Book Review:

**Beyond the Mosque: Diverse Spaces of Muslim Worship (Rizwan Mawani)**

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The title of Mawani's book, *Beyond the Mosque: Diverse Spaces of Muslim Worship* (2019), highlights its focus on the diversity of places of worship developed by Muslims besides mosques, which have been a central place of worship for the majority of Muslims throughout their history. Mawani states that the first mosque was built during Prophet Muhammad's lifetime, but it has evolved architecturally over time, leading to modern places of worship. In this book, Mawani discusses the multiplicity of Muslim places of worship and ritual, and how Islam has become more nuanced and inclusive. Over five chapters, he applies an anthropological approach while focusing on his firsthand accounts of his journey visiting Muslim places of worship around the world, along with utilizing other primary and secondary sources.

Mawani emphasizes, "Further accentuating the diversity of each culture is the majoritarian context of one and the minorities in context of the other" (p. 2). By this, he means that although the mosque is the most common place of worship for Muslims, there are other places which are prevalent in the Muslim World, such as *imambaras, husayniyyas* for Shia Twelvers, *khanaqahs, zawiyas* and *tekkes* for Sufis and *jamatkhanas* for Ismailis as well as shrines. He states that despite some similarities, mosques around the world are architecturally different, and these differences have been culturally-informed. This means that culture can

influence rituals as well as the places where people worship, besides also producing distinctive interpretations of religion. For instance, he provides photos of mosques such as the Grand Mosque of Tuban, East Java, Indonesia, the Grand Mosque of Djenne in Mali and the Shah Mosque in Isfahan, Iran, that are architecturally different. Regional cultures have influenced how mosques have been built and painted. "The quality of architecture of an art is the foremost important form in cultural point of view..." (Arif, 2015, p. 1). For instance, the paintings and decorations used in the Shah Mosques, which are common in Persian-speaking countries, are different from those in Indonesia due to cultural differences. Mawani notes this regarding the five daily prayers that Muslims perform in mosques (pp. 49-51); however, some rituals are different as they depend on the school of jurisprudence (*fiqh*) being followed. This is not only the case for Shia and Sunni Muslims in general, but also for the sub-branches of both. So, there is diversity of interpretations and rituals.

Besides the architectural differences of the mosques, Mawani emphasizes that the death of the Prophet in 632 generated theological debates regarding the nature of religious and political authority to follow him. The main differences between Sunni and Shias is not how they practice Islam, including performing prayers (cf. Madelung 1994), but who was designated to hold the leadership of the Muslim community after the Prophet Muhammad (pp. 55-56). According to Sunni Muslims, the Prophet did not choose anyone as his successor, and some of his companions selected Abu Bakr as the first rightly guided caliph (Madelung 1996). However, he also adds that, based on Shia traditions, the Prophet appointed Ali b. Abi Talib, his cousin and son-in-law as his successor (Nasir-i Khusraw 1969; Madelung 1996). Both of these branches were divided into sub-branches over Muslim history, developed their own doctrinal interpretations and in some cases built their own places of worship. For example, Mawani illustrates Shia Twelver Muslims hold *husayniyya* or *takya* to commemorate the martyrdom of Hussain b. Ali, the grandson of the Prophet, with certain rituals that differ from region to region owing to cultural differences. Ismaili Shia Muslims, despite the ups and downs of their history, believe in exotericism (*zahir*) and esotericism (*batin*) in Islam (Daftary 2007; Jamal 2002). Mawani

mentions the schism involving Mustali and Nizari Ismailis, but covers only the Nizaris' places of worship. Nizari Ismailis perform their daily prayers (*dua*) in their *Jamatkhanas,* which are architecturally distinct, due to local factors including cultural and architectural norms (2019, pp. 86-87). Furthermore, there are six Ismaili Centers in the world, each featuring a *Jamatkhana,* and, considering cultural context, have their own distinctiveness too.

Mawani also covers the rise of Sufism (known as Islamic mysticism), which has led to the development of various Sufi orders (*tariqs*). Sufi orders, except the Nashbandi, take Ali b. Abi Talib as their spiritual reference point. Mawani adds that the Sufi orders emerged gradually from different parts of the Islamic world, particularly Baghdad and Bukhara (2019, p. 93). As Sufis focus on esoteric aspects of the religion, they perform devotional practices such as *dhikr* (chanting remembrance, 'calling God's name'), poetry and music. So, they developed their own places of worship, such as *Khanaqah* in Iran, Zawiya in Africa and Tekke in areas under Ottomans in the 16th century. The illustrations in Mawani's book show that such Sufi places of gathering also differ from each other in terms of architecture. Mawani also covers the issue of groups which "Transcend Boundaries", in which he focuses on the Zikris of Pakistan and the Druze. Mawani explains that Zikris believe that worship can be performed not only in Mosques through prayer (*salat*) but also in other locations, due to the Zikri focus on the inner aspects of the religion. While Zikris practices in *Zikr-khana* largely resemble that of Sufis, the Druze – which emerged after the death of Fatimid Imam-caliph, al-Hakim (r. 996-1021) – believe in the divine essence of the Imam and perform rituals in *khalwas.* According to Mawani, the Druze were influenced by Hellenic philosophy, including Aristotle and Plotinus, and Hamza b. Ali (d.1021), a missionary (*dai*) of al-Hakim. As the Druze are an offshoot of Fatimid Ismailis, they pay close attention to philosophy, because the Fatimids welcomed philosophy in their theological debates featuring well-known philosophers such as Abu Yaqub Sajistani (d. 971), Kirmani (d. 1021), and Naser-i Khusraw (d. after 1070). However, Mawani does not outline the reasoning for determining who is a Muslim and who 'transcends boundaries', which itself is a vague concept. This is because he positions

Zikris and the Druze as those who went beyond the accepted norms of Islam. He argues this is because it seems that they believed, like Sufis and Shia Muslims, in an inward orientation of the religion and developed places of worship that operated in parallel to mosques. Sufis believe that God is like Ocean, and they are part of that same entity. This is why the famous Sufi, Rumi (d.) said, "My Shams my God" which refers to unity with God. Also, Ibn al-Arabi, an Andalusian mystic, poet, and philosopher (d. 1240) stated, "...There is only one being, God, who is the sole reality. His creation is an integral part of this reality, not having a separate existence from Him".

Despite Mawani's contribution to the field, there are some points which could be built upon to further enrich the book and expand it beyond being just an historic and architectural overview of mosques and other places of worship. For instance, Mawani did not discuss how the architecture of mosques evolved over time, while considering various factors besides cultural and geographical dimensions. Also, some communities were overlooked. Ibadis, which are considered a branch of the Kharijites, are not mentioned at all, despite the fact that they can be considered as the third branch of the Muslim community after Sunnis and Shias. The term Khariji, meaning 'people from outside (of religion)', is a negative term used by Sunni and Shia Muslims, but this group identify themselves as 'Ibadi Muslims'. Furthermore, Mawani's study takes an anthropological approach to the study of religion, however, considering sociological, linguistic, phenomenological lenses could help expand the view of places of worship. For instance, how such places of worship contributed toward pluralism or schisms among individual Muslim communities as well as more broadly in the world. Also, in Arabic '*masjid'* (mosque) literally means anywhere one prostrated (*sajda*). A hadith attributed to the Prophet, "Wherever the hour of prayer overtakes you, you shall perform the salat and that is a masjid" (IIS, 2017, p. 189). So, this has probably been interpreted by some Shia communities and Sufi orders that their spaces of worship are masjids – in Syria, Ismailis refer to their *Jamatkhana* as 'masjid'. Thus, Mawani adopts anthropology more than any other approaches for his study of religion as well as theology, since he does not refer to Quranic verses and hadiths.

In this book, Mawani explores the diversity of Muslim places of worship including mosques, *husayniyya, takya, jamatkhana, khanaqa, zawiyas* and *zikr-khana and khalwa.* These places of worship have emerged due to diversity of interpretations and cultural differences across the geographic locations in which Muslims have lived, and this has led these buildings to become architecturally distinctive from one another. Mawani provides a handful of illustrations taken from these locations while applying an anthropological approach to conduct his study. But there was less of a focus on theological interpretations, despite the fact that it is an important factor behind the diversity of locations for places in which some Muslim communities perform their rituals, besides mosques. In addition, Mawani misses an opportunity to cover some other Muslims communities, which would have further enriched his discussion.

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