public. By taking the ban in Switzerland as a starting point, the British Muslim writer Shelina Zahra Janmohamed reviewed a seminar held by the Arts and Islam Initiative of Arts Council England and makes a different point through illustrating the aesthetic qualities of religious buildings and their specific spatial relationship towards their community and their urban environment.[2] Quoting a workshop participant, she asked "What makes the brick of the butcher's shop across the road, less sacred than the brick in the religious building?" The answer

1 I am especially grateful to Dorothea Schulz who patiently commented on and criticized several stages of the draft of this introduction. Her invisible voice has undoubtedly played a part in shaping this chapter. Similarly, I would like to thank Martin Zillinger and Jörn Thielmann for their helpful suggestions and comments on earlier versions. The discussions with students during a graduate seminar in 2010 on 'Place Matters' provided a fertile ground for several trains of thought.

2 http://artsandislam.com/wp-content/uploads/2010/06/Faithbuildings.pdf (last accessed 15.12.2010).

she suggested was that a locality's sacred significance results from the actions of people who imbue the physical structure of a locality with specific meanings and functions.

What practices turn spaces, sites and buildings in Muslim societies into a Muslim sacred place? How do Muslims transform abstract and empty space into a place that is invested with particular social and symbolic meanings? In what broader cultural understandings are Muslims' practices of sacred place-making grounded? Who controls Muslims' diverse sacred places and who contests the claim for their sacredness? And how do Muslims' diverse practices of rendering places 'sacred' intertwine with the opportunities and constraints of urban space?

Prayer in the City takes social practices surrounding mosques, shrines and public spaces in urban contexts as a window onto the diverse ways in which Muslims in different regional and historical settings imagine, experience, and inhabit places and spaces and invest them with sacred meaning. Unlike most studies on Muslim communities, this volume concentrates on social practices and expressions of urban everyday life rather than on the political issues that dominate today's headlines. These practices are conceived of as specific modes of place-making and the authors seek to understand them in their semantic and contextual complexity. This collection thereby moves beyond interpretations that focus exclusively on the ritual character of these places. The religious meaning of places, often initiated and maintained by Islamic scholars, ritual specialists and common visitors, is mostly accompanied by more subtle and routinely everyday activities and interpretations by people who may not participate in ritual activities but they live, work and interact at these places. Some of these actors might be in charge of picking up garbage in front of a shrine; others might sell sweets or audio-cassettes with Qur'anic recitations; yet others might simply hang out in front of the mosque to relax from overcrowded and busy street life; these activities are done without any peculiarly religious intent; they belong to the realm of everyday routines and occupations. All these practices help construct a physical space as a place that bears particular, religious and mundane meanings.

A place is not only a site where Muslims live. It is also a site of struggle and contestation over the use and significance of this place. Muslim sacred places constitute spatial nodes in a wider network of religious, socio-political, cultural or economic flows in which different ideas, claims and interests intersect and sometimes converge. Sacred places are contested sites because opinions of their uses may differ, just as the meaning of 'sacredness' may be questioned. In urban settings, with their historically and regionally specific backgrounds, their density and heterogeneity offer various possibilities for the making of sacred places. At the same time, the urban physical structure and centralized administration may

impose various constraints on Muslim ritual as well as on their ways of conducting everyday life. For instance, projects by politicians and or state officials to renovate and refashion a mosque building or to use its surrounding property for new purposes often collide with the resistance of those who actually frequent these sites. Considerable disagreement over proper attitude, comportment, dress and religious conviction may exist among believers and visitors who flock to a well-known mosque or shrine. New Islamic reform movements may contest existing understandings and claims about the sacredness of particular places, and simultaneously promote their own domiciles as sites of proper behavior and moral piety. Throughout Muslim history, shrines and correlating practices of worship and veneration have often constituted a bone of contention among competing religious groups. Controversies centered not so much on the special, sacred character of these sites but on questions of proper religious practice.

Stretching from Morocco, Mali, Senegal, Tanzania, Sudan, Tunisia, Germany, and Egypt to Pakistan, India and Bangladesh, the contributions to this volume explore different modes of place-making in Muslim societies with a focus on urban settings. Drawing on a range of analytical and disciplinary perspectives, the chapters examine how the cultural, material and sensuous architectonics of religious practice, on one side, and everyday experience and activities in town on the other constitute and affect each other. The contributions examine spatial practices in Islam from an interdisciplinary and trans-regional perspective, and thus move beyond approaches that have been commonly advanced in Islamic studies and in the social sciences. The place-making activities examined in the different chapters range from practices of Senegalese Sufi pilgrims, female Malian Muslim activists, and traders engaged in the Tunisian tourist industry, to activities in different mosque and shrine congregations, and finally to festivities that partake in the visual and aural construction of sacred place in urban environments.

The different chapters in this volume pursue three guiding concerns. First, conventional scholarship on Islam treated space (and place) as meta-categories without defining them explicitly. Space was taken for granted or understood as a 'container' of human action, filled with a specific Islamic order of norms, values, and practices. In search of a definition of Islam on the grounds of proper religious practice and conduct, studies of Islam mapped Muslim societies according to their specific methodologies: from the early Orientalist notion of centre and periphery to the dichotomy of rural and urban Islam and the assumption of fragmented *islams* of local contexts in anthropology. How Muslims themselves construct space and place has been comparatively neglected.

Second, space and place within Muslim societies had either been treated as being interchangeable concepts or as dichotomies. Although this book takes place-making of Muslims as an initial starting point, space has to be included in the overall analysis. Both terms are complementary and it is a comprehensive theme of most contributions to illustrate that Muslim sacred places are always made of diffusion, appropriation and movement in space.

Third, the practice of transforming something into a sacred place is explicitly related to the question of how sacredness is constituted in different Muslim contexts. Sacredness is related to a social practice of investing specific meaning to physical structure. This process is both guided by religious references as well the context-related everyday life of social actors with their specific economic, socio-political dimensions. Everyday life in urban settings is particularly shaped by the interaction of heterogeneous actors with their respective life styles, practices, and attitudes that produces both routines as well as cultural creativity. Against this background, Muslim practices of place-making are often intensified to maneuver through the complexities of urban life. However, the increasing presence of even temporary Muslim sacred places often results in tensions over their legitimacy and use.

REPRESENTATIONS OF SPACE IN SCHOLARSHIP ON ISLAM AND MUSLIM SOCIETIES

Until the 1980s, scholarship on Muslim societies and cultures did not treat 'space', 'place' and 'landscape' as analytical categories. Very often, these terms were used interchangeably and applied to geographical locations and regions that were treated as timeless and static. This endeavor of categorizing reflected a colonial thinking to assume the existence of separate cultures that are rooted in isolated, unique and bounded territories. To subdivide the world into a mosaic of cultures was helpful to understand complex differences. In early anthropology geographical regions became containers, in which constrained cultures were connected with surfaces of institutionalized social knowledge as 'gate keeping concepts' or 'theoretical metonyms' (Appadurai 1986; Rodman 1992). Arjun Appadurai (1988), for example, criticized that caste became the substitute for Indian society while India became the predominant region for anthropologists to study hierarchy which produced a region-specific school of structuralism. In this sense, space is treated as an external but undefined meta-category that reflects knowledge and power while excluding actor-centered perspectives. In the same way, the Middle and Near East was conceived of primarily in terms of segmenta-

tion, Islam and the harem (Abu-Lughod 1989). In an isomorphic perception of a geographical region (Middle and Near East), its social structure (Arab segmented society) and its underlying culture/religion (Islam), Islam became the explanatory framework for European imperialism to understand the 'Arab mind'. In this sense, the image of the Middle and Near East produced knowledge of an abstract spatial frontier which has to be explored, traversed and controlled. This point has been criticized in Edward Said's famous *Orientalism* (1978), which shook many scientific disciplines to the core. For Said, Orientalism is a body of theory and practice about the 'Orient' and about Islam, which form a set of representations based on power hegemonies of European scholars and their subject.

The claim that 'Muslim society' has been homogeneous and timeless goes back to the shallow Orientalist imaginations of the 19th century and earlier.[3] The search of early Islamic studies for an essence through the analysis of Islamic texts and theology resulted in a categorization of a territorial bounded Islamic centre and its peripheries. These categories are based on the normative perception of different expressions of Islam: the Middle and Near East were perceived as the heartland of an assumed Islamic orthopraxy, which served as a scale to evaluate 'nonstandard' practices as 'syncretic' or 'pre-Islamic'. Since most religious texts were produced in centers of Islamic learning in the Arab world, other regions like Africa or Asia were defined by Islamic studies as Muslim peripheries. They regarded Muslim societies at the assumed fringe as passive receivers and not as producers of Islamic religion while presuming at the same time that these Muslims must be considerably shaped by their cultural context and local religions like Animism, Hinduism and Buddhism, thus practicing a 'syncretic' or mixed Islam. The search for and definition of a normative essence on the basis of analyzing Islamic texts resulted in a general disregard of the peripheral regions as locations of research, even though many Muslim societies in Africa or Asia developed a rich tradition of Islamic literature. This gap was filled later on by the works of anthropologists, who tried to avoid complex historical depth and literal legacies and searched for rituals and face-to-face interactions.

From the 1950s onwards, increasing anthropological research on Islam and Muslim societies resulted in a paradigmatic shift. The Islamicist scholar Gustav E. von Grunebaum (1956) and the anthropologist Robert Redfield (1955) sought to overcome the hierarchical and categorical opposition of orthodox and syncret-

3 An example for the continuity of this notion is Ernest Gellner's *Muslim Society* (1981). Despite Gellner's sophisticated amalgamation of Hume's oscillation theory with the sociology of Ibn Khaldun and the impact of modernity on Muslim society, his work portrays Muslims as rather behaving in a fixed and timeless system than acting as individual social actors.

ic Islam by proposing an alternative, the conceptual contrast of 'Great' and 'Little Traditions'. Initially developed with regard to peasant studies and urban migration (with the intent of studying the folk-urban continuum), both terms were meant to refer to contrasting forms of practicing Islam. The 'Great Tradition' was understood as 'orthodox' Islam, to be based on scriptural scholarship and cultivated in urban mosques and urban institutions of education by an urban elite. 'Little Tradition' in contrast referred to what von Grunebaum and Redfield understood as 'heterodox' forms of Islam, practiced by mostly non-literate rural populations and manifesting itself in demotic versions like mysticism, saint veneration or maraboutism.

One could argue that by positing a contrast between a Great and a Little Tradition, von Grunebaum and Redfield were asking valid questions yet offered only partial answers that brought with them new challenges. The Great vs. Little Tradition dichotomy organized differences within a religious tradition in spatial terms, by opposing a rural to an urban Islam. The strength of the categorical divide posited by von Grunebaum and Redfield was that it accorded equal value and importance to different expressions and practices of Islam, instead of ordering them in a fixed hierarchy, with 'orthodox' Islamic knowledge prevailing over aberrant and un-Islamic beliefs and practices. By treating both traditions as equal, the conceptual duality overcame the hierarchical categorization in Islamic studies in orthodox practices and inferior deviants.

Still, a shortcoming of the Great vs. Little Traditions categorization was that it arranged a great variety of Muslim practices, conventions and interpretations into a neat and, one could argue, rigid and ahistorical interpretational scheme. Moreover, the claim of this model to overcome normative hierarchies was only partial fulfilled. According to Redfield, the mosque was (always) the place of 'orthodox' Islam practiced in town, whereas the shrine stood for various manifestations of a 'popular' Islam practiced by believers with little erudition and knowledge in the countryside. This view contains at least two significant problems. First, it strengthens an inner-Islamic discourse of normative assertion concerning the rightfulness of certain practices. Second, it neglects the various overlapping and confluences of the distinctive forms of social organization.

According to Abdul Hamid el-Zein (1977: 248), the anthropological dichotomy of folk and elite Islam is congruent with methods of Islamic theology. He argues, that social sciences merely mirror an Islamic discourse dominated by Muslim elites. This discourse reflects the hegemony over interpretation and therefore takes the right to articulate a vision of proper Islamic conduct as being orthodox. While an urban Islam is always equated with religious orthodoxies, rural concepts change continually according to their diverse contexts of social for-

mation. Although anthropology claims to have a more reflective, systematic and objective approach than Islamic theology, the discipline tries to capture Islamic diversity by the same means and principles of a hegemonic Islamic elite, therefore, strengthening existing hierarchical relationships within Muslim societies.

A second problem with Redfield's dichotomy is its rigidity. Its perspective disregards that many important shrines are located in urban environments, and that many of those who engage in practices associated with mystical Islam and the veneration of saintly figures are models of Islamic erudition. Thus what Redfield considered as little 'folk' tradition is not little at all, since all rituals and religious practices make references to the 'Great Tradition', be it the everyday prayer or the reciting of the Qur'an by rural peasants. On the other hand the urban middle class may very well be attached to Islamic mysticism. To neatly separate urban and rural spheres as different locations of religious practice is impossible because these sites intertwine through people who move back and forth between them and whose practices frequently link these different domains of religious and mundane practice. As early as 1955, McKim Marriot (1955) suggested to replace the Great vs. Little Traditions dichotomy with the twin concepts of universalization and parochialization, and to conceive of different religious traditions as complementary and as existing in a mutually constitutive relationship. Marriot's early and innovative corrective did not find a broad echo. As a result, Redfield's dichotomous classification helped perpetuate an already existing disciplinary division of labor. Philological approaches in Islamic studies and in history continued to focus on texts produced in urban centers; anthropologists and those from other disciplines concentrated on detailed empirical research located in the village as the center of an allegedly traditional and untouched rural life.

In the 1970s, Abdul Hamid el-Zein (1977) conceived of Islam in the plural to comprehend the heterogeneous collection of different practices and beliefs that he illuminated existed. His main argument was that anthropology should detach itself from assumptions of the existence of one Islamic orthodoxy and to assess different religious expressions in equal terms. The explanation of Muslim's diversity became less normative, however, more and more fragmented from a spatial perspective: early attempts to categorize the Islamic world in a center and its surrounding peripheries have been superseded by a localized division into an urban and rural Islam, while anthropologists from the 1960s on understood Islam in its spatial plurality as bounded unities related to their cultural field sites. When Clifford Geertz (1968) heralded an 'anthropology of Islam', he first compared a 'Moroccan Islam' and 'Indonesian Islam' as having the same religious

affiliation, although a culturally different religious expression developed.[4] This highly influential work explained diversity in Islam from an angle of cultural diversity as dominating religious expression. This approach echoes the anthropological idea of the ethnographic field as a spatial bounded entity, which is epistemologically central but has been rarely questioned before the early 1990s (Gupta and Ferguson 1992). In a similar manner as the 'field', space in Islamic studies has been treated as an undefined meta-category up till today. Common terms like 'Moroccan Islam' (Eickelman 1976) or 'South Asian Islam' (Ewing 1988), 'African Islam' (Rosander and Westerlund 1997), 'American Islam' (Barrett 2007), or 'Euro-Islam' (AlSayyad and Castells 2002) underline the local distinctiveness of Muslim identities and have the tendency to reproduce a close spatial relationship between a geographical site and specific religious expressions. These spatial terms, implicitly or explicitly, disregard two important dimensions. First, they rather neglect mobilities, movements and historical networks of pilgrimage or trade which crosses regional boundaries and triggered religious, economic and cultural exchange between Muslim communities. Against the background of globalization studies and transnational Islamic movements many authors today turn towards the interconnections and translocal space of Muslims. Engseng Ho (2006), for instance, takes the Yemeni region of Hadramaut as a starting point to illustrate travel, mobility and Hadrami communities dispersed over the Indian Ocean. John Bowen (2004), on the other hand, asks if French Islam is or should be limited culturally, linguistically, and geographically to France. He highlights the field of tension of French Muslims to be part of the global Muslim community and the normative pretensions of the French state to domesticate Islam at the same time.

However, these and earlier studies often neglect – Bowen's study is a rare exception – that Muslims perceive themselves as being part of a universal and global Islam. Only few Muslims would relate their religious belief to a geographical region, such as following an 'Ethiopian Islam', although the term 'Ethiopian Muslim' would be commonly accepted. Spaces inhabited by Muslims have multiple meanings and are socially constructed, not only by studies of Islam but also by Muslims themselves. The division of the world in different territories likes *dar al-Islam*, 'the house of Islam', and *dar al-harb*, 'the house of war', seems to be common theological fact in Islam. However, this mode of mapping the world is in fact not related to passages in the Qur'an or Hadith, but

4 "Moroccan Islam became activist, rigorous, dogmatic and more than a little anthropolatrous and why Indonesian Islam became syncretic, reflective, multifarious, and strikingly phenomenological lie, in part anyway, in the sort of collective life within which and along with which they evolved" (Geertz 1968: 20).

is the result of interpretation by Islamic scholars (Bennett 2005). The contributions of this volume de-essentialize notions of sacred places as timeless manifestations of religious power, but take socially constructed places as the starting point to elaborate an actor-centered perspective on practices of place-making.

PRACTICES OF MAKING-PLACE (AND SPACE). MUSLIMS' MOVEMENT AND SENSE OF BELONGING

Despite the role that space had for studies on Muslim societies and cultures, only few scholars have actually specified what they perceive as 'place' and 'space'. Since both categories are everywhere, they seem to stand for themselves and have been misconceived as unquestioned constants of social reality. However, since the 'spatial turn' in the 1980s, it has become more and more fashionable in studies on Islam to use spatial categories and to emphasize the social construction of places and spaces as important aspects of cultural production. This turn is mostly related to contemporary sociological and anthropological scholarship which tend to address spatial aspects relating to lived 'spaces' as being parts of various aspects of Muslims' everyday life: gendered spaces (Falah and Nagel 2005; Göle 1997, 2002), media spaces in the public sphere (Eickelman and Anderson 1999), bodies as sites of embodied piety (Mahmood 2005; Starrett 1995) or the making of Muslim spaces in Europe and North America (Metcalf 1996).

The philological discipline of Islamic studies, in contrast, inclines to focus on remembered 'places'. These are sacred places which are often related to acts of remembrance, the creation of continuity and of imagining the past in an idealistic way. These are places such as mosques, shrines, public places or landscapes which are remembered by Muslims as being related to important figures or events in Islamic history, while being often imagined as an interrelated sacred topography which is inhabited and lived by Muslims (Bennett 1994; Schimmel 1991).

These different perceptions of spatiality in Muslim societies and cultures echo a tendency in the social sciences to treat space and place not necessarily as dichotomous but as differently evaluated concepts of one social reality. On the one hand, there are spaces of modern life which stand for rapid social change and compete with the fixity of places, and on the other hand, there are historic places which stabilize the chaotic surrounding space. These different foci on the relationship of place and space go back to different epistemological traditions. While approaches to study space have been prominent in Marxist inspired soci-

ology, human and social geography has been preferably interested in places. In a general way, Agnew summarized that sociology analyzed space as an abstract grid and object, which could be crossed and lived but also observed, controlled and formed, while the geographical discipline perceived places mostly as subjective, embodiments of meaning and locations of cultural memory. As a consequence, space has been associated with development, change and the global, while place was labeled with nostalgia, continuity and the local (Agnew 2005: 82-83).

There is the need to conceptually distinguish these perspectives on 'place' and 'space'. For both disciplines, space is first of all conceived as a structure or domain uninhabited by people and to which actors have not (yet) inscribed any social meaning. The concept of space is also more abstract than place, and more difficult to apply to empirical investigations. More theoretical understandings of 'space' have been advanced mostly by Marxian inspired approaches in (urban) sociology (Harvey 2006; Jaret 1983; Wallerstein 1976). These studies treat 'places' largely as points of reference in a wider, abstract space, in which power relations are inscribed. Space becomes first of all a capital-induced space. Capitalism was seen as the root of the fragmentation of the world in different states or cities and particular property rights. This perspective is a top-down approach in the sense that spaces have comprehensive influence on places and dominate the everyday life of their inhabitants. The main problem of this approach of space is that it tries to explain political power without reference to situated power relations. Instead, space itself becomes an abstract, all-embracing power, detached from any human agency.

In a more sophisticated way, the social philosopher Henri Lefebvre (1991 [1974]) developed a dialectical relation between space and place. Similar to other studies on space, he presumes that capitalism transformed abstract and empty space into space that colonizes and exploits the everyday life of its inhabitants through control, planning, gentrification or commodification. However, these incapacitated inhabitants may reclaim space by its naming or remembering, thus transforming space into space with a particular and specific meaning beyond its capitalist characteristics. Lefebvre therefore defines space as socially constructed which could be experienced, imagined and acted upon by its inhabitants. Although Lefebvre's amplifications most importantly do focus on uneven economic conditions and dominant practices (and he does not use the term 'place'), the activities of potential resistance imply a place-related agency of people insofar as it gives meaning to space.

'Place', therefore, had its role in sociology, even if it was secondary to space and not named as such. However, the transformation of empty into meaningful

space is a distinct form of place-making. A city as such is an urban space, meaningless and abstract, designable and controllable, but cities such as Fez or Islamabad are places conjuring specific histories and identities. Where the early Portuguese explorers of the Indian Ocean may have seen an empty space of wide water which had to be conquered and traversed, Arab and Swahili sailors read the sea as a set of places inhabited by various spirits and fraught with dangers (Sheriff 2010).

In contrast to sociology which favored the perspective on space and perceived place as an abstract position (in space), early human geography was engaged in the explanations of place as a location to which actors attributed particular social meanings or cultural significances (Relph 1976; Tuan 1979). These approaches have been influenced significantly by the phenomenology of Maurice Merlau-Ponty (1962). According to him, life is grounded in perception, an ontological grounding that implies an 'emplaced' knowledge about place and about our own movement in space. Because we are always localized through our 'being in the world', everything we do is in fact emplaced. This approach implies that early approaches in human geography were not necessarily interested in how places were made and constructed in their unique cultural or social setting. Rather they tried to explain the essence of human existence as being 'emplaced'. Tuan for example uses the term 'topophilia', love of place, and explains the perception and emotional ties people have with their environmental surroundings (Tuan 1974). Feelings towards a place may vary, but 'home' and other places of positive memories or nostalgia were perceived as being fixed entities of value and belonging opposed to space as an arena of action, mobility and movement. Edward Relph took this dualism as a starting point to draw a sharp line between 'authentic' places, loaded with identity, experience, belonging and a feeling of home, and of 'inauthentic' places which are the product of increasing mobilities, change and the resulting loss of relationship to place (Relph 1976). Placelessness finally is a nostalgic assertion that more and more places in the modern world are assumed to lose their meaning through developing the same features like airports or motorways as standardized landscapes.

Later on, the contribution of social philosopher Edward Casey (1996) became quite popular in anthropology. Drawing on earlier phenomenological approaches in geography, Casey criticized widely held assumptions about the unproblematic and taken-for-granted existence of space, and their contrast to place as something that requires the active making and signification practices of human actors. Instead of space, according to Casey, it is place which is much more significant for human life and "to live is to live locally and to know is first of all to know the places one is in" (1996: 18). However, Casey departs from earlier

approaches that perceived place as a spatial entity fixed with an unchanging self-identity and stressed the processual and undetermined nature of place. Referring to Martin Heidegger, Casey argues that places 'gather' experiences, memory, histories, languages and thoughts and they hold them together (1996: 24). Casey's formulations are important for understanding places as sites where practices, experiences and remembrances intensify by a continuous process of place-making.

However, his assumptions do not include gender or social differences that produce different experiences of the same place. Socially constructed or imagined places do maintain and produce social hierarchy and difference through their makers by excluding and separating people by materials and symbols. Mosques or shrines are often strongholds of power. By controlling them, their geographical locations, built-form or symbolic meanings may be instrumentalized to dominate others. The sociologist Thomas Gieryn (2000: 468), therefore, proposes that we explore how places come into being and what they accomplish. Places are socially constituted through practices, cognitive models and material manifestations, and they simultaneously structure action and social life. The social process of place-making as well as their social consequences, the resulting possibilities and constraints for social agency should be given a preferential treatment in the analysis of places. A place is at once a performative act *and* a structuring order. They are a medium through which social life is affected.

Agnew succinctly sums up important insights drawn from the different approaches to space and place that I discussed so far: "space refers to location somewhere and place to the occupation of that location. Space is about having an address and place is about living at that address" (Agnew 2005: 82). Both conceptualizations of place and space are often arranged in a hierarchical relationship, which is reminiscent of the conceptual dichotomies so characteristic of former approaches to the study of Muslim societies and cultures. One side of the dichotomy was represented by scholars interested in theology, both Muslims and non-Muslims, who conceived of Islam as a universal system (space) that determines Muslim everyday life according to an Islamic orthodoxy that is passed on and reproduced at certain institutions of Islamic erudition (places). On the other side of the dichotomy were scholars who stressed the diversity of Muslim religious expressions and understandings across time and cultures, and who thus promoted a view of Islam in the plural (places), highlighting the particularistic elements of local Islam instead of its claim for universality (space). However, in recent analysis, conceptual boundaries between universalistic and particularistic as well as between space and place became more and more blurred.

Geographer Doreen Massey (1991) has made a much-quoted effort to bring together place and space into one framework of analysis. Questioning the function of places ascribed by neo-Marxian studies on space, Massey criticized that places seem to be constructed by people out of fear as reactive and defensive responses which reflect the struggle for authenticity against the power of a global capitalist juggernaut of homogenization. These place-based social movements include identity politics or cultural heritage politics as subaltern strategies against globalism (see Escobar 2001). Massey suggests that, rather than treating place as a fixed entity in a surrounding mobile chaos, scholars should investigate how places emerge out of particular social and political relations and encounters. In Massey's reading, a place is a process, a site on which multiple identities and histories are inscribed. Place is not only defined by its inscribed identity, but this identity itself is a process reliant on interactions and movement of people through a wider space. A place constitutes a moment and a node in a social network where different experiences and translocal ties and movements intersect. Thus, what Massey's notion of 'place' emphasizes are not boundaries or authentic identities, but processes of contestation, of movement and connection, and (the generation of) ambiguous meanings. According to Massey, place is to be understood in relation to factors that exist outside and reach beyond that place. Massey also makes the important point that globalization is not experienced everywhere in the same way. Different configurations of power and politics allow some people to move and migrate, while restricting the mobility of others (see also Cresswell 2001).

As elsewhere in the world, places in Muslim societies are made through mobility, movement and their restrictions. Muslim places are constantly made and remade by travelling, pilgrimage, knowledge networks or trade, activities which are explicitly encouraged by Islam (Eickelman and Piscatori 1990). Obviously, most places in Islam are made by human actors who move through space: Mecca is made a place fraught with ritual meaning through believers who engage in the *hajj*, the annual pilgrimage, or *'umra,* a pilgrimage which could be performed any time. Medina is 'made' into a sacred place by people who, through embodied practices, commemorate the *hidjra*, the flight of the prophet Muhammad with his followers from Mecca. Jerusalem becomes a place with particular (ritual) meanings through ritual practices that invoke and honor the *miradj*, the nocturnal journey of Muhammad. Other sacred places are made through practices dedicated to the commemoration of pious Muslims who, because of their personal biography, ethical conduct or erudition, are considered saints today and whose tombs are the object of 'visits' (*ziyara*), veneration, and supplication.

As in the past transnational ties, mobility and migration have a tremendous effect on contemporary processes of place-making in Muslim societies and cultures. Transnational Muslim communities in the West purposefully inscribe new meanings into spaces by engaging in various ritual practices, such as processions or those surrounding the constructions of mosques (Metcalf 1996; Werbner 1996). Another example of place-making via movement is the Tabligh-i Jama'at, a modern reform group with an explicit focus on travel and mobility (Masud 2000). Their mode of education starts out from their teaching center (*markaz*) and moves on to the missionary tour (*khuruj*) that includes door-to-door-visits or short trips to mosques located in the surrounding rural and urban areas. A missionary tour may last several months and may take its participants, individuals as well as groups of missionaries, to other countries. In addition to their annual congregations (*ijtema*), the Tabligh also gather in mass meetings that bring together hundreds of thousands of their members from all over the world. However, mobility is often constrained by economic and other reasons. During my fieldwork in the town of Harar in Eastern Ethiopia, for instance, the Tabligh had to report to the local Qadi before going to rural areas first. After an interview, the local Sharia court makes out a document for identification that proves that the affected person is not an 'Islamist' who instigates religious intolerance. The lack of these documents usually resulted in arrests by the police.

The contributions to this volume, too, illustrate that movement, migration, mobility and the restrictions imposed on them, are factors that inform modes of place-making in numerous Muslim societies. Many chapters highlight how the transnational connections play into practices of place-making at various moments of everyday and ritual life. Johara Berhane reports on how inhabitants of a popular neighborhood in the Moroccan town of Fez discovered the importance of a shrine dedicated to the Sufi leader Ahmad al-Tijani only once they were confronted with Senegalese pilgrims flocking to the shrine. Simon Hawkins discusses the significance that young Tunisian traders, whose business is geared toward attracting international tourists, attribute to the famous Zeituna mosque in Tunis. In other contributions, movement is more implicit but is often a decisive factor of place-making. Catherine Asher focuses on the symbolic meaning of a staircase and its mosque in colonized Jaipur/India. The struggle of Muslims with the local government over widening the stairs did result into a violent killing and imprisonments at the mosque. In protest of this perceived betrayal, many Muslims migrated to Delhi, where they stayed for several months before the responsible police officer in Jaipur asked the emigrants to come back and finally ordered for the widening of the mosque stairs. Samuli Schielke opts for the form of a photo-essay to account for the extraordinary nature of *mawlids* festivals in

Egypt. These festivals transform the city or a village temporarily into a world of celebration where the everyday order is suspended. However, the *mawlids* is characterized by a constant mode of flux and the mobile structures of its buildings are treated as temporary cities within the city. Every year these constructions are rebuilt and help to reproduce the magic atmosphere of the festivity.

Muslims obviously make their different places by creative interaction, appropriation or movement. Sacred places are the result of a specific mode of place-making; they are the product of people's investments and practices that endow physical space with diverse, religious connotations. This leaves us with the following questions: What makes a Muslim place a sacred Muslim place? How is the sacred in Muslim societies related to Muslims' everyday life? Addressing these questions and specifying how we conceive of the sacred in Muslim societies is of central import to studies on Islam because sacredness is central to the tension between the claim to universal validity of the teachings of Islam and the historically and culturally variable forms in which they are realized and lived.

SACRED PLACES, SACRED BOUNDARIES AND URBAN LIFE

The constructivist character of places incorporates Muslim practices to imbue physical manifestations with sacred meaning. However, what sacredness in different Muslim societies actually means is open to debate. The 'sacred' is probably one of the most controversial concepts in the social sciences, while Muslims themselves often question, compete over or debate different modes of sacredness. It has to be emphasized that the power of the sacred as well as boundaries between the sacred and the profane are often real for the believers and that this distinction usually plays an important role in their everyday life. On the other hand, the continuous debates of Muslims concerning the role of sacredness reveal diversity of meaning as well as transgression and fluidity of boundaries. Although one is easily attentive for essentialist thoughts – since most believers of monotheistic religions usually refer to a universal truth – the sacralization by Muslims should rather be analyzed through the diverse socio-political conditions and cultural contexts, the everyday life of people, than exclusively through essentialist perspectives which define sacredness in Islam in a rather narrow manner.

From a linguistic point of view, the distinction between the sacred and the mundane is originally related to spatial dimensions and goes back to the Latin

terms *sacer* and *profanus*, which are linked to specific and distinct locations. While the *sacer* was a place set apart as *sanctum*, usually a temple, the surrounding space was available for profane use. The concept of sacredness, therefore, is often applied to objects, places or spaces as material manifestations of the elsewhere uncertain transcendence of divine forces. Therefore, sacred space is distinguished from the topography of the non-sacred, the everyday and mundane. Whereas everyday life is perceived as being shaped by routes of work, leisure, love, social obligations and fun, sacred topographies could be identified by the scholar in those blank spaces which are left out by daily routines (Hauser-Schäublin 2003). This distinction goes back to Durkheim's suggestion that the primary characteristic of religion is to divide the world into the two fundamentally opposed domains of sacred and profane (Durkheim 1976). His elaborations on contrasting spheres inform most studies on the 'sacred'. However, according to the religious scholar Matthew T. Evans (2003) most studies on the 'sacred' differ fundamentally and could be categorized in two research traditions. On the one hand, there is a substantivistic approach, which denotes a 'transcendent reality', and on the other hand, a situational-constructive one, which refers to the ascription of special meanings and boundary-making.

Some studies may use a substantivistic approach to examine the sacred as a manifest religious experience which involves ambivalent emotions of fear and desire. The philosopher and religious scholar Mircea Eliade (1959), for example, claimed that sacred space emerges out of profane space. Sacredness, therefore, not only transforms but also penetrates everyday life like a symbolic arrow. Sacred space evolves through the manifestation of the transcendence on earth (hierophany) or the mediation of a transcendent message though a human being (theophany). However, Eliade's approach explains sacredness as detached from human agency. Sacredness stands for itself as an essentialistic category and becomes a manifestation of reality with a specific ambivalent quality since it induces emotions of fear and anxiety but also fascination and attraction.

The situational-constructive approach on the other hand is more fruitful to explore sacred places as being made by Muslims. Spearheaded by Claude Lévi-Strauss, who proposed that the sacred is open to the reception of any meaning (Lévi-Strauss cited in Mauss 2001: 5), some scholars on religion dissociate from essentialistic notions of sacredness and rather emphasized the role of human agency in the ongoing work of sacralizing places or objects. According to David Chidester and Edward T. Linenthal, particular built environments depend "not only upon a symbolic conquest or construction of place, but also upon the temporal processes of ritual and practice, memory and narrative, and the ongoing

engagement with historical factors and change" (1995: 25). Sacred space, therefore, could be defined as a

> "[...] portion on earth's surface which is recognized by individuals or groups as worthy of devotion, loyalty or esteem. Space is sharply discriminated from the non-sacred or profane world around it. Sacred space does not exist naturally, but is assigned sanctity as man defines, limits and characterizes it though his culture, experience and goals" (Jackson and Henrie 1983: 94)

This explanation implies that sacred space is not abstract, but is a distinct and experienced place which contains at least three important features. It is socially constructed, it implies a moral quality and above all it could be identified by its set-apart character, as having special value which has to be protected by material and symbolic boundaries.

Philological approaches in Islam, for instance, extracted three different intrinsic and essentialistic types of sacredness. The terms *qudsi* or *muqaddas* derive from the Arabic letters *q-d-s* and relate to the transcendental and God only, while the letter sequence *h-r-m* reflects the notion of the forbidden, the taboo or the protected like in *haram*, a place which is forbidden for men. The main mosque in Mecca is called *al-masjid al-haram*, the Sacred Mosque, and Mecca and Medina are known as *al-haraman*, places which are forbidden for non-Muslims. A different mode of sacredness indicates the Arabic letter sequence *w-l-y* like in *walayah*. This form of sacredness is exclusively ascribed to human beings as in the most popular notion of *wali Allah* (pl. *awliya' Allah*), the 'friend of God'. These individuals are 'protectors', 'patrons' or 'helpers' and are perceived – being alive or dead – as being near to God.

However, this approach towards sacredness in Islam is a narrow one. Many Muslims involved in making a place sacred may refer to these Islamic terms as they do to other 'Islamic imperatives', narratives related to the prophet or his companions which legitimize the significance of certain places. At the same time, processes of place-making are always embedded in their socio-political and cultural contexts. To imbue a sacred and special meaning to physical structure often implies nuances, metaphors or notions of a specific cultural background.

These may be complementary to definitions of sacredness by philologists, but not necessarily so. The emphasis on boundaries, as well as their transgression, has a long tradition in social anthropology and is often related to the term liminality. Liminality was first developed by Arnold van Gennep (1960 [1909]) and later on appropriated by Victor Turner (1969) in his pioneering work on processual symbolic analysis. A liminal phase occurs during rites des passages and

is defined by its liberation from social norms. In liminal spaces a person can stand outside of their normal social roles and embrace alternative social arrangements and values. In sum, the liminal subjects are "neither here nor there; they are betwixt and between the positions assigned and arrayed by law, custom, convention, and ceremonial" (Turner 1969: 95). It is an ambiguous situation where individuals may reinterpret and criticize social order, which makes them potentially dangerous for others, let us say religious authorities, who wish to continue to monopolize knowledge and "orthodoxy". Closely related to liminality is communitas as forms of sociability, solidarity and equality which is strengthened through a communal spiritual experience. It is "a community or comity of comrades and not a structure of hierarchically arrayed positions" (Turner 1967: 100). As with liminality, the communitas marks a challenge for social and cultural order and Turner clearly places it outside the common social structure, the anti-structure. This means an alternative structure of social relationships which are reversed socially acceptable behavior of people through liminal phases. In sacred places, therefore, things become possible, even prescribed, that may be problematic outside. In any case, a shrine might transcend identities and makes interreligious participation possible and practicable.

This more inclusive aspect is highlighted both by the contributions by Geoffrey Samuel and Santi Rozario as well as Linus Strothmann. Both papers use or mention the Foucaultian notion of heterotopia. Heterotopia is a concept to describe places and spaces of otherness, pointing towards its position at the margins of ordered society. These places/spaces have a system of closure and openness and are not accessible to everybody, since they may require permission or a specific state of being to enter. Geoffrey Samuel and Santi Rozario argue that shrines in Bangladesh are a kind of inversion or negation of the society that surrounds them. They are, or claim to be, places, where the laws of ordinary logic can be suspended – at least in principle. Linus Strothmann does use heterotopia in an alleviated form in his exploration of Data Ganj Bukhsh, a shrine-mosque complex in Lahore/Pakistan, a "city within a city". Describing different meanings of the shrine as sacred place as well as place of crime and moral deterioration, he defines the shrine as a public place in a landscape of different representations.

As suggested by N.J. Demerath III et al., "the secrets of both the sacred and the secular are often revealed more in the adumbrations and interpenetrations than in their separation" (1998: vi). Sacred places may be both sacred and non-sacred in different respects or circumstances. One could argue that a mosque is per se not more sacred than any other building – at least not in the Christian sense of the word. With regard to churches, mosques are not consecrated spaces

by a ritual performed by a specialist. Yet Muslims speak of a mosque as being 'sacred', since it is a set-apart space for prayer, in which one is not allowed to enter without ablution. It is thus specific, temporal, restricted, ritual practices that demarcates the mosque as a sacred place, and marks it off as separate from sites of mundane activities. Mosques are places of prayer, but also social, political, often even economical centers, where people can meet and go on with their business. The mosque is also the place for travelling for homeless Muslims, a place, where one could relax or discuss important issues. The ascription of sacredness to a mosque by Muslims is in general multivalent and has to be analyzed though its simultaneous, fluctuating and conflict-laden processes, that take into account both mundane and sacred imaginations.

Eric Ross, for example, illustrates in his contribution to this volume the distinctiveness of the spatial design of urban spaces by the Murid Sufi Order in Senegal. One of his main points is that the primary association of urban design with Islam has been rather accidental. Since the dominant grid model of urban space is predominantly organized around the palatial compound of the *Shaykh*, these places are not just places of proper religion, but primary paragons of community-building which generate and represent a larger political order. Since this specific design was applied to political and not religious places, their 'sacredness' becomes the expression of a larger field of authority, nobility and identity.

Another example is the role of shrines for their communities. For example, despite all the lamentation of decline and disappearance of Islamic saint tradition – often related to notions of 'disenchantments' and to debates about reform – saint veneration is still a lively religious practice in many Muslim societies, as presented by many of the contributions in this volume. Karin Willemse sheds light on how a *shaykh* conquered the cityscape through inscribing it with a new moral and cultural meaning. Based on her research in the Sudanese tripartite metropolis of Omdurman/Khartoum/Bahri, she elaborates on the marking of spaces as sacred through movements of the *shaykh*, while at the same time these marked spaces constitute the individual as a *shaykh*. These spaces are interlocking sacred spaces, corporeal, virtual and imagined, and they 'reach out' to other imagined religious communities via travel or internet. However, the *zawiya* remain a central place where the triadic relation of practice (*zikr*), people (Sufi adherents guided by a *shaykh*) and place form an interactive sacralized space as performative force.

The reasons for the continuity (which is not unbroken) of saint veneration could be manifold. One important point might be that saints and their veneration are appropriated in everyday life. In particular, the individual characteristics ascribed to these individuals do not reflect an Islamic theology, but rather worldly

needs and cosmological images of Muslims. That means that most practices of saint veneration are embedded in or related to culturally specific patterns, sometimes agricultural rituals and seasons. This kind of relationship leads to a close identification with the place of the saint, who lived, acted, and finally died at the spot of veneration as ancestor, neighbor, teacher, political leader, spiritual advisor, friend or foe. These variations are culturally specific but they offer a point of view which cannot be grasped by a rather narrow definition of sacredness, which reflects a transcendental reality beyond Muslim practices and their everyday life.

In most non-Western cultures, matters of the sacred and the mundane are inextricably interwoven and very difficult to separate. The sociologist Meredith McGuire (2008) argues that sacredness has its source in the everyday life of people. Most individuals select, interpret and use cultural resources in their everyday life in different manners. Accordingly, their definition of religion is not analogous to a theological one. There is no clear-cut boundary which separates practices of being sacred from those which are not. In other words, the cleaning of the house and body before Ramadan is not scientifically appreciated as a sacred act, although the fasting or nightly recitations of the Qur'an during the month definably are perceived as such. McGuire tries to link an everyday sacredness to the influence of reformers who, later on, drew tidy boundaries around the sacred, in order to protect it from pollution by the profane. Those protections also served to make the sacred less accessible to ordinary people. One key feature for the definition and exclusivity of these places has been the plethora of embodied practices by which people relate to the sacred (McGuire 2007).

Georg Stauth (this volume) underlines in the making of places a process where the endeavor of everyday needs and religious purity are intrinsically connected. Focusing on the symbolic and material role of Pharaonic spoils in mosques and shrines of towns in the Nile Delta of Egypt, he shows that the relationship of Muslims towards those objects are more complex than the pure juxtaposition of belief and Islamic law. While some urban communities have a rather positive cultural attitude towards these objects, others are intolerant – they suppress them as pre-Islamic survivals or neglect them as relics of the past. These different understandings of integration or exclusion are the reflection of different and complex modes of authentification, be it a scientific appropriation, purification or integration of the spoils as forms of everyday life and customary behavior.

His contribution shows that rather than defining what the sacred in Islam *is*, the focus should be on the "ideals and aspirations people express and the everyday lives they live", which are "characterized by complexity, ambiguity, reflectivity, openness, frustration and tragedy" (Schielke 2010: 2). This perspective on

Muslim everyday life coincides with the imagination of urban life as an inherently ambiguous condition. In his classical observation *The Metropolis and Mental Life* (1969), Simmel argued that urban life is often associated with deeply ambivalent meanings and evaluations. Urban life may relate to anonymity, individualism, anomie, isolation, shattered dreams, exclusion, exploitation, state control and danger. At the same time urban life could represent diversity, visions and dreams, tolerance, public sphere, cosmopolitan milieus, integration, networks, higher education, (assumed) freedom and cultural creativity (Simmel 1969).

The underlying uncertainty of urban life mirrors the difficulties in conceptualizing urbanism by social sciences. There have been a number of theoretical attempts to generalize urban conditions. However, according to Canclini (1997), all these studies failed in developing a relatively operational definition to further the investigations of urban life. Canclini primary refers to common theories at the beginning of the 20th century, like the confrontation of urban with rural life, implying a dichotomy of primary relations of community life and secondary relations of segmented roles in cities. Similarly, the definition of urbanism as a way of life as proposed by the Chicago School is not satisfactory, since the spatial focus on size, density, and heterogeneity neglect historic and social processes. The third approach has used economic criteria to define urbanism as an outcome of industrial development and the concentration of capital. However, the economic point of view misses cultural aspects and everyday urban life.

These conceptualizations mainly failed because they searched for archetypical conditions and a universally valid theory of urban life. They are characterized by a relentless drift towards an abstract definition of the 'City' which neglects specific historical and cultural settings. Cities are shaped by a diverse set of processes, which are dependent on factors that are unique to individual cities, like their spatial structure, economic activities, and diversity of social groups, size, or position in relation to networks of cities. Any city, therefore, becomes a very specific mode of social organization, a specificity which should be analyzed against their specific historical, political and socio-economic background.

Each of the papers in this volume is concerned with exploring how Muslims negotiate life-worlds in their very specific urban setting. Many contributions underline the field of tension between Muslims' claims to live according to a Muslim society ordered according to the principles dictated by God on the one hand, and on the other hand, to urban conditions which may contradict the aspiration for a 'proper Muslim life'. Katharina Zöller, for example, argues that Muslims in colonial Dar es Salaam transformed a 'public space' into a 'sacred place' where diverse Muslim groups presented themselves as one group in public during Islamic festivals. At the same time, the act of place-making revealed diverging

ideas on religious praxis and existing tensions between the festival participants. The transformation of a public space was the prerequisite for the emergence of a public arena, where the different actors involved raised issues concerning the underlying racial and economical divisions of Dar es Salaam's Muslims in urban everyday life as well as religious practice and the common good of the Muslim community. Dorothea Schulz, on the other hand, pleads to include the unexplored aural dimensions of Muslim urban experience as a key element by which religious places are made and unmade. Female supports of Islamic moral renewal in San/Mali seek to control their daily urban environment by creating places that are conducive to their ethical endeavor. Listening to 'moral lessons' provided by the leaders of Muslim women's neighborhood groups became a regular practice of place-making, which fuels already existing controversies over religious authority. Furthermore, Jörn Thielmann focuses on the ban on Muslims from using a chapel's room at a German university that resulted in an agitated correspondence between the representative of a Muslim group, the Church and the administration of the university. Claiming the right to pray at a secular university, the representative of Muslims fiercely challenged both administration and Church on the grounds of making a place for inter-religious encounters.

Urban everyday life may be, but is not necessarily, linked to resistance, subversion – in other words, power. This volume takes the situational and individualistic character of everyday life and their social actors as a starting point, a life which is also influenced by the struggle for economic means, frustrations, love, boredom or fun. Each chapter discusses the relationship between Muslims' place-making and urban everyday lives, both through historical or contemporary perspectives. The variety of socio-cultural contexts and the variety of approaches adopted in these chapters reflect the ambiguities of religious, social, political and economic meanings ascribed to places of 'sacred' significance within diverse Muslim communities. Paying attention to making places as constructed (materiality), imagined (cognition) and lived (everyday life) allows us to shed light on the common ground and differences of Muslim societies and cultures.

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