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Religious Architecture

Anthropological Perspectives

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Given that many people of religion tend to downplay the importance of religious buildings as merely representing the outside or the superficial part of their religion, it is remarkable how much time, energy and – above all – money are put into the construction of new religious buildings all over the world. Proselytising Christian groups in the US, Europe or Africa have built an astonishing number of new churches, some of which are quite costly and spectacular, and they will continue to do so (LeCavalier 2009). Since the end of Communism in the former Soviet Union, many new Russian orthodox churches have been built and others have been restored or rebuilt (Köllner 2011). New Hindu temples have been erected in India in some of the places that have benefited the most from the economic liberation since the 1980s (Valenta 2010). We find many new, purpose-built mosques in Western Europe and the US as well as in countries where Muslims make up a majority. A remarkable but little noticed example of contemporary religious architecture is the recent boom in synagogue building in Germany thanks to the influx of Jews from the former Soviet Union since the 1990s. In addition, in predominantly secular and multicultural societies and spaces, we see the emergence of new secular or multi-faith retreats which offer some of the facilities that mosques, churches, synagogues and temples also offer (Hewson 2011; Holsappel-Brons 2010). All over the world, religious buildings are being restored as heritage sites.

Still, anyone involved in the study of religious architecture will recognise the moment when practitioners of faith question this scholarly interest as slightly beside the point. 'Professor, please stop asking about architecture,' a New York-based imam asked Jerillynn Dodds (2002: 67) after a long interview about contemporary mosque design in the US. Although some may argue that mosques, like synagogues, are essentially just religious community centres – unlike, for instance, Catholic churches which Catholics supposedly consider sacred spaces – there is a tendency across all contemporary religions to argue that the heart of religion lies in indi-

vidual faith, the community, charitable deeds, ritual or doctrine, but not primarily in the religious building. Put otherwise, the soul of the building lies in its people, not in the material of which it is made. Anthropologists do not usually disregard the statements of informants as irrelevant. Why then devote a whole book to the topic of modern religious architecture?

One answer lies in anthropological methodology, developed ever since the publication of Bronislaw Malinowski's seminal *Argonauts of the Western Pacific* (1922), which is based on the idea that people do not always do what they say they are doing and that there is often a discrepancy between ideology and practice. Why, for instance, spend such an astonishing amount of money to erect a church or a mosque if it hardly matters? Despite many Muslims' insistence that one can perform one's religious duties everywhere, it often happens that a poor migrant community of two hundred active members in a small European town will raise two million euro to build a new community mosque. Former labour migrants skip the annual summer trip to their country of origin to be able to contribute to a new mosque in Germany, France or the UK. True, people pray in makeshift places and often do so without complaints. After the Second World War, several Dutch Jewish communities, for instance, tried to regain some Jewish community life by hiring small rooms in hotels or school buildings to congregate for Sabbath. But many of these Jewish communities are now putting a lot of energy into restoring old synagogues, rescuing them from destruction, and using them again as centres for religious community activities. Apparently, buildings do somehow matter, despite religious dogma.

One of the most perceptive answers to the puzzle of why people put a lot of time into something they proclaim to be obsolete is the argument that religious buildings may not be crucial for religious reasons but are important in a social or political sense. In the case of contemporary mosques in North America and Europe, we find interpretations of this kind in the work of Dodds (2002) and Metcalf (1996), among others. The argument postulates that for religious minorities, their religious buildings represent religious identity and power and are therefore linked to processes of emancipation or integration. In nineteenth-century Europe, the Moorish style of synagogues or the neo-Gothic style of Catholic churches certainly served such purposes of visibility and communal pride. Similarly, some of the impressive contemporary mosques in the Islamic world, such as the ones in Casablanca or Islamabad, are obviously linked to post-colonial state power and may primarily be considered nationalist monuments rather than religious buildings in a strict sense. In sum, this inter-

pretation has the merit that it takes seriously what religious people say as well as what they do. They say that for religious purposes the building is meaningless, but they build and pay for them anyway because of their social or political significance.

Despite this analytical elegance, however, the interpretation is not entirely satisfactory because it draws a conceptual line between religious and political aspects of contemporary religion that may not exist as such in the eyes of people of faith. Drawing on the same distinction between inner faith and outer form that has relegated ritual to the margins of religious experience (Asad 1993a), this analysis seems to separate the ritual, aesthetic and habitual dimensions of religion from the question of religious social identity and political power. It implicitly assumes that one can distinguish between on the one hand the material expression of religion that belongs to the superficial domain of political identity and on the other hand the immaterial true heart of religion. Although this is precisely the division that many modern religious people make when they argue that religious architecture is obsolete, some of the most relevant recent anthropological contributions to the study of contemporary religion rest upon the critique of this very disconnection of the immaterial from the material. In his work on materiality, Daniel Miller for instance argues that although religion by definition strives for the immaterial beyond the material, it necessarily needs the material to evoke the immaterial (Miller 2005: 1). Like earlier studies on the importance of ritual for religious collective behaviour, Birgit Meyer has developed the notion of 'sensational form' to argue that contemporary religion is not merely a mental and ethical engagement with religious doctrine but a profound somatic, performative and aesthetic commitment to 'the affective power of images, sounds, and texts on their beholders' (Meyer 2009: 6). Others like Webb Keane (2008) and David Morgan (2010) have argued that material religious objects do not simply express already existing religious identities but may be constitutive of certain religious sensations and experiences that impact upon a religious sense of self. In the work of these authors, the material and immaterial are reconnected again even in the most iconoclastic forms of religion. Hence, we not only see the profound Muslim purist renouncing all reverence of material form as idol worship (*shirk*) but also the person who treats the material form of the Quran with the utmost respect or adores the voice who performs a beautiful Quranic recitation.

It is from these insights on how the material can be constitutive of the immaterial that the chapters in this book deal with religious architecture as an aspect of contemporary religion that goes beyond the repre-

sentation of religious power or identity. Although churches, synagogues, mosques and temples obviously do represent religious communities and hierarchies to the outside world – and most authors in this volume do pay attention to this aspect – their relevance to modern religious life is much broader. In this book we bring together chapters that discuss religious architecture as not merely expressing identities but performing religious identities; as representing not just identities to the outside world but ways to broaden and internalise one's knowledge of religious doctrine or deepen one's faith. There are chapters about the importance of religious architecture for the creation or reproduction of religious communities and about religious space as an intrinsic part of ritual rather than a mere container of ritual. There are contributions about religious architectural forms evoking sensations that, in an almost Durkheimian way, evoke a sense of effervescence that intensifies religious feelings or, in contrast, arouse intense feelings of dislike in conflicts over space-making (whose city is this?) and religious doctrine (what is and is not allowed according to the traditions?). In short, all these essays regard religious buildings as playing a more active part in processes of religious experience, identity and community than the conceptual split of the building in a private religious interior and a social, political exterior would allow for.

An anthropology of religious architecture

It is often said that anthropologists pay scant attention to architecture – a statement informed as much by reality as by ignorance (Buchli 2002: 208; Vellinga 2007 & 2011; Verkaaik 2012). As a result of the unproductive nineteenth-century divide between the Great Tradition of high art and the Little Tradition of folklore, anthropologists have indeed to some extent left the study of architecture to art historians and architectural critics. Nonetheless, anthropologists have written much more about buildings, including religious buildings, than is often assumed. Although there is a considerable body of literature about vernacular architecture (e.g. Amerlinck 2001; Blier 2006; Rapoport 1969; Vellinga 2004), predominantly about houses (Carsten & Hugh-Jones 1995; Gullestad 1984) but also including some work on religious architecture (Marchand 2001, 2009; Nelson 2007), there is less about modern architecture in anthropological writing. In different ways, Clifford Geertz (1980), Edmund Leach (1983), Maurice Bloch (1968), Pierre Bourdieu (1973) and even Marc Augé (1995) have all looked at how buildings represent and reproduce cosmolo-

gies and social hierarchies, but they have hardly explored how people use, read or 'consume' buildings. Tim Ingold (2000) and others influenced by Heidegger's notion of 'dwelling' (1997) explore how people position themselves within the natural environment, but they pay less attention to how people do so in built environments. The recently developing study of space and place (Lawrence-Zuniga & Low 1990; Low & Lawrence-Zuniga 2003) does focus on the politics as well as the consumption of built spaces, but it tends to take the materiality of architecture for granted. Materiality and its affect, however, play a larger role in recent studies of modern iconoclasm and utopian architecture (Buchli 1999; Rabinow 1995; Hoorn 2009), but this has had little influence on the anthropological study of religious architecture thus far.

Anthropologists have a lot to learn from art historians and architectural critics, but they also have a great deal to contribute. Consider, for instance, Eric Roose's recent study of contemporary mosque design in the Netherlands. His iconological approach is a welcome correction to the architectural critical perspective that dominates the public debate about the issue. Rather than interpreting contemporary mosques in terms of temporal and regional styles as many architectural critics do when they dismiss new mosques as nostalgic replicas of the Ottoman, Moghul or Mamluk tradition, Roose focuses on the designing process as a symbolic-political practice. Mosque commissioners do not simply and unreflectively copy styles from their country of origin, they actively choose between various forms and styles to make a political statement. Explicitly borrowing from an interactionalist perspective on culture, Roose treats the parties involved as political actors rather than mere children of their times (Roose 2009).

Anthropology also offers an alternative to a dominant perspective in architectural criticism that treats buildings as texts, as speaking architecture or *architecture parlante*. Like literary critics, architectural critics tend to focus on what the architect, as author, tries to convey about the function, symbolism or even character of the building. The semiotic approach in anthropology is more complex as it treats texts, like symbols, as inherently polysemic and contextual (Buchli 2002). This shifts the attention from the design and construction of buildings to the question of how people use them, from production to consumption (Vellinga 2011). Moreover, the centrality of context in meaning-making processes makes it possible to argue that buildings may have different meanings or even 'lives' (Appadurai 1986) to different groups of people in different periods of time. Rather than trying to decipher the authoritative meaning of a

building – that is, the opinion of the architect, the commissioner or architectural critics – an anthropological perspective focuses on shifts and conflicts in meaning-making practices.

Taken together, the interactionalist and contextual-interpretative approaches allow for a perspective on buildings as more than just passive objects or texts conveying a static message. Recently, anthropologists like Daniel Miller (1987) and Alfred Gell (1998) have questioned the 'objective' nature of 'objects'. Building upon philosophical and theoretical backgrounds as wide apart as Hegel's notion of objectification and Mauss's concept of reciprocity, these theorists argue that the relation between an object and its maker or user is an interactive, dynamic one. We find similar arguments in Actor Network Theory (Latour 2005) and, much earlier, in Gregory Bateson's work on cybernetics (Bateson 1971). More directly related to the issue of religious architecture is the work of Yael Navaro-Yashin (2009) on 'affective spaces' and 'spatial melancholia'. To analyse the affective power of spaces and building, Navaro-Yashin refers to Spinoza's notion of the affect – a crucial building block for Spinoza's theory of the unity of body and mind – and Deleuze's interpretation of the affect as a sensation that 'moves through human bodies, but that do not necessarily emerge from them' (ibid: 12). The power of affect, in other words, may originate from outside the human being in objects like buildings. Deleuze's notion of the affect allows us to conceive human experience not merely in terms of subjectivity and the symbolic interpretation of the world but also in terms of environmental impulses and 'lines of flight' (Deleuze & Guattari 1987) that have the capacity to move human beings beyond their learned symbolic registers. It is from this perspective that it can be argued that religious spaces have a kind of agency. They are man-made products that have an impact on human experience. Concretely, buildings limit or direct movement, impress visitors, affect the senses, evoke connotations. Neither an empty cipher with no intrinsic meaning whatsoever nor an authoritative text, a building provides opportunities for processes of identification within a particular social context. We are being trained to interpret and experience buildings in a certain way, but that does not exclude the possibility that they may, positively or negatively, overwhelm us and make us look at ourselves and our communities in a new or renewed way.

Recent studies in material religion focus explicitly on this dynamic and interactional relation between material objects and religious subjects. The works of Saba Mahmood (2005) or Annelies Moors (2009) on Islamic veiling, for instance, interpret this practice as a technique of becoming a

pious Muslim. More than just a symbol of religious identity, the veil can be seen as an affective object – an object, that is, that imposes its power onto the human subject and affects the subjectivity of the person who wears it. By wearing the veil, Muslim women actively allow the affective power of the material to transform their sense of self. This volume looks at religious architecture in a similar way. More than just a 'message cast in stone', as the iconological approach would have it, several of the authors in this book consider mosques and churches and synagogues as affective places. Working in the spirit of philosophers like Gaston Bachelard (1969) and Brian Massumi (2002) as well as architects like Juhani Pallasmaa (2005) and Peter Zumthor (1999), to name but a few, several chapters in this book look at those qualities of architecture that do not simply represent something that already exists but that help make and unmake identities, enable and disrupt experiences, create, reproduce or break up communities – in short, that make a change.

In sum, interactionalism and identification are conceptual key terms in this volume. As used here, interactionalism refers to two processes: 1) the negotiations between various parties in the design, construction and use of religious buildings, and 2) the dynamic relations between the architectural object and the religious subject. Identification refers to the idea that a religious self engages in a socio-material field that includes both others (fellow community members, secular majorities, religious minorities and so on) and objects (including religious buildings and places). Although these two terms – interactionalism and identification – do not return in each and every chapter, all of the contributions are concerned with interactive, dynamic relations of identification between religious groups and architectural spaces.

What is religious architecture?

Ever since Talal Asad's critique of substantive definitions of religion, especially those by Clifford Geertz (1973), and his insistence that definitions of religion are always situational (Asad 1993b), it is no longer self-evident what religious means within a particular historical moment. This has obvious consequences for the definition of religious architecture. For how exactly does religious architecture differ, for instance, from the architecture of the modern state? The greatness of God expressed in architectural form has an obvious family likeness to the greatness of the state as represented in modern architectural monuments. When it comes to the

evocation of ritual effervescence, a sense of community or the sensation of the sublime – all aspects we might associate with religion – we might find these qualities in secular buildings like sport stadiums, modern museums or courts of law rather than in modern churches or mosques. To define religion in terms of the holy, the sacred or the transcendent does not solve the problem either: to talk of mosques or synagogues in such terms has often been criticised as importing Christian notions about religious space into Islam or Judaism (Eade 1996: 226). And even though this viewpoint may draw too sharp a boundary between Catholicism and other monotheisms on the basis of religious texts and received ideas alone, whereas in actual practice many Muslims and Jews also seem to recognise the special character of religious spaces, anthropologists have consistently maintained that the rigid distinction between the sacred and the profane that informed classical sociological definitions of religion is untenable cross-culturally (Evans-Pritchard 1965; Goody 1961). Churches and synagogues lose their religious function and are converted into houses, museums or cultural centres. Does that mean they are no longer religious buildings? Or vice versa, is a former garage or school building turned into a mosque a piece of religious architecture? Several authors have pointed out that space is defined by ritual rather than the other way around and that the status of a building as religious or even sacred is situational (Smith 1987; Metcalf 1996), which suggests that definitions can never be static.

One solution to the problem of definition is to give up a substantive definition of religious architecture altogether and follow Asad's point that the religious is always constituted by the secular and vice versa. In this line of reasoning, religious spaces are almost by definition 'heterotopias' – a term coined by Foucault to denote 'other spaces' or '*espace autres*'. In the 'infinite, and infinitely open space' of the secular, some spaces defy the 'desanctification of space' by being 'other', 'counter-sites', 'fantasmatic', 'a mirror' (Foucault 1967). In a similar vein, Bataille could compare religious sites to slaughterhouses: both are expelled from the secular main street and, on top of that, are – in Bataille's essentialist take – places of sacrifice (1997: 22). The important point of these insights seems to me that religious architecture is not defined by some inherent qualities but by its opposition to secular space and its potential to create spaces of affirmative transgression where the secular is confirmed by the very existence of its opposite. However, although the notion of heterotopia may be helpful to understand the place of religious spaces in societies where secularism is the dominant belief system (see, for instance, Irvine in this volume), the

downside of it is that it makes it very difficult to see how the religious and the secular come together in a mutually affirmative rather than a dialectic way, for instance in churches or mosques that are built to the greater glory of the head of state or a rich local entrepreneur (see Köllner in this volume).

Another solution, then, might be a return to a functional definition of religion and religious architecture. According to Roy Rappaport, the function of religion lies partly in its capacity to 'offset the deficiencies of language and symbolic culture' (Lambek 2001). Although thoroughly part of the social and political world, partly indeed as the necessary contrast to the secular, religion also evokes a domain beyond the social world of learned speak and symbolic behaviour, offering a ritually defined entrance to this domain. Obviously, religion is not alone in its evocation of the sublime. Art, psychology, travel, violence and other bodily practices may generate similar desires and techniques to fulfill them. We might indeed get ourselves into trouble if we try to argue that modern religion stands out as somehow special and unique amidst other techniques of evoking the Real. A more fruitful way to emphasise the significance of modern religion might be to say that in highly disciplined modern societies that constantly instill modern subjects with the romantic aspiration for authentic individuality, religion is one of various ways that modern society offers to consume this desire. If this is so, the question becomes how religious architecture evokes and fulfills this desire.

A third and perhaps academically unsatisfactory solution to the problem of definition is to take common sense demarcations for granted. For although it may be difficult to conceptually distinguish modern religion from, say, the sovereign power of the bureaucratic state, the autoreferential qualities of art or the communal aspects of sport, modern subjects, including anthropologists, do make these distinctions in everyday speech. This is a social fact that has an effect of its own. That is not to deny that it may be useful and welcome to destabilise common sense notions of religion by comparing religious architecture with skyscrapers in the business centres of global cities – New York's Saint Patrick Cathedral is indeed one of the smallest buildings in its surroundings, and the term 'ecstatic architecture' has recently been used for postmodern office towers rather than for religious buildings (Jencks 1999). In many other ways, the conceptual distinction between religious and non-religious architecture remains blurred and problematic. And yet most of our informants seem to have a fairly clear idea about religious buildings as purpose-built places where people come to perform rituals they themselves call religious or

where communities gather under the flag of some faith. Or rather: the problem of definition is relevant for them on some level but not on another. Muslims may, for instance, have fierce discussions about the doctrinal requirements of a mosque, about questions such as whether a *mihrab* (where the person stands who leads the collective prayer) is required or not? In other words, they may struggle with the definition of a mosque in terms of the Quran and the Hadith, but they know perfectly well where a person is going when he says he is going to the mosque. Grounding ourselves in this practical knowledge, then, we ask questions about the relation between the building with its architectural form and the interactions and experiences people have when they individually or collectively engage with the building as a self-defined religious place.

This volume borrows from all of these three definitional tactics, all of which direct us to relevant questions about how religious buildings, as heterotopias, take their place in opposition to the secular surroundings; how they, as evocations of the sublime, help believers to move beyond the boundaries of modern subjectivity; and how they, in their common sense definition, function as community centres in urban daily life.

Introduction to the chapters

Building upon the definitions and theoretical framework outlined above, this collection addresses a number of themes: affect, identity, community, heritage and the relations and conflicts between these various aspects of religious buildings. I will briefly specify how these themes are addressed in the various chapters.

Richard Irvine's chapter about an English Benedictine monastery explicitly deals with religious architecture as 'counterfactual' and self-consciously opposed to key values of dominant secular society. Although its nineteenth-century neo-Gothic architecture was originally meant as an expression of a Catholic minority religious identity, the meaning of the building has changed considerably, as it now stands out as a place of stability and tradition in a world of 'global movement and fleeting interaction', as Irvine puts it with reference to the work of Marc Augé. Irvine describes how the architecture of the place is intimately linked with the everyday routine of Catholic ritual, and it is this combination of ritual taking place in a particular architectural setting that creates the 'value of staying put', as one monk puts it. Heritage, community, identity and affect are all intertwined because the sense of tradition and stability that gives

the community of monks its modern 'counterfactual' identity is aroused not in the least by the very materiality of the monastery as a site of English Catholic heritage.

Analysing the mythical language of size in relation to newly built mosques in Europe, Pooyan Tamimi Arab addresses the issues of affect and identity within the highly politicised context of European Islam. Focusing on the Essalam Mosque of Rotterdam and how it is framed as a 'megamosque' or 'the biggest mosque in Europe' by Dutch Muslims and anti-Islam politicians alike, Tamimi Arab examines the affective dimension of this depiction. Although the Essalam Mosque is, in reality, not the biggest mosque of Europe, the author is less interested in analysing the 'megamosqueing' myth as a discursive construction than in seeking to find out how the myth works for various parties involved. Using Bruno Latour's notion of 'symmetrical anthropology' in which fact and fetish are no longer seen as oppositional, Tamimi Arab analyses the role of the building in current identity politics, emphasising how its mythical reputation impacts how the physicality of the mosque is experienced.

The issue of affect is taken up further by Mattijs van de Port who in his contribution explicitly focuses on the question of how the sublime can be evoked by architectural means. Taking the baroque church architecture of Brazil as his example, Van de Port explores what Jens Baumgarten has called the 'visual rhetorics' of the Brazilian baroque architecture (Baumgarten 2010). Whereas Baumgarten examines the religious, aesthetic and social dimensions of the Brazilian baroque, Van de Port explicitly rejects a historical or representational interpretation that would explain baroque colonial architecture in the context of the Counter-Reformation, colonial expansion and Brazilian nationalism. Instead, he delves into the question of how baroque architecture affects the senses, developing an argument that is reminiscent of Edmund Leach's point in an article on Hindu temples: that the overwhelming and spectacular presence of a magnitude of gods and goddesses functions to derail the senses of the visitor and in that way to take him beyond himself. Borrowing from the equally self-consciously ahistorical work of Bataille and Barthes, Van de Port emphasises the 'sovereign power of form itself' to develop an argument about the interaction between architectural form and human perception. Put differently, this contribution focuses on how the sensational form of the baroque church creates a dimension beyond the realm of discursive identity formation. If Irvine and Tamimi Arab emphasise in their contributions the relations between affect and identity, Van de Port forms a counterpoint to these opening chapters by indicating how architecture

can create a sensation of the sublime which overturns and deranges religious-political identity.

Tobias Köllner's chapter on new Russian Orthodox churches in contemporary Russia shifts our attention to issues of heritage and community. After the fall of communism, the Russian Orthodox Church has re-entered the public space, and many new churches and monasteries have been built since the 1990s. Describing two such cases in the monumental city of Vladimir, Köllner highlights the moral dimension of gift-giving in the context of religious revival. The financial gifts of entrepreneurs who have made the most of Russian capitalism, as well as the manual labour contributed by poor religious community members, are interpreted as public works of penance. Interestingly, it is through these gifts that public tensions in the new Russia can temporarily be solved. Not only do new churches link local communities to the nation by reviving national religious heritage, the gifts given to new church projects also reinforce economic ties and political positions whereas they also function as a public form of moral purification. For example, through financial gifts, rich businessmen strengthen their relationships with local politicians and the Russian Orthodox establishment but also publicly and privately show themselves as moral persons, capable of sin and penance. It is this religious money that hints at the links between the simultaneous rise of the Russian Orthodox Church and Russian capitalism.

Even more than Köllner, Markha Valenta zooms in on religious architecture as an expression of contemporary global capitalism. Her account of the Siddhivinayak Temple, the richest and most spectacular of Mumbai, is an explicit attempt to analyse what is contemporary about contemporary religious architecture. Refusing any kind of reductionism, Valenta describes how the rise of the temple, which attracts some 100,000 visitors daily, reflects the political, economic and cultural changes since the 1980s and how these changes have impacted Mumbai as a global city. Indicative of these often-conflicting changes, the temple itself is full of contradictions. Symbolising a new demotic Hinduism, for instance, it also functions like a gated community with airport-like security and modern technologies that make the structure largely self-provisional and yet globally connected through media and finance. It speaks of the conflictual but simultaneous rise of chauvinistic and cosmopolitan Hindu religious politics, of Bollywood as well as Shiv Sena. In these and other ways, the Siddhivinayak Temple is, as Valenta puts it, reflective of 'the structural interplay between equality, (dis)possession, consumption and desire in our brave new world'.

In his analysis of the Great Mosque in Djenné, Mali, reputedly the world's largest mud structure, Trevor Marchand takes the issue of heritage and community further, explicitly emphasising the potential tension that exists between the interests of heritage preservation and community activity. Starting out by documenting various historical ideological disputes about its design that arose over the years between locals and invading religious purists, Marchand then moves on to describe the re-plastering ceremonies that take place annually to maintain the structure. These ceremonies become festive rituals that reproduce a sense of community. However, the mosque is also world heritage, the object of conservation projects financed by donors like the Aga Khan Trust for Culture, and a focus point of the annual *Festival du Djennéry* that is largely staged for tourists, all of which neglect the important social function of the maintenance activities by the Muslim community. The conflict becomes one between the outsiders' admiration for the building as an authentic end-product and the seasonal engagement of the community with the materiality and building techniques.

A similar tension occurs in Verkaaik's discussion of the new mosque in Granada, Spain, built and used by Western converts to Islam who have settled in the shadow of the Alhambra. Like Marchand's contribution, this chapter describes the encounter between tourists seeking authentic Moorish culture and Muslim converts doing largely the same but with a religious rather than a leisurely purpose. A profound difference with the Great Mosque in Djenné, however, is that the Muslim community in Granada is a new community of converts who need to establish a religious habitus from scratch. The sensational practices of making things in a re-fashioned and revitalised Moorish tradition are an important part of this effort to create a new aesthetic community. Verkaaik also describes how this attempt clashes with reformist-minded notions of Islam as a truly inward-looking faith and how this enigma of religion and aesthetics leads to local discussions about time and beauty.

Ivan Kalmar's contribution discusses another example of how the Moorish legacy of Al-Andaluz is revived in a modern context. Focusing on nineteenth-century synagogue building in Europe – in this case the synagogue in Florence, Italy – Kalmar refutes the often-repeated notion that the Moorish style as applied to synagogues expressed an admiration for religious tolerance in Muslim Spain. Based on historical documents, he shows how in the nineteenth century the Moorish style was associated with the Orient. Since the Jews were seen as an 'Oriental' people, non-Jewish architects in particular considered the Moorish style appropriate

for synagogues. The rediscovery of the Moorish style was thus related to the growing visibility and integration of Jews as a separate ethnic-religious community.

Shahed Saleem also focuses on contemporary mosque design, namely the various trends and development in mosque building in postwar Britain. Some of the discussions about style and identity in the case of the contemporary British mosque are comparable to the discussions analysed by Kalmar, but Saleem also takes the analysis a step further by analysing the designing process as a process of negotiation, learning and 'objectification'. Disagreeing with the often-heard criticism that European Muslims simply produce cheap replicas of traditional Islamic building styles, Saleem points out the many variations, adaptations and innovations in British mosque design. Although the gaze of the secular world affects in an important way how Muslims design their mosques, Saleem's look at the mosque interior shows that Muslims are also driven by other concerns such as religious disputes on mosque design, the wish to create a familiar and relaxing place for prayer, and the ambition to literally build an English Muslim identity. These complex interactions make the designing and building process 'a performance that the community engages in to establish its own dynamics and relationships to each other and the outside world'.

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