

MECCA AND OTHER COSMOLOGICAL CENTRES IN THE SUFI UNIVERSE

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Cosmological centres are places where different levels of cosmic reality are said to converge and become accessible to the human being. In the Sufi universe, Mecca is the principal place of convergence, but others exist, too, including Medina and Jerusalem. This chapter demonstrates that such places have been ritually replicated in this universe, most especially Mecca.

When it comes to cosmological centres, any given culture can have a number of them without that fact presenting a contradiction or paradox. As explained by Mircea Eliade and Lawrence Sullivan in *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, “[t]he center of the world is a locus in mythic geography, a symbolic portrayal of the real, known, and essential aspects of the world, rather than a detached and objective reckoning of abstract space” (Eliade and Sullivan, 1501).¹ Islamic culture is no exception to this phenomenon, with the appellation ‘navel of the world’ (*surrat al-arḍ*) most commonly applied to Baghdad, Jerusalem and Mecca, and occasionally Isfahan, in medieval geographical literature.² In the same literature, a cognate appellation, ‘the

¹ Cf. Eliade, *Symbolism*, 39.

² For Baghdad, Isfahan, and Jerusalem, see Cooperson, 100-1; Livne-Kafri, Jerusalem, 47; Antrim, 157 n. 36; and Olsson, 492-5. For Mecca, see Wensinck,

mother of towns' (*umm al-qurā*), was additionally applied to cities such as Merv and Damascus, and 'the mother of the world' (*umm al-dunyā*) was applied to Cairo (Livne-Kafri, Jerusalem, 50).³

Notwithstanding this relative abundance of cities honorifically ascribed a cosmically progenitive function in Islamic culture, an ascription hardly free of ideological motivation (Lassner, 180-1),⁴ three cities reign soteriologically and cosmologically supreme in the Sunni oecumene: Mecca, Medina, and Jerusalem.⁵ Not only does the Qur'ān exalt them, either directly by way of honorific titles or indirectly by linking them to the life of the Prophet or an act of divine intervention,⁶ but additionally a prophetic hadith permits pilgrimage

36. Damascus (or perhaps just its mosque) is called 'navel of the world' by the Umayyad poet, al-Nābigha al-Shaybānī (d. ca. 126/744). See Rabbat, *Dialogic*, 90.

³ With reference to Merv and Damascus, note Livne-Kafri's sensibly restrictive interpretation of the appellation (which is Qur'ānic Qur'ānic -- see below), in Livne-Kafri, Jerusalem, 50 n. 25.

⁴ Cf. Gelder, *passim*.

⁵ In the Shi'i oecumene, a fourth city belongs: Kufa. See Friedman, *Kūfa*, esp. 215-17. Here is not the place to question and investigate von Grunebaum's statement that 'cosmological holiness [is] possessed by Mecca and Jerusalem, but [...] Medina is entirely devoid [of it].' Grunebaum, 31. To this assertion, one might add that Medina is not, to my knowledge, accorded the status of 'world navel' in the aforementioned geographical literature. See below for further discussion of von Grunebaum's statement.

⁶ Mecca, e.g., is called *umm al-qurā*, 'the mother of towns' (Q 6:92, 42:7); Medina is linked to the Prophet's life (e.g. Q 9:101, 120); and as the capital of the Holy Land (*al-arḍ al-muqaddasa*) (Q 5:21), Jerusalem is linked to an act of divine

to them alone.⁷ The hadith reads: ‘You shall only set out for three mosques: The Sacred Mosque (in Mecca), my mosque (in Medina) and al-Aqṣā mosque (in Jerusalem)’ (Kister, *You*, 173).

Of the three pilgrimage destinations given in this hadith, one might have supposed that Mecca would be ranked first in importance, given the location of the Ka‘ba there. However, evidence shows that Medina was occasionally valued above it (Kister, *Sanctity*, 40).⁸ Equally, one might have supposed that Jerusalem would be third in importance, given that the Prophet’s tomb lies in Medina; but again evidence refutes this, showing instead Medina and Jerusalem regularly vying for second place (Kister, *You*, 180-6; Kister, *Sanctity*, 60-2). In Sufism, however, the question of primacy regarding these three destinations is a bit different; in fact, as this chapter will argue, in Sufism the question is moot. Without disputing the fact that all three sites are prime centres of Sufism, a topic well covered by others (Renard, 187-212),⁹ the chapter will argue that the de facto cosmological centre of the Sufi universe is Mecca. This is because what originally made Mecca this cosmological centre

intervention, namely, ‘the land *blessed* by Us’ (*al-arḍ allāti bāraknā fīhā*) (Q 21:71) (my emphasis).

⁷ The fact that Islamic pilgrimage comprises much more than these three destinations is well treated in Arjana, *passim*.

⁸ Cf. Lazarus-Yafeh, 294-5. On the societal drive to rank cities in terms of their spiritual virtues, see Grunebaum, 31.

⁹ Because Renard covers Jerusalem less fully than Mecca and Medina, the following is also recommended: Goitein, *Sanctity*, esp. 142 ff. For Mecca in specific, see also Ohlander, 34-49.

means that it has the potential to be ritually replicated elsewhere and thus to predominate numerically over the other two centres.

The argument I am proposing in this chapter is not that in Sufism there is no ranking of cities and sites according to their perceived spiritual degree. Well known, for example, is the following passage from Ibn ‘Arabī (d. 638/1240), in which we find the mystic doing exactly that:

One of the conditions for the person who knows through direct vision, who is master of the stages and modes of witnessing the unseen spiritual realities, is that he is aware that places (*amkina*) have an influence on sensitive hearts. If the heart finds itself in any place (*ayy mawḍi‘*), its intensity of spiritual presence (*wujūd*) is the most general (*al-a‘amm*); but its intensity of spiritual presence in Mecca is more radiant and perfect (*asnā wa-atamm*). [...] What a difference there is between a city (*madīna*) most of whose buildings are the carnal passions (*shahawāt*) and a city most of whose buildings are (divine) signs and clear proofs (*al-āyāt wa-l-bayyināt*)!

(Ibn ‘Arabī, 2: 120-1; trans., Morris, 31 [modified])¹⁰

The argument, rather, is that in Sufism the cosmological importance of Mecca extensively renders the Sufi universe a patchwork of Mecca analogues: cosmological centres that ritually replicate Mecca and the cosmogony,

¹⁰ As the paragraph that follows immediately after this passage explains, Ibn ‘Arabī is neither arguing that buildings confer upon a place its spiritual degree nor that there is something inherent to places that makes them more or less virtuous. Rather, he is arguing that the spiritual intentions (*himam*) of the saints, or friends of God (*awliyā‘*) living or buried in these buildings and places are what matter. That other people did, however, argue for a place’s inherent virtue is indicated by a *fatwā* from Ibn Taymiyya (d. 728/1328) rejecting the argument. On this *fatwā*, see Katz, 162.

originating in the Ka'ba, that is said to have occurred there. Because of this extensive ritual replication, Mecca predominates in the Sufi universe.

As just noted, the argument is not intended to be exclusive. For example, given the signal importance of the Prophet to Sufism, one might have expected to find his person and tomb (*ḥujra*) in Medina playing a similar role to the Ka'ba in the Sufi universe.¹¹ In such a scenario, the cosmological centre would be Medina, specifically the tomb, and other centres would be ritual replications of it; these analogues would compete or overlap with those of Mecca. As will be adduced below, there is some evidence for this.

The argument will proceed as follows: first, an account of the Ka'ba-based cosmogony as recorded in traditions (*akhbār*) contained in early, predominantly second/ninth-century Islamic sources; second, an account of the ritual replicability of Mecca in the Sufi universe; third, an account of Medina and Jerusalem as replicable cosmological centres competing or overlapping with the replicability of Mecca; and fourth, an account of the Ka'ba as the structural basis of certain cosmological ideas in Sufism.

The argument draws on Eliade's understanding of the ritual replicability of cosmological centres. According to Eliade, the cosmogonic actions perceived by a culture to have occurred at its centre provide the model for the centre's replication elsewhere (Eliade, *World*, 24-7).¹² By way of this replication, he says, life can be lived 'always and without effort in the Centre of the World, at the heart of reality' (Eliade, *Symbolism*, 55).

¹¹. For an overview of the importance of the Prophet (and Medina) to Sufism, see Schimmel, *Mystical*, 213-27; Schimmel, *Muhammad*, 176-215; and Schöller, 367-71.

¹² See also Eliade, *Symbolism*, 51-2; and Eliade and Sullivan, 1504.

My argument does not, however, depend on Eliade's problematic distinction between sacred space, which he avers is oriented and meaningful, and profane space, which he avers is disoriented and meaningless (Eliade, *World*, 21-2).¹³ Rather, following Angelika Neuwirth, I take the view that the Qur'ān re-codified the space inherited from the pre-Islamic world, making all space meaningful space. My reasoning follows below.

Using allegedly pre-Islamic poetry as her source for pre-Islamic space, Neuwirth states:

As against the heroic attitude of man towards space as displayed in [pre-Islamic] poetry, the early qurānic revelations present earthly space as particularly inspiring of confidence. They present it as a locus of pleasure and enjoyment, as a venue for the reception of divine bounty and as a site of ethically charged social interaction. [...] Be it the image of the firm land or the image of the sea, humankind is taught to rejoice in a divinely adorned cosmos. [...] Haphazard fate and all-consuming time have ceded their power to a just divine agent. Space has regained a meaningful historical dimension.

(Neuwirth, 302-8)

In contrast to Eliade's polarised typology of space, this Qur'ānically re-codified space means, for example, that the boundaries of Mecca's *ḥaram*, or inviolable precincts, do not separate two typologically different spaces: meaningful and meaningless, or sacred and profane. Rather, the boundaries indicate the commencement of a space that is *more* meaningful than the space outside them. Certain laws and rituals must be observed in order to access, penetrate

¹³ On this distinction see, e.g., Shiner, 425-36. On the problems of the distinction with specific regard to the Islamic world, see Akkach, *Wholly*, 41-58. Key aspects of this latter article are reproduced in Akkach, *Cosmology*, 162-8.

and take reward (*ajr*) from this inviolable (*ḥarām*), more meaningful space;¹⁴ but it is not qualitatively different to the space surrounding it. It is just more divinely intense. The difference is one of degree, not kind. As noted by Samer Akkach:

The most significant challenge the Islamic tradition poses to [...] Eliade's polarised [typology of space] is the lack of polarity. [...] Medieval Arabic sources do not speak of 'sacred' sites, landscapes, and cities as distinct from other types that are 'profane,' nor do they interpret spatiality in a dualistic frame of real and unreal, structured and amorphous, significant and insignificant.

(Akkach, *Cosmology*, 164-5)¹⁵

¹⁴ Similarly, the inviolable *ḥarām* space that hadiths allege a domestic house provides depends on the observation of laws for it to be enjoyed. See, e.g., this article regarding kin and non-kin visitors and members of the household: Alshech, 276-86. The establishment of inviolability (*ḥurma*), be it of a precinct like Mecca, a mosque, a house, or a wife (also *ḥurma*), results from the execution of power. The enjoyment of the inviolability that is thereby established, results from the observance of laws and rituals. Cf. Noorani, 53.

¹⁵ Cf. Ahmed, 208-9. Akkach argues that instead of Eliade's polarised typology, medieval Muslims classified space in terms of its virtues (*faḍā'il*): 'The notion of the *virtuous* accounts for both the sacred and the profane, in that all sites and places have virtues. The intensity and significance of the virtuous, however, varies from one place to another. The variations are hierarchically ordered and are charted through a unique form of conceptual mapping of holiness that is traced by Muslims on the territories they inhabit.' Akkach, *Cosmology*, 165-6 (italics as marked in the original).

In a sound hadith, the Prophet is alleged to have said: ‘The earth has been made a mosque and means of purification for me, so wherever a man of my community is when the time for prayer comes, let him pray’ (al-Bukhārī, k. al-tayammum, bāb 1 [#335]).¹⁶ Neuwirth’s insights into the Qur’ānic re-coding of pre-Islamic space help us to make sense of this hadith; not Eliade’s typology and subsequent invocations of it, be they explicit or implicit.

Cosmogony at the Ka’ba

Recorded in some of the earliest Islamic sources are a number of traditions concerning God’s creation of the world. In these traditions, the Ka’ba, sometimes called the House (*al-Bayt*), is portrayed as Creation’s hub. Examples include: ‘He created the House two thousand years before the earth (*al-arḍ*), and from it the earth was spread out (*duḥiyat minhu*)’ (Ibn Ishāq, 73);¹⁷ ‘Two thousand years before He created the world (*al-dunyā*), the House was placed upon the water on four pillars. The earth was then spread out from under it (*min taḥtihi*)’ (al-Ṭabarī, *History*, 217 [modified]);¹⁸ ‘Forty years before God created the heavens and the earth, the Ka’ba was spume (*ghuthā*) upon the water. From it, the earth was spread out’ (al-Azraqī, 1: 66);¹⁹ and ‘Before

¹⁶ Cf. Lange, 246. Were one to gloss this hadith with reference to the foregoing discussion of Qur’ānically re-codified space, the following wording would result: ‘When the time for prayer comes, let a man of my community observe the ritual obligations for prayer. These obligations will allow him to penetrate the inviolable, *ḥarām* space of this earth-as-mosque and take the reward.’

¹⁷ Cf. Q 79:30. For additional references, see Wensinck, 18.

¹⁸ Cf. Wensinck, 42.

¹⁹ Cf. Wensinck, 18.

the creation of the heavens and the earth, when the Throne (*al-‘Arsh*) was on the water, God sent a beating wind which drove the water back and exposed on the [future] site of the House a stony mound in the form of a dome (*qubba*). From under it, God spread out the lands (*daḥā Allāh al-araḍīn min taḥtihi*). They stretched and they strained, so God staked them with mountains.²⁰ [...] The first mountain He placed on them was Abū Qubays [that overlooks Mecca]. For that reason, Mecca is called the mother of towns (*umm al-qurā*)’ (al-Azraqī, 1: 67).²¹

With reference to the stony domical mound that is mentioned in the last of these traditions and from where the earth allegedly spread and where the Ka‘ba would eventually stand, reproduced below is an undated and unsourced late medieval or pre-modern Persianate *mappa mundi* (fig. 1).²² Represented at the *mappa mundi*’s epicentre is this mound, labelled ‘Dome of the earth’ (*Qubbat al-arḍ*): the place equidistant from the four cardinal directions, the zero degree of longitude and latitude (Pellat, 297). The Ka‘ba is shown next to it.

Fig. 1 here (1 full page)

²⁰ Cf. Q 73:7.

²¹ Cf. Wensinck, 39. As noted above (n. 6), the designation *umm al-qurā* is Qur’ānic.

²² Karen Pinto thinks this map might be Ilkhanid in origin. She additionally compares it to an almost identical map in a ninth/fifteenth-century Timurid manuscript held at Heidelberg University Library: Cod. Heid. Orient. 118, ff. 258v-259r (available at <http://tinyurl.com/jqc7ntj>. Last accessed 02.12.2019). Personal communication, 27.11.2016.

Fig. 1: *Mappa mundi*, with the ‘Dome of the earth’ at the centre, the Ka‘ba next to it, and the Lighthouse of Alexandria at the perimeter. From an unidentified late medieval or pre-modern Persianate manuscript. Gouache and ink on paper. (Source: al-Mūjān, 31.)

This connection between the Ka‘ba and the Dome of the earth, which in the medieval and pre-modern periods was also called the Dome of Arīn (most probably after the ancient city of Ujjayinī in India), is underlined by the aforementioned Ibn ‘Arabī.²³ In an early work, *The Night Journey*, he says he met the source of his spiritual inspiration, the mysterious youth (*fatā*), at Arīn (Chodkiewicz, Toward, 20).²⁴ In a later work, his magnum opus *The Meccan Revelations*, he says he met him at the Ka‘ba (Ibn ‘Arabī, 1: 216; trans., Addas, 201).

With reference to the Qur’ānic epithet for Mecca, *umm al-qurā*, ‘the mother of towns’, which is also mentioned in the last of the foregoing Islamic traditions, it makes sense to consider the Creation these early traditions narrate as unfolding less from the Ka‘ba qua Creation’s hub, and more from the Ka‘ba qua Creation’s matrix.²⁵ That is because a hub denotes an impersonal object, whereas a matrix denotes a living organ, a womb. As the exegete Muqātil b. Sulaymān (d. 150/767) explains the epithet: ‘Mecca is called *umm al-qurā*, because from under the Ka‘ba the entire earth was spread out’ (Ibn

²³ On the connection between the Dome of the earth and Arīn, see Pellat, 297; Miquel, 273; and esp. Nazmi, 69-74.

²⁴ Chodkiewicz is citing from Muḥyī al-Dīn Ibn ‘Arabī, *al-Isrā ilā al-maqām al-asrā* (1948), no page number provided.

²⁵ Cf. Antrim, 37-8.

Sulaymān, 1: 359).²⁶ On this view, the world was born of the Ka'ba: a vertical – traditional – accouchement.²⁷

Although it is true that this graphic birthing image is also found in Islamic traditions regarding Jerusalem's Rock of the Temple Mount (*Ṣakhrat bayt al-Maqdis*), these traditions appear to be considerably fewer than those for the Ka'ba.²⁸ More importantly, precarious though it is to argue *ex silentio*, to the best of my knowledge, in Islamic sources none is as early.²⁹ Rather, the two

²⁶ Cf. al-Nahrawālī, 18 (lines 2-3); and the epithet's treatment in both Wensinck, 38; and Livne-Kafri, Women, 320-1.

²⁷ As also noted in Vâlsan, 221. On traditional childbirth in the medieval Arab world, see Guthrie, 157-61.

²⁸ This is not a scientific conclusion, for it was undertaken using only the computer-searchable database, *Al-Maktaba al-shāmila*. Examples of the image include the following tradition in which God addresses the Rock with the words: 'From under you I spread the earth,' which is recorded by both Abū Bakr al-Wāsiṭī (fl. 410/1020) and Ibn al-Murajjā (fl. 429-39/1038-48), as cited in Kaplony, 353 n. 2. For midrashic and earlier instances of a very similar image in Judaism (missing is the preposition, under), see Alexander, 114-16; and Koltun-Fromm, 4-6.

²⁹ Note, however, that in a specific edition of the exegesis by Muqātil b. Sulaymān, there is the following tradition: 'The Rock which is in the Temple Mount is the centre of the entire world.' Ibn Sulaymān (2002), 2: 513 n. 1 (lines 14-15); trans., Hasson, 383. Although this tradition does not reference the image of the earth spreading out from under the Rock, it could be taken to imply that the Rock was the birthplace of the world. One could, of course, say the same thing for all the aforementioned navels of the Islamic world. The tradition is

earliest recorded instances both date from the fourth/tenth century. The first comes from *The abridged book of countries* by Ibn al-Faqīh Hamadhānī (d. after 290/903) (Ibn al-Faqīh al-Hamadhānī, 97). The second comes from *The merits of Jerusalem*, a work written in 410/1020 by the preacher of the Temple Mount's Al-Aqsa Mosque, Abū Bakr al-Wāsiṭī (fl. 410/1020), but which is largely based on a lost work by al-Walīd b. Ḥammād al-Ramlī al-Zayyāt (d. 299/912) (Kaplony, 353 n. 2).³⁰ The dates of these two recorded instances mean that the Rock's cosmogonic representation as, what might lightly be termed, *matrix mundi*, comes approximately one hundred and fifty years after the Ka'ba was portrayed thus by Muqātil b. Sulaymān and effectively portrayed thus (missing is the preposition 'under') by Ibn Ishāq (d. ca. 150/767) (Ibn Ishāq, 73) and, allegedly, Abū Ḥanīfa (d. 150/767) (al-Muqaddasī, 75; trans., 69).

As a result of the cosmogony at the Ka'ba, a cosmic axis connecting the infraterrestrial, celestial, and supracelestial realms was established through the terrestrial Ka'ba, at the terrestrial Ka'ba.³¹ By way of the axis, these cosmic realms communicate.³² At the Ka'ba, their communication breaks into the terrestrial world.

This cosmic axis is spoken of in a number of hadiths and traditions

similar to one misquoted by Kister, namely, 'The Rock is the navel of the universe,' which Kister dates to the late-first/seventh century. See Kister, 1: 185. This latter tradition actually says: 'The Temple Mount is the navel of the world.' See Ibn al-Faqīh al-Hamadhānī, 94 (line 4).

³⁰ On al-Wāsiṭī and the dating of his text, see Hasson, 1: 172. On the relationship between al-Wāsiṭī and al-Ramlī al-Zayyāt, see Mourad, 88ff.

³¹ Cf. Akkach, *Cosmology*, 183, whence the terms for these realms come.

³² Cf. Eliade and Sullivan, 1501.

(Wensinck, *passim*). For present purposes, the most telling of these reports is the following one, because it or a variant of it is directly referenced by Ibn ‘Arabī and plausibly referenced by the Ottoman Sufi, İbrahim Hakkı (d. 1194/1780), in his diagram of the cosmos, a later reproduction of which is shown below (fig. 2):

The Apostle of God said: ‘This House is one of fifteen, seven in the heavens up to the Throne and seven up to the limits of the lowest earth. The highest situated one, which is near the Throne, is the Frequented House (*al-Bayt al-Ma‘mūr*). Every one of these Houses has an inviolable precinct (*ḥaram*), like the inviolable precinct of this House. If anyone of them fell down, the rest would fall down, one upon the other, to the limits of the lowest earth.’

(Al-Azraqī, 1: 71; trans., Wensinck, 51-2 [modified])³³

Fig. 2 here (1 full page)

Fig. 2: Diagram of the Islamic cosmos with the Ka‘ba at the centre. From a copy of *The book of gnosis* (*Ma‘rifetnāme*) by the Ottoman Sufi, İbrahim Hakkı (d. 1194/1780), dated 1235/1820. Gold, gouache, and ink on paper; 8.5 x 18.5cm. Courtesy: The British Library. MS Or. 12964, fol. 23v.

Concerning the diagram, the explanation for how it might plausibly reference the foregoing cosmic axis hadith depends on the oddly distorted, non-cuboidal shape of the clearly labelled terrestrial Ka‘ba at the centre of it.³⁴ The explanation is that, because of the diagram maker’s decision to show cosmological elements of the uppermost terrestrial realm, for example, Mount

³³ Ibn ‘Arabī’s references a variant of it here: Ibn ‘Arabī, 2: 258.

³⁴ This diagram has recently been analysed in Savage-Smith, 234-8, its legends translated in Savage-Smith, 281-2.

Qāf, as well as the two-dimensional limitations of his medium, he was unable to show the other fourteen Houses directly above and below the Ka'ba of Mecca. He thus represented, distortedly, just the eighth of these Houses, the middle one, the Ka'ba of Mecca, and thereby he effectively represented them all.

Mecca replicas

If Mecca is a cosmological centre in Eliade's sense of the term, then we should expect the cosmogonic actions that first established it as this centre to form the model that is ritually replicated in the formation of other cosmological centres in the Islamic world. In the preceding section, we saw that those actions pertained exclusively to the Ka'ba, such that in looking for Mecca replicas in the Sufi universe, we should be looking for the ritual replication of the Ka'ba. To reduce Mecca to the Ka'ba in this *pars pro toto* manner is not an interpretive violation of Mecca; for early Islamic traditions allege that the precincts of Mecca either came into existence or took definition only because of the presence of the Ka'ba. They recount how at the time of Adam, the celestial Ka'ba, or Frequented House, temporarily descended to where the terrestrial Ka'ba would one day stand. This descent led to the precincts taking either definition or existence (al-Azraqī, 1: 80-1; al-Fākihī, 2: 274-6; al-Ṭabarī, *Qirā*, 653).³⁵

In two interpretive, predominantly ahistorical essays concerning in part the correspondences between the pilgrimage to Mecca, or Hajj, and pilgrimages in general (sing. *ziyāra*) to saints' (sing. *walī*) tombs across the Islamic world, Catherine Mayeur-Jaouen draws the following equivalences

³⁵ Most of these traditions are discussed in Bin Dehaish, 23-5.

between the two types of pilgrimage. She sees the cenotaph within the tomb as referencing the Ka'ba; its cloth cover as referencing the robe, or *kiswa* of the Ka'ba; and the pilgrims' circling and touching of it as referencing the *ṭawāf*, or the ritual circling and, crowds permitting, touching of the Ka'ba (Mayeur-Jaouen, *Tombeau*, 140-1, 145; Mayeur-Jaouen, *Identité*, 197). In her view – and that of others, both Muslims and non-Muslims alike (Meri, 134-7; Iványi, 78-92) – the *ziyāra* is a substitute for the Hajj, and an imitation of it. In this imitation, she argues, the tomb substitutes for the Ka'ba, with which it is in (cosmic) communication. This communication, she continues, explains why the site of the tomb, the pilgrimage centre itself, is often called a 'second Mecca' and sometimes blessed with a spring said to be linked to Mecca's spring, Zamzam (Mayeur-Jaouen, *Identité*, 197-8).³⁶

Mayeur-Jaouen's interpretation is far reaching, primarily because it is not specific to Sufism but concerns visits to saints' tombs in general, which may or may not be done in the name of Sufism.³⁷ It is, however, based on a limited number of sources. Does that fact undermine it? At least with regard to Sufism, in the account of Sufi-specific, tomb-based Ka'ba replicas that shortly follows below, her interpretation will be seen to be amply corroborated.³⁸

A second reason her interpretation is far reaching is because it

³⁶ She also says the cenotaph is sometimes taken by 'certain pilgrims' as the Prophet's tomb, but without citing evidence for this. See Mayeur-Jaouen, *Identité*, 199.

³⁷ See, e.g., Mayeur-Jaouen, *Identité*, 195.

³⁸ Simultaneously, the argument that the Ka'ba was either rarely or never copied will be refuted. On this art historical argument, see Rabbat, *Beginning*, 58; and Hillenbrand, 8.

undermines the rather unimaginative academic commonplace that views the phenomenon of Ka'ba substitutes as something specific to the peripheries of the Islamic world: regions in which making the official Hajj to the official Ka'ba is the most arduous because of the distance to be traversed.

Interestingly, Mayeur-Jaouen's interpretation is advanced without reference to Eliade's notion of the replicability of cosmological centres. Also, although she talks of sacred space and thereby invokes, implicitly but unavoidably, Eliade's aforementioned typology, she argues that the ultimate model for *all* this sacred space is the Ka'ba and Mecca more generally (Mayeur-Jaouen, *Tombeau*, 145).³⁹ Her argument is thus in keeping with the above-cited cosmogonic traditions in which the Islamic world, including its space, unfolded from the Ka'ba.

In the following account of Sufi-specific, tomb-based Ka'ba substitutes that the sources make clear have been taken as Ka'bas (e.g., by calling them 'the Ka'ba of so-and-so a region'), no attempt is made to separate substitutes that the sources specify as resembling the Ka'ba from substitutes where no such specification is made. This decision is based on the fact that what counts as architectural resemblance in medieval and pre-modern Islamic culture is not necessarily what modern science counts as resemblance (Bloom, 21-8; Flood, 45-63).⁴⁰ Lastly, the account is not intended to be exhaustive.

³⁹ On spatial practices that are modelled on Meccan rituals other than the circumambulation of the Ka'ba, see Goitein, *Sanctity*, 137; and especially Kister, *Concessions*, 31-3.

⁴⁰ This fact is nicely illustrated by an anecdote concerning Ibn Masarra (d. 319/931), the Andalusian philosopher and mystic, who allegedly reproduced in his house the room of one of the Prophet's wives on the basis of hand

Commencing with medieval and pre-modern Central Asia, as this region is expressly mentioned by Mayeur-Jaouen, a number of Ka'ba substitutes, or ritually realised replicas, are said to have existed, some of them built long after the saint they commemorate had died. These substitutes include the tombs of Muḥammad Bashārā (fl. 3rd/9th C. ?) (Gross, 317); Yūsuf Hamadhānī (d. 535/1140); Aḥmad Yasawī (d. 562/1166), eponym of the Yasawiyya order; Ḥakīm Atā (fl. early 7th/13th C.), a disciple of Aḥmad Yasawī; and Bahā' al-Dīn Naqshband (d. 791/1389), eponym of the Naqshbandi order. Visits to the last four of these tombs involved Hajj-derived rituals, including the donning of the pilgrimage garb (*iḥrām*) at Aḥmad Yasawī's tomb (Tyson, 26; Subtelny, *Timurids*, 194; Zarcone, 262-8).⁴¹

At three more Central Asian sites, this trend continued into the twentieth century. The first of these three sites, the tomb of Najm al-Din Kubrā (d. 618/1221), eponym of the Kubrawiyya order, was named 'a second Mecca' by the president of Turkmenistan, Saparmurat Niyazov (d. 1427/2006); about it pilgrims circumambulate (O'Dell, 120; Petersen, 976).⁴² At the second of these sites, in a district north of the city of Turkistan, Kazakhstan, a scaled-down but otherwise formal Ka'ba copy (as photographs show) was built in 1994 in memory of the reputed ancestor of the Khwājas of Khurasan (Zarcone, 268-9, 277).⁴³ Approximately forty-five kilometres north of Turkistan is the third site: the shrine

measurements he had made of it when visiting Medina. See Fierro, 129-30.

⁴¹ I gratefully acknowledge Péter Nagy for bringing both Zarcone's and Iványi's texts to my attention.

⁴² O'Dell is citing from Saparmyrat Turkmenbashy, *Rukhnama. Reflections on the spiritual values of the Turkmen* (2005), 26.

⁴³ No mention is made of Hajj-derived rituals occurring there.

of one Ukasha-ata (perhaps originally 'Ukāsha-ata), an otherwise unknown legendary, proselytising Arab warrior who was decapitated here, his head falling through a crack in the earth and ending up in Zamzam, with an offshoot of Zamzam simultaneously springing up at the crack. According to Azim Malikov, this spring and other Islamic features of the circumambulated shrine indicate that it has been 'transformed into Ka'ba' (Malikov, 164). The site is not, however, specific to Sufism.

Moving westwards, at Alinja (Alincak) in Iranian Azerbaijan, Faḍl Allāh Astarābādī (d. 796/1394), the founder of a mystical community known in external sources as the Ḥurūfiyya, was buried within a shrine that was called the 'true Ka'ba' (*Ka'ba-yi ḥaqīqī*). About the tomb devotees circumambulated and performed other Hajj-derived rituals, including, once more, the donning of the pilgrimage garb (Bashir, Enshrining, 294-5; Bashir, *Fazlallah*, 87-8). South of Alinja, at Ardabīl, the tomb the Ṣafawiyya order's eponym, Shaykh Ṣafī al-Dīn (d. 735/1334), is called in a tenth/sixteenth-century source the Ka'ba and a site for the *ṭawāf* (Rizvi, 219 n. 78).⁴⁴

Further west, at Umm 'Ubayda in Iraq, the mausoleum of Aḥmad Rifā'ī (d. 578/1182) is alleged to have been taken as a Ka'ba substitute, at least at some point in its history (Post, 44). Also in Iraq, at the town of Zarīrān, the tomb of Shaykh 'Alī b. al-Hītī (d. 564/1168) was apparently taken as a Hajj destination, at least during the final decades of the sixth/twelfth century and the first decades of seventh/thirteenth century. It was especially used this way when the Meccan Hajj was in progress (Ibn al-Mustawfī, 1: 54).

Much further west, in The Gambia, the anthropologist Marloes Janson witnessed Sufis circling a saint's tomb 'which was covered with a black cloth so

⁴⁴ Rizvi is citing from Qāḍī Aḥmad Qummī, *Khulāṣat al-tawārīkh* (1981), 617.

that it resembled the Kaaba,’ and she heard a reformist preacher railing against the Sufi practice of seeing tombs as substitute Ka’bas (Janson, 511, 511 n. 24). Perhaps the preacher had Ahmadou Bamba’s (d. 1345/1927) tomb in mind, for a visit to the mosque in Touba, Senegal, that contains the tomb is viewed by his order’s followers, the Mourides (Ar. *murīd*: novice), as the equivalent of the Hajj (Flynn, unpaginated). The mosque is popularly known as the Mecca of the Mourides, and the pilgrimage to it involves rituals reminiscent of the Hajj (Cantone, 333; Bava and Gueye, 424-5).

Although not restricted to self-identifying Sufis, in North Africa, some forty kilometres north of Safi on Morocco’s Atlantic coast, there is an isolated shrine (*qubba*) dedicated to one Sīdī Shāshkāl (lifetime unknown). Here is staged an annual ‘Hajj of the poor’ (*hajj al-masākīn*) that coincides with the Day of ‘Arafāt of the Hajj of Mecca. The rituals performed during it include circumambulation of the shrine, standing in worship (*wuqūf*) at ‘little ‘Arafāt,’ and drinking from a well called Zamzam.⁴⁵

Moving eastwards from Africa and Central Asia to Indonesia, at Tembayat in central Java, the saint (Jv. *wali*), Sunan Bayat (d. ca. 918/1512), is buried in a

⁴⁵ I gratefully acknowledge Kholoud al-Ajarma for informing me of this shrine and the Hajj-practices occurring there, and for confirming that Sīdī Shāshkāl is not the only place in Morocco where a ‘Hajj of the poor’ is held. Moroccan newspapers occasionally report these pilgrimages; for example, concerning the one at Sīdī Shāshkāl, see <https://tinyurl.com/r9uijp44> (last accessed 03.12.2019). On these pilgrimages, see most recently al-Ajarma, 287-322. Shortly before this chapter went to press, I learnt of a similar phenomenon (except more overtly Sufi in identity) that occurs at the tomb of the Moroccan Sufi, Abū al-Ḥasan al-Shādhilī (d. 656/1258), in Humaithara, Egypt. See Elrasam (unpaginated).

tomb that is shaped and draped like the Ka'ba and pitch black inside. This darkness is explained on the grounds that 'in the Ka'ba there is no light either' (Doorn-Harder and Jong, 340). A visit to the tomb is said to replace the Hajj (Doorn-Harder and Jong, 346). In Aceh, circling the tomb of the first Habib Seunagan (*fl.* 13th/19th C.) on the tenth day of the month of the Hajj is a practice initiated by one of his descendants; it is intended to substitute for the circumambulation of the Ka'ba (Bowen, 603). Finally, in the province of Sindh, Pakistan, the Sufi necropolis of Makli is said to derive its name from the Arabic for 'this is Mecca for me' (*hādhā Makka lī*) (Quraishi, 270).

Were one to expand the remit of this account to include Sufi-related Ka'ba substitutes not based on a saint's tomb, one would add to the list the scaled-down Ka'ba which al-Ḥallāj (d. 309/922) is said to have built in his house and used to celebrate the Hajj (Miskawayh, 1: 80, trans. 4: 89; Massignon, 1: 67-8). One would also add the Marinid royal necropolis at Shālla, Morocco, which seems to have functioned as a state-sponsored Ka'ba analogue for at least part of the eighth/fourteenth century (Nagy, 279-82). One would add, too, the *Kedaton* section of Yogyakarta's pre-modern palace (*kraton*), which became 'simultaneously the Ka'ba, the sanctuary of the heart and the site of the divine throne' during a particular Sufi-informed royal ritual there (Woodward, 160). Above all, one would add the human heart. In the words of al-Qushayrī (d. 465/1072): 'The Ka'ba is the House of the Real in stone and the heart is the House of the Real in the innermost self' (al-Qushayrī, 311). For some Sufis, the Ka'ba of Mecca is itself a substitute for this heart. 'The meaning of the Ka'ba,' says Rūmī (d. 671/1273), 'is the heart of the prophets and saints, the locus of God's inspiration, of which the Ka'ba is but a derivative (*far*'). If there is no

heart, what purpose is served by the Ka'ba?' (Rūmī, 165; trans. 172 [modified]).⁴⁶

Other Medinas, other Jerusalems?

On the basis of Eliade's notion of the ritual replicability of cosmological centres, we should not expect to find the replicability of Mecca, specifically the Ka'ba, a phenomenon unique to Islam. Well known, for example, is the extensive replicability of Jerusalem in Christianity (Krautheimer, 3-20; Stroumsa, 349-70). As noted by Philip Alexander:

[F]or most Christian writers, Jerusalem was a spiritual entity which the Christian could experience anywhere. Other great cities, Rome, Constantinople, Aachen, could become 'Jerusalem.' 'Jerusalem' could even be created in one's local church by the erection of stations of the cross and of 'calvaries.'

(Alexander, 112)⁴⁷

Given this culturally widespread replicability of cosmological centres, why do we not find, in addition to Mecca, Medina and Islamic Jerusalem extensively replicated in the Islamic world and specifically in the Sufi universe? As mentioned earlier, there is some evidence that Medina, specifically the Prophet's tomb, was replicated elsewhere in the Islamic world. For example, according to Shaun Marmon, the Prophet's tomb was the charismatic centre of the Mamluk empire and was mirrored in the mausoleum complexes of a number of the Mamluk rulers, thereby creating 'a ceremonial axis between

⁴⁶ For further discussion of Rūmī's words, see Subtelny, *Templificatio*, 206-8.

⁴⁷ The Ethiopian pilgrimage site of Lalibela exemplifies a more permanent replication of Jerusalem.

Cairo and the Hijaz, between Sultan and Prophet' (Marmon, 28-30).⁴⁸ At Tinmall, Morocco, the sixth/twelfth-century Almohad mausoleum, now lost, of the dynasty's founder, the Mahdi Ibn Tūmart (d. ca. 524/1130), and the Friday mosque that was likely once adjacent to it, are spoken of in a contemporary source in terms of the tomb and mosque of the Prophet (Buresi, 436).⁴⁹ The unusual architecture of the Tinmal mosque indicates that most probably one or both buildings there were used for some sort of pilgrimage-based, royal-cum-religious ceremony or ceremonies, the details of which have not been recorded but to which the aforementioned source seems to allude (Calvo Capilla, 599-605, 616-21).

Neither of these foregoing examples, however, is specific to Sufism. What is specific to Sufism is the following principle of ritual etiquette when visiting saints' tombs, written by the Moroccan Sufi, Muḥammad b. Ja'far al-Kattānī (d. 1345/1926):

[The one who visits a saint's tomb] should believe that he is requesting succour (*istimdād*) from the Prophet. For in truth, it is [the Prophet] who is visited (*huwa al-mazūr 'alā al-ḥaqīqa*).

(Al-Kattānī, 1: 43)

⁴⁸ See also Juan Campo's discussion of domestic inviolability (*ḥurma*), which concludes: 'Local mosques, Mecca, Medina, and ordinary houses are obviously not totally segregated localities. They would be of little use to anyone if they were.' Campo, 99.

⁴⁹ Cf. Laroui, 179; Bennison, 307-10. The source Buresi refers to invokes the hadith alleging that a garden of paradise lies between the Prophet's house – later his tomb – and minbar in Medina. On this hadith, see Lange, 250.

Here we begin to find at least some evidence of a Sufi universe comprising both Medina and Mecca substitutes.

Regarding Islamic Jerusalem, specifically the Noble Sanctuary, or the *Ḥaram al-Sharīf*, Christian Ewert has argued that the plan of the Dome of the Rock and the Al-Aqsa Mosque are schematically replicated in the third/ninth-century rebuilding of the Great Mosque of Kairouan in modern-day Tunisia (Ewert and Wisshak, 42-54; Ewert, 136-42).⁵⁰ The argument has, however, since been disputed, especially with regard to the schema's legibility and use (Grabar, Review, 394-5).⁵¹ Moreover, the replication does not relate to Sufism. In central Java, in a town called Kudus, there is a mosque that an inscription from 956/1549 calls al-Aqsa (Tajudeen, 1015).⁵² Both the name of the town and the name of the mosque reference Islamic Jerusalem (*al-Quds*), most especially the *Ḥaram al-Sharīf*.⁵³ There is another al-Aqsa mosque in Rabwah, Pakistan,

⁵⁰ As well as this allegedly extensive and unusually direct reference to the Dome of the Rock in Islamic architecture, other instances of both direct and indirect references to the Dome of the Rock are recounted in Hillenbrand, 1-20. None pertains to Sufism.

⁵¹ Note, however, the positive assessment of the argument in Hillenbrand, 7-8.

⁵² Cf. Grabar, Jerusalem, 175.

⁵³ On the relationship of the two names with the *Ḥaram al-Sharīf*, see Goitein, Quds, 323. The early medieval trading centre in northern Mali, Tadmakka, is an equivalent to Kudus, in that it is named, not after Jerusalem, but Mecca (*Makka*). On this town, see Nixon, *passim*; and de Moraes Farias (unpaginated). In modern Spain, a village near to Cadiz, Los Caños de Meca, has its origins in a medieval Islamic settlement there, Bakka: a Qur'ānic name traditionally taken to mean Mecca (*Makka*). On this settlement and its archaeology, see Sánchez-Molero.

Masjid-e-Aqsa, which was founded in 1966 and serves as the headquarters of the persecuted Ahmadiyya movement (Arjana, 33). An earlier mosque with the same name was founded in 1876 in Qadian, India, by the father of the movement's eponym (Roose, 43-4). These examples, too, though, are not specific to Sufism, and additionally neither obviously pertains to ritual replication.

Against these possible examples of Jerusalem replicas, one might conceivably argue that the *Ḥaram al-Sharīf*, specifically the Dome of the Rock, was itself built as a Ka'ba substitute; something first proposed academically by Ignaz Goldziher and later defended by Amikam Elad (Goldziher, *Muslim*, 2: 44-5; Elad, *Why*, 44-58; Elad, 'Abd al-Malik, 167-266). In the light of this conceivable argument, the reference in the travel memoirs of the Sufi 'Abd al-Ghanī al-Nābulusī (d. 1143/1731) to the Rock as 'the Ka'ba of the spirits, around which our innermost secrets circumambulated' (*Ka'bat al-arwāḥ ṭāfat ḥawlahā asrārunā*) (Akkach, *Poetics*, 127 n. 65) would be more than just a rhetorical flourish.⁵⁴

The answer to the apparent lack of Medina and Jerusalem substitutes in the Sufi universe cannot be that they were not considered to be *cosmogonic* cosmological centres. That argument might perhaps hold true for Medina, as alluded to decades ago by Gustave von Grunebaum;⁵⁵ but it is not true for Jerusalem, as proved by the aforementioned Islamic traditions concerning the world's creation from the Rock. Nor can the answer be that Medina and Jerusalem were not esteemed highly enough by Sufis. The evidence against

⁵⁴ Akkach is citing from 'Abd al-Ghanī al-Nābulusī, *al-Ḥaḍra al-unsiyya fī al-riḥla al-quḍsiyya*, ed. Akram al-'Ulabī (1990), 121.

⁵⁵ See above, n. 5.

that possibility is prodigious;⁵⁶ and when this evidence is coupled with the fact that widely circulated hadiths and traditions spoke of both centres having a share in Paradise, it is overwhelming (Lange, 247-50). The eponym of the Barelwis, Aḥmad Razā Khān (d. 1340/1921), for example, considered Medina the holiest place on earth, surpassing even Mecca.⁵⁷ In a poem addressing pilgrims in Mecca, he exhorted them thus:

O Pilgrims! Come to the tomb of the king of kings
You have seen the Ka'ba, now see the Ka'ba of the Ka'ba.

(Sanyal, 99)⁵⁸

Later, the Sufi-leaning poet, Muḥammad al-Faytūrī (d. 2015), spoke of the tomb of this 'king of kings' as a structural element of the cosmos:

Over the Prophet's bones every speck of dust
Is a pillar of light,
Standing from the dome of his tomb
to the dome of the skies.

(Schimmel, *Geography*, 168)⁵⁹

Perhaps the answer to the apparent lack of Medina and Jerusalem substitutes in the Sufi universe lies in the Ka'ba's deceptively simple geometric structure. That is to say, its quaternary form possibly lent itself to mystical conjecture regarding the structure of the cosmos in ways that neither the

⁵⁶ See above, n. 9, n. 11.

⁵⁷ Cf. Kister, *Sanctity*, 40.

⁵⁸ Sanyal is citing from Aḥmad Razā Khān, *Ḥadā'iq-i bakhshish* (1976), 96.

⁵⁹ Schimmel provides no citation information.

Prophet's tomb in Medina nor the *Ḥaram al-Sharīf* in Jerusalem could; it captured the mystical imagination.⁶⁰ On this hypothetical view, the paucity of Medina substitutes and the seeming total absence of Jerusalem substitutes in the Sufi universe are explicable on the grounds that neither centre was *formally* comparable to Mecca as a cosmological centre, and so neither could be readily espoused as an ordering principle of the cosmos. Presented in the chapter's final section below is evidence in support of this supposition.

The Ka'ba as a structuring principle of the cosmos

According to the historian of Islamic science David King, the Ka'ba's four corners (*arkān*) took their names from the geographical regions of the world (King, Makka, 181). On this plausible but historiographically undocumented explanation, the south-western, *Yamānī* corner is called thus because it abuts Yemen; the north-western, *Shāmī* corner is called thus because it abuts Syria (*al-Shām*); and the north-eastern, *ʿIrāqī* corner, is called thus because it abuts Iraq (King, Makka, 181).⁶¹ The south-eastern corner, in which is set the Black Stone, is the exception to this view, because it seems to have no geographically derived nomenclature, and instead is commonly called just *al-Rukn*, the Corner.⁶²

⁶⁰ With reference to this possible explanation, Christian Lange notes (private communication, 30.08.19): 'Another [explanation] might be that Mecca is more axial than Medina, and arguably also more than Jerusalem, and that this axiality resonates with Sufi conceptions of saints as poles/axes.' On Sufi conceptions of saints as poles/axes, see below.

⁶¹ Cf. Herrera-Casais and Schmidl, 280-1.

⁶² On this name, see Hawting, 38.

Undermining this explanation is a tradition that dates to at least the time of the hadith compiler al-Bukhārī (d. 256/870). In it, two regions of the world are said to take their names from the Ka‘ba. ‘Yemen,’ al-Bukhārī says, ‘was called so because it is situated at the right hand (*yamīn*) of the Ka‘ba. Syria was called so because it is situated at the left hand (*yasār*) of the Ka‘ba’ (Bukhārī, k. al-manāqib, bāb qawl Allāh ta‘ālā [#3499]).⁶³ This naming capacity of the Ka‘ba is also alleged to be behind a wind schema referenced in a tradition attributed to al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī (d. 110/728): a four-wind compass-rose schema, with the Ka‘ba at the centre, which King considers to be the most popular of the early Islamic wind schemas (King, *Maṭla‘*, 840 [fig. 2]).⁶⁴ As the nomenclature of this schema is explained by the jurist and philologist Abū Ishāq al-Aṣbahī (d. ca. 660/1262):

The ‘ulamā’ say the winds are named thus on account of God’s Inviolable House (*sumiyat al-riyāḥ bi-hādhihi al-asmā’ bi-Bayt Allāh al-ḥarām*), because it is the qibla of the world. When the Arabs observed the wind that came and struck the wall of the Ka‘ba’s left hand (*shimāl*), they named it ‘Shamāl’ (the North wind). When they observed the wind that came from the other side (*al-jānib*), they named it ‘Janūb’ (the South wind). When they observed the wind that struck the Ka‘ba’s front (*wajh*), they named it either ‘Ṣabā’ (viz., the East wind) because it struck (*aṣābat*) the Ka‘ba’s face or ‘Qabūl,’ because it came from in front of (*min qubuli*)

⁶³ This anonymous tradition is not asserted by al-Bukhārī as a hadith; rather, he gives it on his own authority. It is later cited by al-Muqaddasī (d. after 380/990), an anonymous fifth/eleventh-century author, and Ibn Manẓūr, although in all three of these citations the word ‘left-hand’ is given as *shimāl*. See al-Muqaddasī, 152, trans. 248; *An Eleventh-century*, 436 (Arabic: 167); and Ibn Manẓūr, 15: 462 (w.r.t. ‘yaman’).

⁶⁴ The schema is cited in Heinen, 157.

the Ka'ba. When they observed the wind that came from the Ka'ba's back (*ẓahr*), they called it 'Dabūr' (viz., the West wind; literally, the rear-comer). (Schmidl, 141)⁶⁵

In Sufism, the mystic Ibn 'Arabī says something similar to al-Aṣḥabī when he talks of the cardinal directions being 'apportioned from (*taqsīm min*) the Ka'ba' (Ibn 'Arabī, 11: 276-7; trans., Gilis, 53). Preserving these directions, he continues, are the four divinely appointed saints known as the Pillars, or *awṭād* (Ibn 'Arabī, 11: 277; trans., Gilis, 53). These cosmic figures commonly comprise the second highest degree in the Sufi hierarchy of saints, just below the Pole, or *quṭb*.⁶⁶ No matter who or where they actually are in the cosmos at any one time, the Pillars carry out their universe-preserving duties at the centre of the world, namely, Mecca (Gilis, 53-5).⁶⁷ There, each one of the four Pillars corresponds to one of the four corners of the Ka'ba (Ibn 'Arabī, 2: 401; trans., Addas, 66-7).⁶⁸ By extension, therefore, each Pillar also corresponds to one of the four corners of the celestial Ka'ba, the Frequent House (Gilis, 40-62).⁶⁹

⁶⁵ Schmidl is citing from Abū Ishāq al-Aṣḥabī, *Kitāb al-Yawāqīt fī 'ilm al-mawāqīt* (unpublished).

⁶⁶ An exception is Ibn 'Arabī, who counts the *quṭb* as one of them. See Ibn 'Arabī, 11: 269; trans., Chodkiewicz, Seal, 93. Cf. Goldziher, *Awtād*, 772

⁶⁷ Cf. Goldziher, *Awtād*, 772

⁶⁸ Cf. Chodkiewicz, Seal, 93, 100 n. 22.

⁶⁹ Against this account of the four Pillars corresponding to the four corners of the Ka'ba, one should note that Ibn 'Arabī also speaks of the *Ḍurāḥ*: the allegedly divine model for the Ka'ba that a number of traditions say was built by Adam on earth. This model, Ibn 'Arabī says, was a ternary structure. See Akkach, *Cosmology*, 188-91.

It is beyond the scope of the present chapter to discuss the overlap of Ibn ‘Arabī’s Ka‘ba-centric cosmology with mystical currents in Shi‘ism or to attempt to chart the progress of this cosmology in Sufism and Islamic culture more broadly.⁷⁰ Rather, this section on the quaternary geometry of the Ka‘ba concludes by returning to the heart of the Ka‘ba: the geometry of the cosmic ‘Ka‘ba of the heart’. With reference to another of Ibn ‘Arabī’s engagements with the Ka‘ba’s corners, Stephen Hirtenstein notes:

[Ibn ‘Arabī] depicts the correspondence between the four [corners] of the Ka‘ba and the four Divine Names that govern existence (First, Last, Manifest and Hidden), and the four elements of the Qur’anic Light verse (niche, lamp, glass, and olive oil), all in relation to the meanings of the heart.

(Hirtenstein, 37)

It is hard to imagine Medina or Jerusalem inspiring such a geometrically configured cosmology.

Conclusion

⁷⁰ Concerning Shi‘ism, see Corbin, 65, 198-227. (In Shi‘ism, mystical cosmological conceptions of the Ka‘ba long antedate Ibn ‘Arabī. See Friedman, *Nuṣayrī-‘Alawīs*, 142.) Concerning Sufism, one place to look would be the Ka‘ba-centric cosmology of the Naqshbandi shaykh, Aḥmad Sirhindī (d. 1033/1624), in which a hierarchy of cosmic ‘Realities’ (*ḥaqā’iq*) is set forth, culminating in the ‘Reality of the Ka‘ba’ (*ḥaqīqat-i Ka‘ba*). See Friedmann, 14-16. Another place to look would be the cosmology of the Ḥurūfiyya. See Bashir, *Enshrining*, 295-7; and Mir-Kasimov, *passim*. Concerning Islamic culture more broadly, see Yilmaz, 200-6.

This chapter has investigated the apparently paradoxical phenomenon, as reported in the medieval Islamic geographical literature, of the existence of more than one *axis mundi* in the Islamic oecumene. Referring to the ideas of Mircea Eliade, the chapter observed that this phenomenon was paradoxical only to modern scientific thought, and that the ritual replication of a culture's cosmological centre, above all its *cosmogonic* cosmological centre, was a widespread occurrence in history. Said occurrence was additionally rational: replication enabled an individual's life to be lived, in Eliade's words, 'at the heart of reality'.

With reference to the culture of Islam, the chapter then pursued the question of the replicability of this culture's prime cosmogonic cosmological centre, Mecca. Establishing first that Mecca was indeed this centre, it demonstrated the extent to which it is ritually replicated within the Sufi universe. Asking if the same replicability was also true of other centres in the Islamic world which could be considered cosmological, either in Eliade's technical sense or more generally, the chapter additionally looked at Medina and Jerusalem. It argued that the evidence for both appeared to be limited, and with regard to Jerusalem in the Sufi universe specifically, apparently non-existent.

In an attempt to explain this last finding, the chapter finally pursued two more questions. It firstly asked whether the Ka'ba's geometric form might have acted as a stimulus for cosmological thought, both Sufi and non-Sufi; and secondly, whether this stimulus had, in turn, helped established Mecca as the cosmological centre in the Sufi universe to be ritually replicated. To both questions, the answer was tentatively affirmative.

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