Seven Doors to Islam

Spirituality and the Religious Life of Muslims

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To Oleg Grabar for sharing his love of the arts of Islam

2 Devotion

Ritual and Personal Prayer

By the term *devotion* I mean all the elements of personal investment—energy, feeling, time, substance—that characterize Muslim communal and individual response to the experience of God's revelation and involvement in human affairs as described in the first chapter. I use the term *ritual* to denote a range of religious actions with which Muslims express their response in faith to what they believe are God's ways of dealing with them. These actions include those prescribed by the rubrics of Islamic communal practice and those left to the discretion of the participants or canonized by local custom, or both.

In Islam there are two large categories of religious practice, one comprising regular observances programmed by its liturgical calendar. Each major observance has its times and seasons through the lunar year. The literature of the Five Pillars and of the Friday sermon, as well as some arts and architecture, is directly related to regular religious observance.

Various kinds of additional devotion include forms of communal and individual prayer not regulated by religious law, as well as the full range of rites of passage and popular practice associated with matters of everyday life and special occasions particularly important within specific segments of the world's Muslim population. Sermons for every occasion are a variety of pulpit literature, and some aspects of architecture and the arts are associated with popular or devotional preaching. Many textual and visual sources are related to ritual and devotional activities that, while often regulated by a calendar or season, are optional in that Islamic law does not strictly require them. In a given cultural context these activities may indeed be expected of everyone as though they were juridically obligatory, but they fall in the category of custom rather than that of divinely revealed duties.

Rituals help members of social and religious communities negotiate moments of special significance. These may be times of grief or of joyous cel-

Figure 6. (*Opposite*) Indian calendar poster with caption "Du'a'Boy" (1994), showing the Ka'ba and Muhammad's tomb; 786 is the numerical value of the Arabic letters in the phrase "in the name of God." Qur'an is open to 33:33, a reference to ritual purity. Courtesy of Carl Ernst.

ebration, of intense struggle or of liberation from spiritual or psychic enslavement. As rites of passage, religious rituals give structure to the otherwise threatening and often chaotic experience of change. Acts of devotion mark a temporary excursion from the ordinary into the extraordinary, whether they are prescribed in religious law or are merely what people "have always done" in a particular cultural setting.

The notions of sacred time, sacred space, and the state called liminality are useful in describing the goal of these excursions. (Derived from the Latin word *limen*, "threshold," the term *liminality* suggests a dramatic change in one's condition.) When religious persons mark off and intentionally enter upon a ritual undertaking, they must commit themselves to a change of mind and heart. They signify this commitment by certain physical and behavioral changes, such as donning special garb, leaving daily tasks aside for a time, and performing specific bodily actions prescribed by the ritual in question. Such controlled change (sometimes called separation) introduces the participant into a state of liminality. In that state the individual is cut loose from the accustomed moorings of everyday life—relationships, job, status—to drift for a while in sacred time and space. The devotee thus enters into a condition of heightened receptivity to the powerful symbolism of the ritual. Liminality is a vulnerable state, but the participants' realization that others have also chosen to take the risk makes the prospect less forbidding. Supported by a mutual sense of community, devotees can give each other permission to express feelings they might otherwise keep controlled or safely hidden.

Various kinds of ritual differ in both content and emotional tone. Some provide catharsis through tears born of sympathy with the suffering of some spiritually potent figure; others offer release through ecstasy or trancelike states. Some suggest an emphasis on the need to attain and maintain a state of purity; others focus on the task of cleansing an individual or community from the curse of some ritual impurity. Whatever the specific tenor of the experience, the participant must at the end make the transition from liminality back to the ordinary. To this "reaggregation" the individual, ideally, brings a self slightly different from the self that had earlier willingly submitted to the potential danger and power of the ritual.[1]

ON THE LITURGICAL CALENDAR

About the Five Pillars

The Islamic tradition has specific ways of communicating to believers the appropriate ways to express their faith by means of ritual actions. The most familiar summary characterization of Islamic religious belief and practice

is that they rest upon the Five Pillars. The five are: profession of faith (shahada), "I confess that there is no god but God, and Muhammad is the Messenger of God"; pilgrimage (*hajj*) to Mecca during the prescribed days of the twelfth lunar month, given sufficient health and means; ritual prayer (salat) five times daily toward Mecca; almsgiving (zakat); and fasting (*sawm*) between sunrise and sunset during the ninth lunar month, Ramadan. One cannot reduce the spirit and life of a complex global community to a cluster of religious practices. Still the metaphor of the Five Pillars is more than a mnemonic convenience, so long as one remembers that it is merely a summary. Through these rituals the tradition has communicated to its adherents the importance not only of basic practical observance but also of the spirit that must breathe life into that practice.

Some casual observers dismiss Islam's ritual and devotional life as dry and mechanical, hardly worthy of the name "religion" because it seems little more than a collection of external actions performed robotically. In reality, Muslims are no more or less likely than anyone else to participate sincerely and vitally in the religious life of their tradition. One of the most important concerns governing the performance of the basic Islamic rituals is the intention of the worshiper. Islamic sources accord great importance to individual attentiveness and heartfelt presence in religious observances generally.

Written sources describe intention on at least two levels. First and minimally, one must actually pronounce one's intent to perform each specific ritual action, including ablution, prostration, and the oral profession of faith. But prior to the enunciation of intention one must cultivate a more basic interior attitude of receptivity or "presence of the heart." Once classic text describes the attitude more fully:

> The "intention" involves place and time and method and ideal. We ask Thee for the purity of those places, the observance of those times, for faultlessness in that method, and for full realization of that ideal. We ask Thee for due fulfillment of the obligation and for right purpose, and for a desire for the Countenance of God Most High. Now the place of "intention" is the heart; its time is at the beginning of the actions of the prayer-rite, its method is a binding control of the heart and of the members. It is built up of four elements, purpose, determination, desire, and act of will, all of these united in one idea. And the "intention" has two aspects, first the direction of the heart in the rite with full awareness, and secondly single-heartedness towards God out of longing for the reward that He has to give and desire for His Countenance.[2]

One of the most influential works dealing with these matters is *Revivification of the Sciences of the Faith* (*Ihya' 'ulum ad-din*), by Abu Hamid

al-Ghazali (1058–1111). A four-volume work organized into forty books, *Revivification* is a compendium of Islamic spirituality ranging from the most elementary to the most advanced mystical pedagogy. Even when he is proceeding through fairly detailed descriptions of how to perform a ritual action such as the daily prayer, Ghazali never fails to attend to the requisite underlying attitudes. He cites the Qur'anic prohibition against approaching the ritual prayer while intoxicated (Q 4:43): "O you who believe, do not approach the ritual prayer while you are intoxicated; [wait] until you can comprehend what you are saying." Ghazali interprets the text by observing, "Some say that 'intoxicated' means inebriated by many anxieties, while others say it means drunk on the love of this world. According to Wahb [a famous traditionist], the meaning is obviously a caution against worldly attachment, since the words 'until you know what you are saying' explain the underlying reason. Many are those who pray without having drunk wine, yet do not know what they are saying in their Prayers!"[3]

Among the most widely disseminated and least consulted textual sources for the study of Islamic spirituality are the unpretentious manuals of religious education one finds on the shelves of mosque bookstores the world over. At the most basic level, they instruct the believer in the fundamentals of ordinary ritual. They offer directions on how to perform the ablution before prayer, where to place the hands during salat, what invocations to say while circumambulating the Ka'ba (a roughly cube-shaped structure traditionally said to have been built by Abraham) during pilgrimage to Mecca, and how to tell when sunset occurs during Ramadan. These concerns come under the heading of basic catechesis, the sort of instruction given to children or to new converts or to Muslims who wish to return to active observance after years on the periphery of the community.

In their function of religious education, these sources stand on a continuum with a larger body of literature. At one end, the texts are written for as diverse a public as possible. Close to the midpoint of the continuum are works whose range narrows to include, for example, individuals training to become professional Qur'an reciters or to fulfill other functions whose responsibilities require specific instruction. At the other end are works addressed to a still more selective constituency, members of religious fraternities and mystical adepts.

Even the most rudimentary religious education invariably addresses issues far deeper than the superficial rubrics of ritual performance. There are, of course, manuals dedicated almost exclusively to teaching believers the raw structure of ritual practice, but they presume that one already brings at least the inchoate stirrings of a genuine desire to seek God. Muslims call the whole complex of ritual and devotional acts deeds of worshipfulness (*'ibadat*, which could also be translated as "signs of servanthood"). All acts that describe or acknowledge the human posture of a servant before a divine master are thus distinguished, in Islamic religious law, from those that regulate relationships between and among human beings (*mu'amalat*).

The manuals ground every required or recommended practice in the Sunna, Muhammad's example. Even when an individual can find no profound personal significance in, say, kissing the Black Stone (a bowling-ball-sized object, possibly of meteoric origin, set in a silver collar in a corner of the Ka'ba) or placing the hands in a particular position during salat, the action nevertheless rests on solid authority and precedent. It is not merely that an unnamed someone at some unknown date began a practice that stuck. Each practice draws its sacralizing power from the custom of the Prophet himself. For example, tradition ascribes to Muhammad dozens of the intermittent prayers worshipers might say while performing the various movements of the salat (standing, inclining, sitting on the heels, prostration, etc.). One manual observes that when Muhammad performed the prostration he used to say, "Before Thee I prostrate myself, in Thee I believe, to Thee I am surrendered. My face is prostrate before Him who created it and moulded it and pierced for it (the openings of) hearing and sight. Blessed be God the Best of Creators."[4]

William Chittick has translated three thirteenth-century Persian instructional texts that likewise evidence the centrality of right intention.[5] Their probable author, a certain Nasir ad-Din, lived in the central Anatolian city of Konya and was a fellow townsman and contemporary of the original "whirling" dervish, Jalal ad-Din Rumi (d. 1273). All three short and charming works lay out the fundamentals of Islamic faith and practice from slightly different angles and with varying levels of subtlety and sophistication. One is a gem dedicated to conveying "command of a few preliminaries of the intellectual and practical pillars of Islam, the knowing of which is mandatory for the seeker."[6] Nasir ad-Din wrote *The Easy Roads of Sayf ad-Din* (*Manahij-i sayfi*) for a Turkish convert who had asked for guidance through the fundamentals. Leading his supplicant down five "roads," Nasir ad-Din begins with the rudiments of faith and then moves on to the particulars of practice (purification, ritual prayer, fasting, and the personal prayer of supplication). The work is remarkably similar in content to Ghazali's *Beginning of Guidance* (*Bidayat al-hidaya*), an Arabic introduction to the faith written some two centuries earlier.[7] Nasir ad-Din explains the spiritual meaning of the ablution prior to ritual prayer:

> When the person finishes the ablution and aims to say the ritual prayer, he should turn away from all things to the extent possible. He should make his heart present and be aware of the tremendousness and majesty of God. He should understand that he will be talking intimately with the Sultan of sultans. Since he has purified the parts of himself where creatures look with outward water, he should also purify the place where God looks—which is called the "heart"—with the water of turning toward God, repenting, and asking forgiveness. If he does not do this, he is like someone who wants to bring the sultan into his home. He cleans the outside of the house, but he leaves the inside of the house—the place where the sultan will sit—full of filth. We seek refuge in God from that! "God looks not at your forms, nor at your works, but He looks at your hearts."[8]

While the instructional manuals prepare worshipers to participate more fully in the community's canonical rituals, other materials record some of the kinds of religious communication that occur within those rituals themselves. One such genre preserves the preaching associated with the Friday salat.

From the Pulpit

Literature of the pulpit (*adab al-minbar*) refers specifically to collections of sermons delivered in a mosque by famous preachers (*khutaba'*; sg., *khatib*). I divide the literature into two categories, liturgical preaching and popular preaching. In the case of the sermon the principal difference between the two is functional rather than formal. The shape and content of a sermon preached during the Friday midday congregational prayer may be virtually identical to that of a sermon delivered on the occasion of a holy person's birthday or in commemoration of some signal historical event. The ritual context of the Friday sermon sets it apart by virtue of its obligatory status in religious law.

The literature of the pulpit also functions as a bridge between Qur'an and Hadith, and institutional texts (see chapter 5). The Friday sermon always takes place in a mosque. Through its mandatory mention of the name of the legitimate political authority, the sermon has historically often been an expression of formal institutional allegiance. Throughout Islamic history, however, liturgical oratory has also been a prime vehicle for disseminating revolutionary sentiments. In either case, the Friday sermon has been potent both as a symbol and as a form of discourse.

Liturgical oratory is called *khutba* in Arabic. In its broadest meaning, however, khutba refers to any sort of public address. Typically, Islamic tradition has not distinguished neatly between sacred and secular activities in general; nor does Arabic preserve a distinction parallel to that between generic speech and religious sermon. Nevertheless, the oratory that has come to be associated most of all with the Friday midday congregational prayer has taken on a number of distinctive formal features.

After the call to prayer, timed to mark the sun's passing its zenith, the khatib rises from his place on the steps of the pulpit (*minbar*) and faces the assembled worshipers. The classic form includes four distinct segments: an introduction; the body of the address, divided into two separate sections; and a conclusion. An initial thanksgiving (the anaphoric exordium) opens with praise and thanks to God, followed by a first-person profession of faith and recollection of Muhammad's prophetic mission, and a prayer for blessings upon Muhammad and for the well-being of the congregation. A brief moral exhortation (*maw'iza*), sometimes in the form of a litany, closes the exordium.

The main section of the khutba typically develops a distinctive central theme often related to a religious observance or some important event, although some addresses merely continue in a general vein of moral exhortation. Islamic liturgical oratory differs from the classic Christian homily, in that the mosque preacher does not set out principally to elucidate a passage of scripture, though the Qur'an does play an important role. The preacher will quote the Qur'an often, as proof text or as rhetorical device, and sometimes uses a text as his theme. Only on rare occasions does the speaker set about an exegetical elaboration of a text, which typically occurs in gatherings dedicated to the study and discussion of a particular text.

In the body of the address, the mosque preacher seeks to persuade his listeners of the need to change, to point to which areas of life might need changing, and to instruct them in distinguishing between desirable and reprehensible options. With an invocation to God, the first movement closes, and the preacher sits down for a minute or two. The second part returns to the main theme but more briefly, as if to reinforce the message. Finally, the address concludes with a reference to God's glory, sometimes in litany form. After the preacher comes down from the pulpit steps, the congregation performs the regular liturgical prayer (salat), engaging in only two cycles of prostration rather than the more usual four. For major observances, such as the breaking of the Ramadan fast ('Id al-fitr) and the Feast of Sacrifice during Hajj season ('Id al-adha), the ritual prayer comes before, rather than after, the address.[9]

Pilgrimage is a good example of a theme of great importance to preachers on Fridays that fall during the formal pilgrimage season (days 8–13 of Dhu'l-hijja, the twelfth lunar month). Symbolically taking on the role of Muhammad, who delivered the inaugural pilgrimage sermon in 632, the

preacher virtually reenacts the journey for his congregation. As he leads his listeners through the various ritual locations in and around Mecca, the preacher describes the inner experience of the pilgrim. Texts of sermons clearly reveal a sense of deep insight into the spiritual significance of pilgrimage, not only for those actively participating in it but for those sharing in its benefits from afar as well.

The major themes of the sermon are duty, community, several important matters of economic justice, and the transformation following a feeling of liminality that the pilgrim experiences. The preacher begins with Qur'anic reminders that the pilgrimage is a divinely ordained duty for all able-bodied adults who have the funds and a safe means of transportation (Q 3:97). God never burdens people with more than they can carry (Q 2:286); and if times are hard now, God will surely provide the appropriate circumstances for pilgrimage at some later time.

Muslims who do make the pilgrimage have the responsibility of bringing back blessings and charity for their community. One of the great benefits the preacher describes is the feeling of coming together in harmony and equality with other Muslims from all over the world. In a sermon originally preached in Arabic, pilgrims are exhorted to become aware of the expanse of Islam and to feel supported in their faith, "saying [to God] with one voice that softens hearts and seeking the favor of the knower of the hidden: Here I am, at your service; all felicity and blessing are in your hands." The opportunity to visit the sacred sites associated with Muhammad helps believers become more grounded in their faith. And the benefits of learning the customs of other people while traveling also expand the pilgrim's sense of wider community.

Issues of economic justice enter into the experience as well. When pilgrims go to the holy land, whatever money they spend there improves the lot of the poor of the land: "he who spends on the Pilgrimage a dirham, it is as if he has spent a thousand dirhams." On the other hand, a pilgrimage accomplished with ill-gotten gains is worthless. To any person who lavishly spends money made from theft or plunder, God says, "You are not here. You are not at my service. Yours is not felicity and your Pilgrimage is thrown back on yourself."

This typical sermon closes with the theme of personal transformation. Of those who have undertaken the struggle of pilgrimage, God says to his angels:

> "you are seeing [none] except my worshippers. They left the comfort of their homes and they came to me whether riding or on foot. They filled the land with, 'There is no god but God,' and 'God is great.' . . . Bear witness I shall smooth the way for them with a hospitable reception [on Judgment Day]; I shall entrench their successors [on earth] and I shall place them in paradise." Oh ye who have neglected the Pilgrimage and carry a heavy burden of sins, hurry to the Pilgrimage of the sacred house of God. . . . There is a people on whose hearts is written faith and on whose works [is written] mercy and [God's] favor. While they were paying their last respects by circumambulations [of the Ka'ba] and resolving on a return, they were impelled by yearning [to visit Medina] [as seen] by the rapidity of their walking to the [home of the] chosen Prophet. There [in Medina on Judgment Day] they will be encompassed by the light (grace) of Muhammad and they will be included in the prophetic blessing. The Messenger of God said: "He who makes the Pilgrimage and does not speak obscene speech and does not commit obscene acts, his sins are taken away and he emerges as he did on the day his mother gave him birth." And he, may God's prayers and salutations be upon him, said: "The Pilgrimage of good faith, there can be no reward for it but paradise."[10]

Predictably Muslim preachers find the ultimate model in the sermons of Muhammad. Next in importance are those of the Prophet's immediate successors, the four Rightly Guided Caliphs. A sermon from the first caliph, Muhammad's aged father-in-law, Abu Bakr, demonstrates several other prominent themes that reveal important emotional dimensions of Islamic spirituality. This selection emphasizes the need to live this life with an eye on the next:

> I enjoin on you the fear of God in His unity, and that you praise Him as He deserves, and that you mix desire with fear, and importuning with requesting, for God praised Zachariah and his family, when He said . . . "They used to vie in good deeds and call upon Us, out of longing and fear." Then know that God has bound your souls with His truth, and therefore has taken your oaths, and has purchased from you what is small and transient for what is large and eternal. This is the Book of God, given to you, whose wonders do not pass away and whose light is not extinguished: so believe it, and accept the advice it gives, and draw enlightenment from it against the day of darkness. Then know that your comings and goings in the morning and evening are in a fixed term, knowledge of which has been hidden from you, and if you are able to do something that may not be accomplished unless you are doing it for God, then do it, for you will certainly not be able to do it except for God. Strive in gentleness, and [beware of being] a people who fixed their terms for others and forgot their own souls: and how many of you will be like them. So make haste and be saved. Verily, behind you is a questioner whose course is swift, so make haste.[11]

Sermons and pilgrimage, along with all the other central ritual deeds that help Muslims organize and interpret their religious lives, do not occur in a vacuum. They presuppose a world of spaces in which the actions take place

and a host of objects that facilitate their performance. Architecture and the arts provide that physical context.

Art and Architecture

Two broad distinctions are useful in a discussion of the visual expressions of required religious rituals. First, one can distinguish between the more formal, elite, or "official" arts associated directly with the performance of ordinary observances, and the more popular arts through which people associate themselves, publicly or privately, with the performance of those actions. A good deal of the more popular art might also be called folk art; it often functions in a magical-protective fashion. Second, a distinction between religious and sacred can help clarify further the nature of the material in this and in subsequent chapters. Religious art is so identified by its content or subject matter, whereas sacred art is identified by its function in the context of worship. In other words, an image of an angel (in an illustrated manuscript, for example) is religious, but not sacred. A tile mosaic created to adorn the niche of a mosque, on the other hand, belongs to the sacred arts because of its immediate connection with liturgical worship.[12]

Mosque architecture is the primary sacred art in that its chief function is to create a space for prayer. There have been important examples of mosque architecture funded by local patronage or even grass-roots financing. But historically the finest works have been built, out of economic necessity, by royal or government commission. Various distinctive architectural styles developed across the Islamic world, so one can make only a few useful generalizations about formal features. The typical mosque has a minaret, a cylindrical or polygonal tower from which the call to prayer emanates. Interior space is generally left as open and unobstructed as possible to accommodate uninterrupted rows of worshipers lined up elbow to elbow. Many mosques, especially those known as Friday or congregational mosques, have some sort of minbar from which the preacher addresses the congregation; the minbar is usually located to the right of the mihrab. (See Fig. 7.) Ascending its steps with back to the congregation, the preacher then turns to face the assembled worshipers either on a step or on the upper level, which is often covered by a small cupola.

Another of the mosque's principal functions is to communicate fundamental spiritual values in a unique way. Anyone who has ever taken a careful look at a Gothic church has likely been impressed by the various ways in which the building communicates, telling stories in stained glass and sculpture. The more elaborate Gothic creations, such as those of Chartres and Notre Dame, exhibit extraordinarily sophisticated coordination among

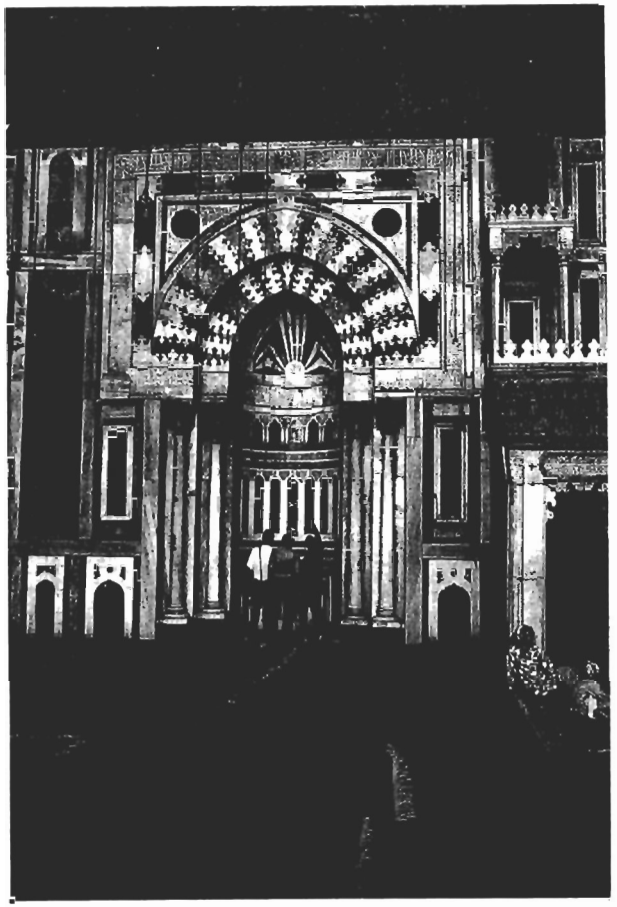

Figure 7. Mihrab and minbar of the Sultan Hasan madrasa (1356–1363) in Cairo. A text about the proper direction for prayer (Q 2:144) is inscribed on the wall above.

their rose windows, lancet windows, and portal sculptures. Seen as a whole, the physical arrangement and decorative program of the cathedral presents a coherent theological interpretation of history and human life. It offers the viewer a cross section of the history of Christian spirituality. Visitors to a cathedral know immediately that the building is saying something, even if the precise content of the message is not immediately apparent.

A Mosque's visual message is more subtle and complex precisely because mosque architecture does not communicate in the narrative style of stained glass or in the more blatantly symbolic mode of programmatic sculpture.

Still, the mosque does speak grammatically and in a distinctive idiom, especially through its Qur'anic inscriptions. But how does one learn this language without pictures? By learning the vocabulary and syntax of architectural space. Although the concept of architectural semiotics—the way a building communicates nonverbally and by its very spatial quality—is too vast to delve into in any detail here, the field can provide some important insights. The external features of orientation and siting, and the internal features of spatial composition and ornamentation—all contribute to the mosque's message.

Orientation is the most distinctive feature of the mosque. All mosques face Mecca, a sacred center of the universe, whereas the cathedral ideally looks toward the rising sun. In the traditional Christian church, all worshipers everywhere face in the same direction, rather than toward a fixed geographical point. Unlike the cathedral, the mosque, with its mihrab and qibla wall, focuses the congregation's visual attention, not on a sacred action occurring within the structure, but on a spiritual center beyond the qibla wall. Perhaps more than any other Islamic institution the mosque embodies the tradition's emphasis on forming community. For sheer scope, of course, no ritual practice matches the annual pilgrimage to Mecca as a celebration of shared humanity; but on a more modest scale, the mosque also fosters community.

Siting is an important external consideration as well. Naturally the practical matter of what sort of property is available at a given time has often limited a builder's options. There are many examples of mosques whose facades are aligned with an existing street or other public space, but whose courtyard and prayer hall is built at an angle, rotated from the axis slightly, in order to be oriented to Mecca (such as the Mosque of al-Aqmar in Cairo or the Royal Mosque in Isfahan). The Sulaymaniye Mosque in Istanbul stands, as do several other important imperial foundations there, on one of the seven hills of that Rome of the East. In this case the choice of site not only makes the building complex stand out on the city's skyline but clearly makes a statement of power as well.

A number of Islam's greatest mosques have been located not merely out of concern for accessibility, visibility or availability of real estate. Some, such as the great mosques of Cordova and Damascus, are located on the sites of earlier structures belonging to other religious traditions. Both sites were formerly occupied by Christian churches and Roman temples. The Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem, located over what was once Solomon's Temple, is a special case since it is not technically a mosque. In some instances the siting clearly makes a statement about the supersession of Islam over the earlier religious and political dispensations. Such a statement seems to override any concern that an observer might take it as a validation of the earlier tradition's identification of a particular site as holy.

Among the mosque's internal features, spatial organization and the use of calligraphic inscriptions are particularly significant. Good mosque architecture sets a mood—as does all successful architecture—and creates a space conducive to the noncompetitive, coordinated effort of one people surrendering in unison to the one God in whom they believe. Most important in this context are the interrelationships among the various functional spaces within the larger compositional design of the mosque. Since Islamicate architecture has developed in many regions over many centuries, of course, one needs to exercise caution in making generalizations. Every cultural setting puts its own distinctive stamp on religious expression, no matter how powerful the sense of belonging to a global community of belief and practice.

Larger mosques normally include facilities and space for ritual purification; a vestibule area or perhaps a courtyard that can serve as overflow prayer space if the crowd is very large; and the prayer hall proper, with the niche and pulpit its only truly essential visual and functional elements. Roger Joseph mentions several key features to consider when assessing the semiotics of a mosque. They include "codes establishing relationships based on spatial designs, geometric patterning, rhythmic sequences, oppositions between high and low, the structuring of polygons, and other systematically assembled elements." Interpretation of nonverbal codes in an architectural space is tricky, but it is an important and much-neglected source of cross-cultural understanding. Joseph theorizes, for example, that a mosque's "repetitive fragmentation" has the effect of "deemphasizing any single item which might draw attention to its uniqueness. Space within the mosque is unpunctuated; it is like the *dhikr* chants of occult recollection—repeated over and over in an effort to shut out the external world of distractions and tunnel into the singular world of unity with God."[13]

Most important, however, is the role of inscriptions as part of the decorative and interpretative program. Among the connections between Qur'anic calligraphy and architecture, I underscore two features of architectural calligraphy: the content of the text and its placement within the architectural space in relation to specific formal (such as facade, courtyard, and dome) and functional features (such as the mihrab and minbar). But beyond that, calligraphy constitutes the single most significant iconic communicator in the visual repertoire of the mosque designer. Even if an inscription is not legible, its mere presence delivers a powerful message.[14]

A madrasa is a second major functional type of religious architecture. The

madrasa has traditionally provided advanced instruction in the religious sciences of theology and jurisprudence. Major foundations across the Islamic world have often combined mosque and madrasa in architectural complexes along with other educational and social functions, such as medical facilities, lower-level schools (of Qur'an and Hadith), public kitchens, and social service agencies.[15]

Smaller, decorative objects include a host of items associated with regular liturgical observances. Prayer carpets reproduce, in two dimensions and on a small scale, the sense of the sacred space of the mosque as well as its cosmic orientation toward Mecca. Carpets and mosques alike are places of prostration (*masjid*), and the niche shape that is the prayer carpet's central design element recalls the mihrab in the wall facing Mecca of every mosque.[16] (See Fig. 8.) Among the finest products of the glazer's art, graceful enameled mosque lamps are often inscribed with the Verse of Light. (See Fig. 9.) Brass candlesticks, engraved and sometimes inlaid, flank the niches of major mosques across the Islamic world. To these one can also add articles such as illuminated manuscripts, book covers, Qur'an stands, and pen boxes in connection with the Qur'an.

Religious in content but no longer sacred in function, the illustrated handbook for pilgrims is an example of elite art. Manuscripts like the *Openings of the Two Sanctuaries*, that is, Mecca and Medina (*Futuh al-haramayn*) and *Guidebook to Blessings* (*Dala'il al-khayrat*) often include exquisite pictures of the holy places. Texts of this sort enjoyed continued popularity until well into the nineteenth century. Their images offer the equivalent of aerial views of the sacred sites' topography and internal features, often showing the interrelationships of a site's secondary features, such as the place near the Ka'ba from which the Prophet is said to have been taken on his Night Journey. Many depict a combination of ground plan and elevation of each place—that is, one sees the site as though simultaneously from above and from ground level. Particular features within each site appear in stylized drawings, often with an identifying caption. A picture of the sanctuary of the Ka'ba in Mecca, for example, usually shows the Station of Abraham and the Well of Zamzam in addition to the black cubic-shaped Ka'ba. Images of Medina typically indicate the tomb of Muhammad's daughter Fatima as well as that of the Prophet.

Sacred sites depicted include, first of all, those associated with the greater and lesser pilgrimages (hajj and *'umra*, respectively). In addition to the sanctuary of the Ka'ba in Mecca, artists often depict the various ritual stations in the valley of 'Arafat outside Mecca, which are all associated with either Abraham or Muhammad. There is the Mount of Mercy, where Muhammad

Figure 8. An early seventeenth-century Mughal prayer rug in which the original imagery of the lamp within the niche has given way to a stylized floral design, India. New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Bequest of Joseph V. McMullan.

Figure 9. An enameled glass mosque lamp of the kind that appears in early prayer rugs and in decorative niches (c. 1350), Syria. The upper section bears words from the Verse of Light: "like a niche in which there is a lamp." The goblet shape within the three circular blazons indicates that the donor held the rank of cupbearer to the Mamluk sultan. New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Edward C. Moore Collection, Bequest of Edward C. Moore.

delivered his farewell sermon in 632, and the three Satanic pillars at which pilgrims toss stones to commemorate Abraham's rejection of the Devil's suggestion that he avoid God's command to sacrifice his son. A beautiful sixteenth-century Turkish scroll shows fifteen topographical scenes of the holy places, including a number of sites in Jerusalem but without extended text, like an ancient filmstrip travelogue of the pilgrimage route. Production of such scrolls began at least as early as the thirteenth century.[17]

Several variations on this theme occur in south Asian pilgrimage accounts produced as recently as the 1970s. With regard to their literary qualities, Barbara D. Metcalf observes that "[t]he *hajj* accounts turn out not to be an isolated genre, a continuation of a static medieval form, but rather a genre that develops in ways broadly similar to the modern novel and autobiography . . . [and] biographies of the Prophet Muhammad. . . . The accounts should be read as part of an enduring yet shifting constellation of three poles: changes in society generally, changes in concepts of individuality, and changes in the interpretation of central religious symbols."[18] Although the literature is worthy of attention on its own merits, a number of these works also include visual illustrations. Thanks to changes in book production, the nineteenth- and twentieth-century images no longer belong to the category of elite arts, but they do retain the medieval works' use of stylized plans and elevations of the sacred sites.[19]

Wall tiles showing the plan of the Ka'ba sanctuary depict the same central subject but serve a different function, in a different medium and on a larger scale. These may have provided a meditative focus or visual recollection of the goal of pilgrimage and the orientation of prayer.[20] Popular art of pilgrimage includes both two- and three-dimensional souvenirs of the journey to Mecca. Small models of the Ka'ba reportedly sold as mementos to departing pilgrims by street vendors in Mecca are mentioned in travelers' memoirs of the late seventeenth century.[21] Islam, like virtually every major religious tradition, has also made ritual use of miniaturized architecture. (See Fig. 13.)

On the walls of ordinary houses all over Egypt, one can still see colorful two-dimensional mementos of the sacred journey to Mecca. A lively tradition of domestic mural painting has preserved a formulaic combination of inscriptions and images of the Ka'ba and of the Prophet's mosque. Images usually show the various modes of travel to the holy places, typically including planes, trains, ships, camels, and often depict the pilgrim on a prayer carpet. These murals serve a protective purpose in addition to certifying publicly and proudly that the house's inhabitants are due the special status and prestige accorded to those who have accomplished the hajj and received the honorific title of *hajji*. It is especially significant that family and friends of the pilgrims execute the paintings while the travelers are away, so that the dwelling undergoes its ritual transformation even as its inhabitants do. Paintings often include the text of Qur'an 3:97: "God enjoins upon people a hajj to the House [i.e., Ka'ba], if they are able to do it."[22]

Finally, sacred pilgrimage sites are a frequent theme in calendar art. The picture entitled *Du'a' Boy* (Fig. 6) shows both the Ka'ba in Mecca and the green dome of Muhammad's tomb in Medina. The Qur'an on the kursi is open to Sura 33:33, which reads: "God desires to remove from you defilement, People of the House [i.e., the family of Muhammad], and to make you entirely pure." This text was originally addressed to the Prophet's wives, enjoining them to be faithful not only to their larger religious obli-

gations but also to their more quiet and hidden prayer and recollection of God. In Islam sincerity and pure intention must always have priority over ostentation.

DEVOTION BEYOND DUTY

Prayer

I discussed earlier Qur'an's unfolding teaching on prayer and on the relationships among the various forms of prayer. Now I turn to postscriptural developments in the many popular forms not integrally connected with liturgical prayer. Just as the term *khutba* has come to mean, in ordinary parlance, religious and mostly liturgical oratory, so a number of Arabic terms originally of broader meaning have come to signify specific types of prayer. The word *du'a'* is a good example. Originally from a root that means "to call or invite," the term now usually refers either to extraliturgical prayer in general, sometimes also called free prayer, or to the prayer of supplication or petition. As a component in Islamic devotional literature, supplicatory prayer comes to us principally in the form of collections attributed to famous persons. A prime example is *The Complete Book of the One Who Constantly Prostrates Himself in Prayer* (*As-Sahifat al-kamilat as-sajjadiyya*), attributed to the Shi'i imam Zayn al-'Abidin (c. 658–713).[23] (See Fig. 10.) In addition to integral collections, anthologies have been compiled to provide Muslims with a handy source of texts to rely on when words do not come easily. Abu Hamid al-Ghazali, the eleventh-century theologian, offers a representative sample of such a source in book 9 of his *Revivification of the Sciences of the Faith*. In a chapter entitled "Prayers Transmitted for Every Occasion of Human Life," Ghazali offers this advice, quoting a prayer that was a favorite of Muhammad's:

> So when you go out to the mosque, say: "O God, make a light in my heart and a light in my tongue. Make a light in my ear; and make a light in my eye; make a light in back of me and a light in front of me; make a light above me. O God give me light." . . . If you go out of the house for a need, say: "In the name of God, My Lord, I take refuge with You that I should not wrong nor be wronged, or that I should not be foolish nor be fooled. . . ." [On looking in the mirror, say:] "Praise be to God, Who has given moderation and uprightness to my person and has given nobility and beauty to the form of my face, and to Him Who has made me one of the Muslims."[24]

Lest his reader wonder what good supplication could possibly do if God already has the individual's destiny set, Ghazali adds the assurance that "revocation of an affliction by supplication is itself a part of Preordination. Supplication is a cause for the revocation of the affliction and the procurement of mercy, just as a shield is a cause for the rejection of an arrow and water is a cause for the growth of a plant."[25]

Figure 10. A painting depicting the fourth Shi'i imam, Zayn al-'Abidin, son of the third imam, Husayn, on pilgrimage at the Ka'ba, from *Silsilat adh-dhahab*, by Jami, folio 66a (1549–1550), Iran. Washington, D.C.: Courtesy of the Sackler Gallery, Smithsonian Institution.

Associated with du'a' is the term *dhikr*, whose root denotes "remembrance and mindfulness." The term also refers to a category of prayer not always neatly distinct from du'a' in form or content. One might characterize dhikr (recollection) as simple praise and acknowledgement of God's sovereignty without specific request for a grant from the divine largesse. In *Revivification of the Sciences of the Faith*, Ghazali cites many beautiful

hadiths that recommend dhikr as a constant practice, an ongoing way of being before God. In one hadith, when a Companion of Muhammad's asks him what act is most meritorious, Muhammad replies that it is to "die while your tongue is moistened" with the remembrance of God. In another, Muhammad says, "God spreads His shade upon seven people on the Day when there is no shade but His [i.e., Resurrection Day]. Among them is a man [i.e., any person] who [remembered] God privately and whose eyes overflowed [with tears]."[26] Dhikr, however, eventually became associated with both individual and communal activities characteristic of mystical fraternities called Sufi orders.

A spiritual and devotional movement known generically as Sufism traces its origins to Islam's earliest generations. The term *Sufism* has come to refer to the Islamic mystical tradition, but some further background is useful. As early as the time of Muhammad, certain individuals had developed reputations for exceptional and distinctive piety. Over the next century or so, informal circles began to form around men and women known for their sanctity. The term *Sufi* came to be applied to some of those individuals, perhaps in connection with their wearing rough garments of wool (*suf* in Arabic). Initially the circles used the humble dwellings of their spiritual leaders as meeting places, but some groups soon grew to need larger facilities. With increasing size came more formal and permanent structures. In time the once informal and temporary circles began to outlive the holy persons around whom their members had originally gathered, and it became more common for the founding figure to appoint a successor to the leadership. By the twelfth century, a network of organizations dedicated to the pursuit of personal and communal piety was spreading across the Middle East. Each order, called literally "path" (from the Arabic *tariqa*), developed its distinctive forms of ritual and devotional practices. Members of the Sufi orders receive a specific word or phrase expressly chosen by the *shaykh*, the spiritual guide and leader of the order, for that person to repeat. Used in that way, dhikr fosters a quality of presence of the heart. As in the prayer called the rosary, the repetitious words or phrases provide a controlled distraction.

As a communal practice, dhikr has also been linked to group prayer services that involve chanting a dhikr along with some form of ritual movement or dance. Repeated words or phrases include, for example, "ya Allah" (o God); "Allahu akbar" (God is supreme); "Allah" (which drifts away till only its last soft *h* fades out), followed by "hu" (he [i.e., God]). The creedal phrase "La ilaha illa Allah" (There is no god but God) and invocations of God by any of his ninety-nine names—as in "ya Rahman" (o Merciful One) or "ya Sabur" (o Patient One)—are also commonly used.[27] These ceremonies have also been known by the general term *audition* (*sama'*). The sound of a large group chanting in unison can be quite moving.

The plural form of *dhikr, adhkar,* refers to supplication and thus is virtually synonymous with the plural of *du'a',* as in the work of Ghazali mentioned above. When a number of these adhkar are strung together, the resulting form is called a litany (*wird,* also *hizb*). Here, as always, Islamic traditional sources hasten to explain that the physical action of pronouncing a dhikr or any other form of vocal prayer has a metaphysical counterpart that corresponds to nearly every human faculty. In the following text, to make clear the original connotation of recollection and remembrance I have reinserted the word *dhikr* where the translator had chosen *worship* as its equivalent: "The [dhikr] of the eyes is weeping; the [dhikr] of the ears is listening; the [dhikr] of the tongue is praise and laud; the [dhikr] of the hands is distribution and giving; the [dhikr] of the body is effort and accomplishment; the [dhikr] of the heart is fear and hope, and the [dhikr] of the spirit is surrender and satisfaction in God."[28]

Another variation on the theme of personal prayer occurs in the form of *munajat,* sometimes translated "intimate conversations," "whispered prayers," or "prayer within the heart." Although munajat are often difficult to distinguish from du'a' in written texts, Islamic tradition has steadfastly maintained a distinction in the titles of important works. A number of famous and beloved collections of prayers are titled *Munajat,* among them, the final section of Zayn al-'Abidin's *Complete Book.* These lovely Arabic prayers, all in prose, represent one of the earliest of these collections. One prayer asks:

> O God, carry us in the ships of Thy deliverance, give us to enjoy the pleasure of whispered prayer to Thee, make us drink at the pools of Thy love, let us taste the sweetness of Thy affection and nearness, allow us to struggle in Thee, preoccupy us with obeying Thee, and purify our intentions in devoting works to Thee, for we exist through Thee and belong to Thee, and we have no one to mediate with Thee but Thee![29]

The short Persian prayerbook of 'Abdallah Ansari of Herat (d. 1089), called *Intimate Conversations* (*Munajat*), is among the most celebrated and widely disseminated collections of munajat. Ansari's disciples compiled his prayers, a mix of poetry and prose, from other works of his, producing a book that has been popular and influential over the centuries. His *Intimate Conversations* may have provided a model for a type of wisdom literature made famous by the Persian author Sa'di of Shiraz (d. 1292) in *Rose Garden* (*Gulistan*). In addition, according to Wheeler Thackston, "[A]s a genre,

the *munajat* gained in popularity after Ansari and even became an essential part of the Persian epic romance, taking its place between the sections on God's unity and on the Prophet."[30] Ansari prays in short bursts: "O God, When you had the flame of separation, why did you kindle the fire of hell?"; "O God, What you sewed I put on; what you poured into the cup I drank. Nothing has come of that for which I myself have striven"; and "O God, Although people think You are distant, You are nearer than the soul—yet You are more sublime than any token that may be given of You."[31] Ansari's prayers are so appealing because they are both brief and substantial, at once intense and soothing in their capacity to put the heart's deepest intimations into clear, simple words.

Rites of Passage

The Five Pillars are not the only religious practices timed by a liturgical calendar. This section will discuss the literary sources associated with several broad categories of popular practice: commemorations of key events in the life of Muhammad; the observance of birthdays or death dates of the Friends of God; the phenomenon of visitation (*ziyara*) to the tombs of holy persons; and the Shi'i memorialization of the martyrdom of Husayn.

Every year on the eve of the twelfth day of Rabi'u 'l-Awwal, the third month in the lunar liturgical calendar, Muslims in many countries celebrate the birthday of Muhammad. The same day marks his death as well. In some areas, such as Saudi Arabia, the event receives no formal acknowledgment as an occasion of special ritual significance, since some people consider such observances an inappropriate aggrandizement of the Prophet. A number of exquisite literary works form the textual foundation for the occasion, and some texts have been integrated into ritual observances. One such work, the poem of the *Noble Birth* (*Mevlid-i sherif*), written about 1410 by the Turkish poet Sulayman Chelebi, has remained an essential text for communal recitation not only on Muhammad's birthday but on death anniversaries as well. Here is the section in which celebrants respond to the news of his coming into the world:

> Welcome, O high prince, we greet you!
> Welcome, O mine of wisdom, we greet you!
> Welcome, O secret of the Book, we greet you!
> Welcome, O medicine for pain, we greet you!
> Welcome, O sunlight and moonlight of God!
> Welcome, O one who is not separated from God!
> Welcome, O nightingale of the garden of Beauty!
> Welcome, O friend of the Lord of Power!
> Welcome, O refuge of your nation!
> Welcome, O eternal soul, we greet you!
> Welcome, O cupbearer of the lovers, we greet you!
> Welcome, O darling of the Beloved!
> Welcome, O much beloved of the Lord!
> Welcome, O mercy for the worlds!
> Welcome, O intercessor for the sinner!
> Welcome, O prince of this world and the next!
> Only for you Time and Space was created.[32]

Numerous Swahili works, some composed as late as this century, attest to the popularity of the material. Typically such works amount to translations or versifications from earlier Arabic prose works, sometimes with considerable variation introduced by the Swahili author. Jan Knappert has translated several of these *mawlid* (pl., *mawalid;* literally, "birthday") pieces. They offer excellent examples of modifications of earlier Arabic texts as well as of important Swahili poetic meters. An unusual aspect of most mawlid prose and poetry is that they do not stop with descriptions of the wonders that attended Muhammad's birth. They merely begin there, continuing through a condensed narration of the Prophet's entire life. Sometimes they end with his death, but they almost always include sections extolling his noble physical and spiritual attributes. One example will suggest the wondrous atmosphere the poetry seeks to create. In the beginning, the text says, when Muhammad's mother, Amina, conceived the child, all the herd animals of the Quraysh spoke most eloquently and said, "The pregnancy of the Prophet has set in here today, the appearance (on earth) of our lord has come near." Every month as the new moon appeared they would say together with the angels, "His appearance on this earth (means) every happiness." As Amina neared labor, four indescribably beautiful women came to be with her. Two were dark-eyed heavenly maidens called houris; the other two were Mary, mother of Jesus, and Pharaoh's wife Asiya. Of the moment of birth the text says, "The Confessor, the fully lit moon, appeared, who was perfect in his perfection, with every beauty. . . . O thou informed of every secret, peace is with thee. O thou who were sent out of mercy, peace is for thee. O thou who art loved, thou hast loved thy Lord, prayers and peace-wishes descend upon thee eternally."[33] The intensely personal, familiar tone in which the speakers address the Prophet is a hallmark of the mawlid genre.

Muhammad's Night Journey (*isra'*) and Ascension (*mi'raj*), usually commemorated on 27 Rajab, has likewise provided occasion for distinctive ritual observances over the centuries. In East Africa, for example, the day of fasting occurs after a three-night recitation of Najm ad-Din Ghayti's prose version of the story, first in Arabic and then in Swahili translation.[34] The

tale recounts Muhammad's experiences en route from Mecca to Jerusalem, and from the Dome of the Rock through the seven heavens, where he meets a number of the major prophets and converses with them. He then descends into hell to witness the tortures of the damned. In a popular Swahili version we find this image of Muhammad's progress under Gabriel's guidance:

> After that they went on and saw a vast plain, and (heard) a pleasant voice, and (perceived) unequalled smells. Gabriel said: "Listen, Messenger-Prophet: The voice of Paradise that speaks to God most Generous." (The voice said:) "Lord, I want many people, I long for them. I am great beatitude, I wait for those who will come . . . when?" God told him: "Yours is every faithful person, women and men for whom you claim great happiness." After that they went and saw a plain of heat, and heard the ugly voice of Munkar, like donkeys, and perceived unpleasant smells (which) he endured, being a man of patience. Gabriel said: "It is the voice of hell." It said: "Lord, I am plagued with excessive heat; I want the immoral people, my people of the fire." The Lord answered: "Every oppressor is yours, the women and the men who rebelled against the Mild Lord."[35]

These episodes also figure prominently in many mawlid works. I make a distinction here between narrative versions of the experience now integrally part of a ritual observance, and those mostly poetic and usually shorter settings of the tale that come under the heading of praise poetry.[36]

An aspect of popular practice analogous to commemorations of Muhammad's birthday are celebrations of the birthdays of numerous holy personages. Sunni and Shi'i Muslims alike in a number of countries observe these occasions (mawalid) of such figures as members of Muhammad's family, his daughter Zaynab for one, or of founders of religious orders, such as the twelfth-century Friend of God (*Wali Allah*) 'Abd al-Qadir al-Jilani or the immensely popular thirteenth-century Egyptian Ahmad al-Badawi of Tanta. Panegyric poetry, similar to the mawlid texts in honor of Muhammad, and pilgrim manuals supplement long-standing local tradition in the performance of the rituals. Often the observances last for several days or a week, with the celebrants becoming increasingly fervent and emotionally involved as the days draw on. Farmers come to Cairo from all over Egypt to commemorate Lady Zaynab's mawlid. They gather in virtually every available mosque and madrasa, and throng the narrow streets of the old city around her mosque for a full week. (See Fig. 32.)

Dozens of rites of passage are part of Muslim life across the globe. Bestowing a name on a child, haircutting and sacrifice of an animal on a child's seventh day, circumcision, marriage, and funerals are among the more important. Here I discuss only the literature of the funeral rite, since it is associated symbolically with several of the other practices to be discussed shortly, namely, the commemoration of martyrdom and visitation to sanctified burial places.

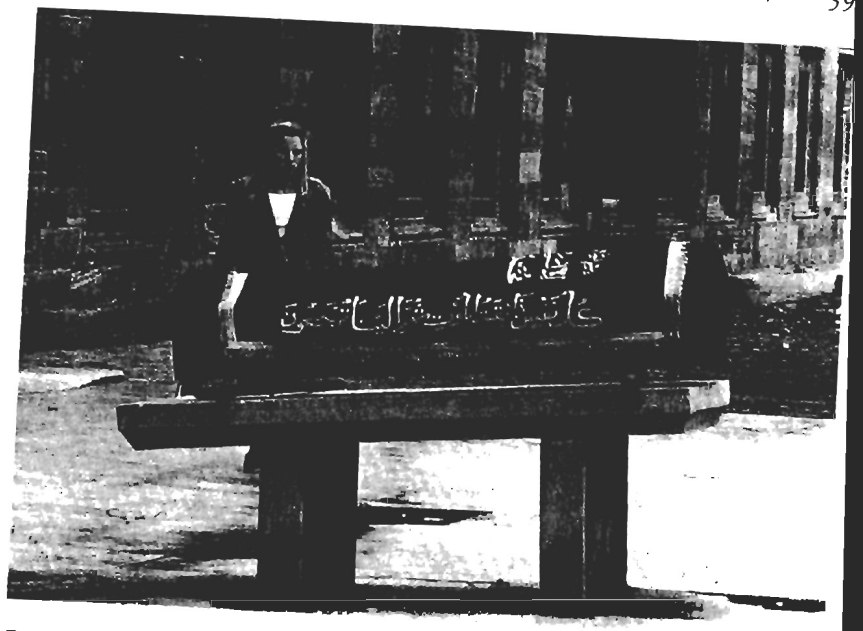

Figure 11. Funeral bier awaiting burial, outside the Sulaymaniye Mosque (see Fig. 19), Istanbul, draped with a cloth bearing the text of Qur'an 29:57. Note the niche design on the right pedestal. The mosque's own cemetery is just behind the wall in the background.

Jurisprudence treatises are the first line of textual material on funeral practice, building of course on Qur'anic references and hadiths reporting Muhammad's views on the matter. I consider here the tone of the observance rather than the rubrics followed, for attitudes toward death say much about a tradition's sense of the individual's relationship to God. A special salat marks the passing of a Muslim from this life (see Fig. 11). The line "Every soul shall taste death; then unto Us you will be returned" (Q 29:57) establishes the tone. The prayer service includes a commendation of the departed one to God by proclaiming four times God's dominion over all things—"Allahu akbar" (God is supreme)—along with other prayers for both the deceased and the mourners. A striking feature of the ritual is the final instruction to the deceased as to how to deal with the two formidable

interrogating angels, Munkar and Nakir, whose task is to test the dead Muslim's faith one last time. An example from an Urdu primer suggests that the mourners say to the deceased:

> Remember the Covenant . . . which is the witness that there is no god but God and that Muhammad is the Apostle of God . . . and that thou art well satisfied with God as (thy) One Lord and with Islam as (thy) religious practice and with Muhammad as Apostle and Prophet. This is the first abiding place of the abodes of the other world and the last abiding place of the abodes of this transitory world. . . . Let them not (the two angels) disturb thee . . . for they are only creatures, a part of God's creation. And when they ask thee, "Who is thy Lord and who is thy Prophet and what is thy *imam* [prayer leader], and thy religion, and thy *qibla* [prayer direction], and thy brethren?" Then say, "God is my Lord and Muhammad my Prophet, the Qur'an is my *imam* and the Ka'ba my *qibla*, and all the believers and Muslims are my brethren."[37]

Help from the community of believers enables the deceased to pass this crucial test, thereby alleviating the loneliness of the tomb, mitigating the sense of constriction the dead feel, and assuring an easier passage from this world to the next.

Another popular devotional parallel to the canonical ritual practice of pilgrimage is journeying to shrines or tombs associated with local holy personages. Considerable literature in several major languages belongs to a genre of pilgrimage manual devoted to the practice of visitation (ziyara). That genre, called *ziyaratnama*, in turn belongs to the broader category of travel literature. When Muslims travel to the tomb of Muhammad in Medina upon completion of the greater or lesser pilgrimage to Mecca and its environs, they are engaging in ziyara. For many Muslims, this is the only acceptable instance of this noncanonical practice; but that is by no means the end of the matter. Muslim theologians have debated at length the acceptability of ziyara; some, such as Ibn Taymiya (d. 1328), have gone so far as to condemn even the visit to Muhammad's tomb. Ibn Taymiya's views have exercised a formative influence on theological underpinnings of Islam in present-day Saudi Arabia. In his *Book Setting out the Straight Path over against the Denizens of Hellfire* (*Kitab iqtida' as-sirat al-mustaqim mukhalafat ashab al-jahim*), Ibn Taymiya notes that the Prophet forbade any act that might have the effect of turning a grave into a holy sanctuary. The process begins, he says, with people claiming a certain place is the station of a prophet or tomb of a Friend of God, "the claim being substantiated with a report, the identity of whose narrator is anybody's guess, or a vision, whose

true nature is not known. The next step is to turn such a spot into a mosque. Thus it becomes a distinct idol which is worshipped apart from God: *shirk* [idolatry] grounded in *ifk* [lie]!"[38]

At the other end of the spectrum of theological opinion, one finds a variety of sources that favor ziyara. Sunni and Shi'i texts alike not only praise the practice but also explain in great detail how one does it properly. Here is a sample of the prayer recommended to a pilgrim upon visiting the tomb of 'Abd al-Qadir al-Jilani in Baghdad (see Fig. 15) on his anniversary, 11 Rabi' ath-thani, the fourth lunar month:

> Peace be to thee O King of the age, O Imam of the place, O wielder of the command of the Merciful, O heir of the Book and representative of the Apostle of God, O thou whose benefit is heavenly and earthly, O thou to whom all the people of the time are his family. Thou through whose petitioning help comes down, through whose blessing supplication is efficacious.[39]

For Shi'i Muslims, the chief focus of the practice is the tomb of the protomartyr, Husayn, in Karbala, Iraq. Tradition says that in the year 680, Husayn, son of 'Ali and Fatima, was making his way with a small band of the family of the Prophet toward an engagement with the Umayyad caliph Yazid, whom Husayn regarded as an evil usurper. Yazid meanwhile had dispatched an expeditionary force to intercept the Shi'i band near Karbala, south of Baghdad. In the face of enormous odds, against the vastly superior power of the Umayyads, the valiant Husayn refused to surrender. In the end he and most of his little band were slaughtered, and Husayn's tomb became a goal of pilgrimage, as did those of all the other martyr-imams.

Shi'i authors have produced numerous works whose function parallels that of the manuals of instruction for Muslims who make the hajj. One mid-fourteenth-century compendium of material for these rites of commemoration, the *Complete (Book of) Visitation* (*Kamil az-ziyara*), by Ibn Qawlawayh of Qum (a city in Iran noted for educating religious scholars), offers several alternative ways of performing the visitation. It includes specific recommended prayers to say at each key point in the ritual. The text emphasizes the role of the ritual and its prayers in integrating the pilgrim into the larger Muslim community and the larger world under divine dominion, as mediated by Husayn, whose life and death sum up the values and aspirations of believers. Addressing Husayn, the pilgrim prays:

> I testify that you are the purity of the pure and pure of purity. Through you, the land is pure. The earth where you are is pure and your sanctuary is pure. I testify that you ordered and called for justice, and that you are the

> vengeance of God on His earth so that He may arouse the feelings of all His creation because of you. The blessings of God be with your spirit and your body. You are the sincere one, the truthful one and confirmer of truth. May God destroy those who destroy you with their hands and tongues.[40]

Originally centered on Husayn, the ritual has gradually broadened to include the whole family of imams and all their fellow martyrs. When Shi'i pilgrims visit the tombs of other imams, such as that of the eighth imam, Riza, at Mashhad, they keep the image and story of Husayn in mind.

An example of the enduring popularity of the pilgrim manual is the *Treasury of Death Anniversaries* (*Makhzan-i a'ras*) of an eighteenth-century Indian Sufi named Muhammad Najib Qadiri. Ziyara typically takes place in the context of the *'urs*, literally, the "wedding," commemorating the death of a holy person whose soul is thus married to God. Ritualizing the mystical marriage of a Friend of God ordinarily occurs on a date believed the anniversary of the holy person's death. Ceremonies include the travel to the tomb, circumambulation, and prayer for intercession. This work discusses proper timing and ritual for visitation. For example, upon entering the tomb the pilgrim circumambulates it either three or seven times. After bowing low to the foot of the grave, the pilgrim stands to the right of the grave and says, "Peace be unto you, people of 'There is no god but God.'" After scattering roses or other floral decorations on the tomb, the pilgrim, either sitting or standing, recites a series of texts from the Qur'an. These include the *Fatiha* (the first sura) and the Verse of the Throne, followed by Suras 99 and 102 said once each, and Sura 112 recited either seven or ten times. Ziyara is especially efficacious on Friday, and it is better to visit in the morning than later in the day.[41]

In this case, as in virtually all matters surrounding the practice of ziyara, the pivotal theological issue is intercession. Islamic tradition has often debated two related questions: whether anyone can intercede with God for the individual believer; and, if so, who can intercede and to what degree. Much discussion hinges on the interpretation of the clause in the Verse of the Throne that says, "[N]one can intercede with Him except by His permission" (Q 2:255). The issue has been debated throughout the history of Islamic thought. On one end of the spectrum one finds a tendency to reject (exemplified by the Wahhabi movement of pre-modern Arabia) any belief or practice that might tend to raise a human being above merely human status: hence, no intercession is possible. That position presumes that God clearly has not given anyone such permission. Every individual faces God alone at the final accounting. On the other end, popular practice has endowed many Friends of God with the power to put in a good word with the Almighty and perhaps produce thereby a miraculous answer to prayer. Somewhere in the middle is the acceptance of some basic intercessory capability on the part of Muhammad alone but only at judgment and only for the most sincerely repentant. Both these last positions assume, for practical purposes, that the sacred text would not have mentioned permission at all if it was not an actual possibility. On balance, however, the tradition strongly discourages the hope of a deathbed conversion.[42]

One famous annual but not strictly canonical observance occurs in still traditional enclaves of Twelver Shi'i Muslims. During the first ten days of the first lunar month, Muharram, Shi'ites commemorate the death of Muhammad's grandson Husayn at Karbala. A climactic event in that commemoration is the *ta'ziya*, a play depicting the sufferings of pre-Islamic prophets and reenacting Husayn's martyrdom. Husayn thus stands in a long line of holy persons who have experienced rejection—and much worse—at the hands of their unbelieving people. But, as the text of the play emphasizes in many ways, their suffering redeems all who are well disposed, and in the end their forgiveness softens the hardest of hearts. In Husayn's case, the martyr intercedes even for his murderer, the vile Shimr, an agent of the tyrannical Yazid.

At the end of one version of the story, Muhammad announces to Husayn at resurrection time, that God has told the Prophet to give Husayn the key of intercession. Muhammad then instructs Husayn to rescue from hellfire all who have ever shed a tear for this martyr or helped his cause or performed pilgrimage to his shrine or composed a poetic lamentation for him. Husayn responds by addressing all sinners: "O my friends, be relieved from grief, and come along with me to the mansions of the blest. Sorrow has passed away, it is now time for joy and rest." As they throng into Paradise, the grateful sinners sing out, "God be praised! by Husayn's grace we are made happy, and by his favor we are delivered from destruction. By Husayn's loving-kindness is our path decked with roses and flowers. We were thorns and thistles, but are now made cedars owing to his merciful intercession."[43]

Sermons for Every Occasion

Sermons preached for special occasions outside the formal midday Friday prayer in the mosque share the same basic form as the Friday khutba. Except for the relationship between theme and special occasion, one can rarely discern an obvious difference between liturgical and devotional preaching.

A separate discussion of the noncanonical sermon emphasizes the importance of ritual context in understanding the meaning of the address, whatever its theme.

Very often the theme of a sermon preached on Friday is determined by that day's proximity to a special but noncanonical commemoration, such as that of Muhammad's birthday or his Night Journey and Ascension as discussed earlier. Some examples of issues that preachers have treated during the month of Rajab are as follows: First, was Muhammad's Night Journey and Ascension a spiritual and physical experience, or solely a spiritual one? That is, did God transport Muhammad bodily on this journey, or did the Prophet experience the journey inwardly? Second, why did Muhammad descend to Jerusalem rather than directly to Mecca? This is not idle theological speculation; one can readily understand the political significance of interpreting these issues in the late twentieth-century Middle East. Muhammad's relationship to Jerusalem is crucial to a religious legitimation of Palestine as an Islamic land.[44]

Another variety of material stands functionally midway between the mosque address and the forms dedicated to telling stories of holy persons. A class of public figures whose profession was either to give moral exhortation (the *wu"az*, "professional exporters") or to tell stories (the *qussas*, "professional raconteurs") were influential across the Middle East, especially during medieval times. Theirs was the quasi-official task of religious education of the unlettered masses. Like their colleagues, the professional Qur'an reciters, these itinerant preachers were sometimes targeted for harsh criticism by religious officials, the *'ulama'*, those more rigorously trained in the Islamic traditional sciences (exegesis, hadith, and jurisprudence). As a result, a number of important documents recommended that these preachers cultivate strict personal discipline to avoid the pitfalls of arrogance and pride that can attend celebrity status.

The twelfth-century theologian Ibn al-Jawzi wrote *The Book of Professional Storytellers* (*Kitab al-qussas wa 'l-mudhakkirin*) as a manual for young preachers. He traces the origins of popular preaching to the Sunna, Muhammad's example. Ibn al-Jawzi identifies the practice as a legitimate religious science and extols its potential for good, granted that one engages in it responsibly. Both Ibn al-Jawzi and Abu Hamid al-Ghazali are concerned at least as much with the requisite interior dispositions as with the external manifestations. (The two are not in agreement on all matters, however, and Ibn al-Jawzi severely criticizes Ghazali for basing his work on too many unsound hadiths.)

Ibn al-Jawzi defines the three functions of public preaching: the narration and interpretation of stories of the past (*qisas*); reminding (*tadhkir*) people "of the blessing God has bestowed upon them, urging them to render thanks"; and "instilling fear that softens the heart" (*wa'z*). This final element is related to a formal component of the Friday sermon, namely, the segment devoted to moral exhortation (maw'iza). Ibn al-Jawzi holds practitioners to the strictest discipline, insisting that preaching "is to be carried out in accordance with the principles of asceticism by means of a woolen garment, an emaciated body, the consuming of small quantities of food, thus distracting the mind away from the body and preoccupying it with the excellences of the spirit."[45] In other words, those who hold so lofty a responsibility need to guard against anything that might tempt them to become absorbed in themselves and forget their ultimate purpose. For virtually every deep human need, popular Islamic rituals provide a response that helps Muslims to celebrate, grieve, commemorate, and acknowledge their feelings and convictions. These rituals occur within a temporal and spatial context that is exemplified in Islamic art and architecture.

Art and Architecture

In everyday life it is unlikely that Muslims across the globe often make the tidy distinction between prescribed and popular practices. The distinction is useful as an organizational device, however, and is based on significant differences suggested in the literary and visual sources themselves. In architecture the primary function of various kinds of structures is either funerary or reliquary. Funerary architecture is much more common than reliquary, but the association of sacred relics with holy places deserves a mention here. For example, a nineteenth-century dervish in the Ottoman Turkish city of Erzincan was in charge of the construction of a new facility. He reports how his shaykh traveled to Istanbul and returned with a hair of the Prophet's beard to be installed there. The dervish writes:

> In the end the dergah [Sufi meeting place] appeared, by the favor of the Prophet, like a sun of truth. . . . For the hair from the beard of the Prophet a place was made like a little dome with glass sides, in the center of the mosque on the ceiling; and the hair was put in a coffer made of iron and placed in its special place in the dome with a big long ladder. When it became necessary to take it down, this poor soul would put the ladder in place, ascend, open the coffer with two keys, take the inner case on my head and bring it down. In the same way, I would take it back up and put it in its place. On this account, I give special thanks and praise to God that I have repeatedly taken the case containing the blessed whisker of our Lord the Most Gracious Beloved, on whom God grant blessing and peace, on my head and transported it down and up.

The newly completed dergah opened on 12 Rabiʿu 'l-Awwal, Muhammad's birthday, and the author describes the festivities at some length.[46]

By far the most numerous sacred places are the graves of Friends of God. Because of their associations with persons of great spiritual power (*baraka*), burial sites often take on the secondary function of shrine. Some become shrines immediately, some do so years later. There is a de facto, though not officially published, hierarchy of such holy places. The more important the person, generally, the grander and the better maintained the monument. For Shiʿi Muslims the most important are the tombs of the martyr-imams and members of their families. The most famous are the tomb of Riza, the eighth imam, in Mashhad, Iran, and shrines associated with ʿAli and his son Husayn at Najaf and Karbala in Iraq. These elaborately decorated structures function as sanctuaries within which devotees can express their grief over the loss of the holy ones; many leave behind as a type of votive offering some symbol of their deepest needs and prayers. Around the tomb of Imam Riza, for example, is a silver framework on which pilgrims tie small ribbons or pieces of paper. More recently, devotees have displayed similar signs of piety at the tomb of Ayatollah Khomeini.[47]

In theory Sunni Islam does not allow for the cultivation of sacred sites built around mere mortals. According to some regional traditions, in fact, the ideal is to bury the deceased, wrapped in a simple shroud, in an unostentatious grave. The only structural requirement is that "bodies are buried in a recumbent posture at right angles to the *qibla* in such a way that they would face Mecca if turned on their side."[48] But in actual practice, Sunni Muslims, too, have historically developed and attended to hundreds of such holy places throughout the Islamic world. To these sites pilgrims make ziyara for special observances of events in the holy person's life, as well as for the purpose of requesting restored health, success in marriage or employment, and fertility. A tomb of an important Friend of God has often formed the nucleus of an extensive necropolis.[49] Just as often, the revered person's grave becomes a starting point for the foundation of a religious institution or complex, such as a madrasa or residential facility for members of a religious fraternity.

In Ottoman Turkey numerous sites dedicated to the rituals and residences of members of dervish orders have also included a prominent funerary and commemorative function. The founder of the organization (tariqa), and often the spiritual leader's successors as well, are buried within the structure, either in a separate room or in a space continuous with that used for communal prayer rites. In the former case, visual communication between the

spaces occurs through windows through which dervishes can cast a glance into the funerary chamber. In addition, windows often open into the shrine room from the street, so that passersby can make a visitation without actually entering the burial place.

Visitation of holy persons' tombs as practiced in connection with dervish orders in Turkey has followed much the same etiquette as that observed by individuals meeting with a living shaykh or other member of the order. Approaching only on foot as a sign of respect and self-effacement, the pilgrim crosses the threshold, right foot first, after making gestures of homage and requesting the dead person's permission to enter. A visitor then stands at the foot of the tomb before circumambulating it three times, and departs by backing out of the space and repeating the various gestures of respect observed on entering. Common motives for such veneration include requests for favors such as healing or intercession, or sanctifying individual rites of passage such as circumcision or marriage. Votive offerings have spanned a wide range, from renovation of the tomb to sacrifice of various animals whose meat is then given to the needy to supplying necessary furnishings such as prayer carpets or lanterns to small gifts of oil for the shrine's lamps. Baha Tanman, speaking of Turkish practices, concludes that "the basic source of the structural relation between tomb and tekke [dervish residence] is to be sought in the human instinct, the desire common to members of every society to be close to their loved ones and to perpetuate this proximity through their spiritual presence beyond the tomb. . . . In the Islamic Sufi tradition, this tendency merged with belief in the power of the saints to intercede with God on behalf of their followers and with the belief in their power to bestow graces and favors."[50]

Monumental funerary architecture created by and for Muslims presents an immediate religious problem. It appears to violate flagrantly an early ban on all structures over burial places, as expressed in the hadith literature. Still, one has to account for the phenomenon in religious terms, since the people who have created the works claim to have done so, at least in part, for religious reasons. Significantly, Islamic tombs seem to function religiously as images of Paradise and as shrines.

Building a roof over a tomb evokes the paradisiacal attribute of shade, alluded to by Ghazali in a hadith cited earlier; tomb towers and lofty domes also suggest elevation from earthly limitations. In some instances the shapes employed suggest further symbolic associations. The fluted tile drum and conical vault over the tomb of Rumi (see Fig. 12), for example, is a visual allusion to reeds that grow in a stream bed. Rumi calls the soul a

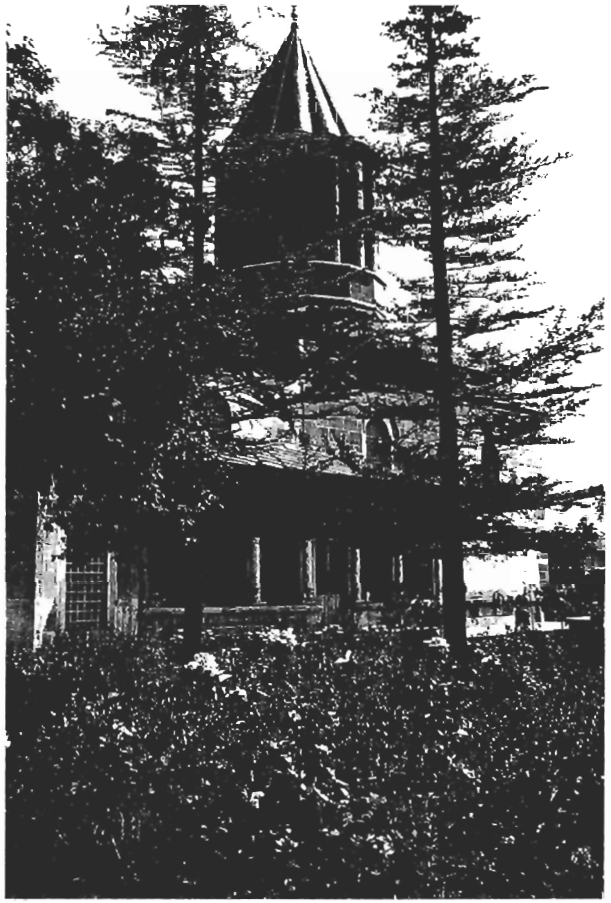

Figure 12. Tomb of Jalal ad-Din Rumi (thirteenth century), Konya, Turkey. Note the fluted tile of the drum and conical vault. The grave markers shown in Figure 33 are located in the same building, just to the left of the domed chamber.

reed flute that longs to return to its original home, whence it has been plucked. Some textual sources link various building plans (square or cylindrical with protruding angles as in a multipointed star, for example, or polygonal shapes) directly with imagery of Paradise and firmament. In some instances the shapes are particularly significant by virtue of the numbers of sides, as in eight- or twelve-sided forms with their allusions to multilevel celestial gardens (called the eight paradises) and zodiacal imagery. As for more explicit symbolism, the use of mihrablike shapes as doorways suggests a deliberate reference to the deceased's transition to another realm or

plane of existence; and literary sources link various dome designs (after which entire structures take their names—*gunbad, qubba, turba*) with images of Paradise and the heavens. Finally, the choice and location of inscriptions, especially of texts from the Qur'an, further reinforces the religious interpretation of the tomb as an image of Paradise.[51] (See also Figs. 24, 26, and 31.)

In addition to these architectural forms, Muslim artsts have developed many types of smaller items. Funerary art spans a range of objects and ornamental themes meant to mediate the presence and blessing of the saintly figure as well as to decorate. In Turkey, for example, the tomb of a Sufi *pir* ("elder"; hence, "spiritual guide") or a former shaykh often bears various insignia of the orders, such as distinctive headgear; panels showing the names of the great figures along with those of Muhammad and the first four caliphs; and images of the order's banner. Qur'anic texts on life's transience and images of Mecca and Medina also appear in these settings. So do scriptographs (in which calligraphy forms the outline of the face of some holy personage) and pictographs (in which calligraphy forms the outline of an animal, plant or object) with the individual's name either incorporated into his headgear or above it. Other visual embellishments include panels or pictures of dervish equipment such as the begging bowl, staff, ax, or mace. Sometimes actual objects believed to have belonged to the deceased person, such as a mantle or rosary, are placed on the cenotaph (the coffin-shaped empty marker located above the actual grave).[52] (See Fig. 33.)

Though Shi'i Muslims make up only a small proportion of the global community of Islam, they have produced a great deal of visual source material related to commemoration of the saintly departed. A unique type of architectural decoration has developed in more recent times in association with the Shi'i observance of Husayn's martyrdom. For centuries a censure of public depictions of the scenes of the protomartyr's story relegated illustration to a variety of folk art called Karbala painting. During the nineteenth century, Iranians began to create narrative murals on the facades of the structures (sg., *takiya*) in which they reenacted the tragedy of Karbala, site of Husayn's martyrdom.[53]

On a smaller scale, processional models of the tomb-shrines of Shi'i imams have been a standard ritual device in communal observances in various Muslim countries. When one cannot circumambulate the actual shrine, a miniature model allows celebrants to carry the holy place among themselves. Vernon Schubel describes the Pakistani use of replicas of tombs called *rowza* or, in the case of Husayn, *ta'ziya* (the same term used to refer to the plays commemorating the imam's martyrdom). These models are displayed

in the visitation house (*ziyaratkhana*), so that people who visit that building can make a surrogate pilgrimage to the martyr's tomb by visiting the miniature of it. The models are made from a variety of materials, from paper and wood to more permanent and expensive materials. Those of lesser quality are destroyed after the observances of the month Muharram, by being thrown into the sea or buried; the better constructed ones are either kept in their visitation places year round or brought out once a year for procession.[54] (See Fig. 13.)

One final type of funerary object deserves mention here, the decorative burial container called the *tabut*. An example is the large, exquisitely carved wooden box rediscovered in the Cairene Mosque of Husayn in 1939. It dates from the later years of the Fatimids, an Isma'ili Shi'i dynasty during whose regime the head of the martyr Husayn was brought to Cairo and enshrined there. The tabut's extensive Qur'anic inscriptions make it a fine exemplar of work by Isma'ili Shi'i artists. The texts that adorn it refer subtly and indirectly to certain central Shi'i tenets, including several that are distinctively Isma'ili. For example, several references to "you people of the house" recall the Shi'i emphasis on the family of the Prophet as uniquely favored. Another text, revealed to Muhammad while 'Ali was praying, suggests to Shi'i Muslims proof that 'Ali was indeed the Prophet's legitimate successor: "Your friend [*wali*] is only God, and His Messenger, and the believers who perform the prayer" (Q 5:55). References to the seven days of creation, along with the appearance of a decorative seven-pointed star, one can associate specifically with Isma'ili thought; the same may be said of several prominent references to *jihad*, one of the Seven Pillars of Isma'ili teaching. The seven include fasting, pilgrimage to Mecca, almsgiving, and daily ritual prayer, in common with Sunni Muslims. Isma'ilis add devotion to the imams (*walaya*), ritual purity (*tahara*), and *jihad*.[55]

Pilgrimage manuals of the sort discussed earlier often include sacred sites that are the goal of noncanonical pilgrimage. Illustrated books of this kind come from all over the Islamic world. Travelers visit the holy places out of personal piety, or because such visitations have either become virtually inseparable from the major pilgrimage to Mecca, or because local tradition recommends it. Images include stylized plans of the Prophet's mosque in Medina, where his tomb is located, and of the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem, the goal of Muhammad's Night Journey and the place from which tradition says he ascended to heaven.

As suggested earlier, these illustrated works function ostensibly as guidebooks for actual travel, but their images also take the viewer to the holy places in memory or imagination. A still more symbolic function may be

Figure 13. Processional models of tombs of Shi'i martyrs (1980s), Rawalpindi, Pakistan. Photograph by David Edwards.

that of a cosmological atlas, locating all the major sanctuaries of divine power symbolically on a map of the spiritual universe. Schematized drawings, both in plan and elevation, of the "Garden" of Medina, site of Muhammad's tomb and that of his daughter Fatima, have apparently served as particularly important meditative devices, allowing the reader of the *Guidebook to Blessings* to travel inwardly.[56]

Illustrated manuscripts, whose cost renders them almost exclusively royal or elite, rarely include images of more popular ritual practices. However, folksy pictures of Buraq, the winged quadruped upon which Muhammad is said to have made his Night Journey and Ascension, are popular in many parts of the world. These depictions of the human-headed creature function symbolically as reminders of a key event in Muhammad's life, commemorated on 27 Rajab, the seventh lunar month. They also serve as talismanic protection; festooning vehicles from huge trucks to pedicabs, the Prophet-bearer's image protects driver and cargo.

Islamic popular iconography covers a broad range of themes in virtually all the major artistic media. With one or two notable exceptions, such as images associated with Husayn's martyrdom, most art produced in connection with noncanonical ritual functions as symbol rather than narrative. Depictions of objects, sometimes quite stylized and abstract, such as the

Prophet's sandal or Buraq, serve as reminders of the whole story of a sacred person or event. But often that very symbolic power also invests images with an almost magical quality that endears them particularly to millions of townspeople and villagers whose world, despite the corrective measures of teachers of official Islam, remains inhabited and animated by countless spiritual forces with which these folk must contend to survive. Imagery of the prophets and Friends of God figures prominently in that struggle.

Even a cursory glance at the rich devotional life of Muslims quickly dispels any impression that Islam is a dry, anemic tradition. The varied sentiments expressed in prayers and in countless evocative and charming images reveal the vividness and vitality of Islamic devotion.