

# The Performances of Buildings Un-Built: Minority Islam as Urban Excess

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## Preliminary

Is a building only the backdrop, stage and conveyer of religion, or can it also *perform* it? What does it mean for a building to perform religion? And what of buildings that are still un-built or buildings about to fall apart – buildings balancing on the edge of nothing – can we see the performance of religion there too (or perhaps even especially there)?

By “perform,” I do not mean an action, much less a conscious action. Buildings after all are both immobile and insentient. They do not move, nor do they believe. And yet they do work on us and on the world, even as the work they do quite regularly diverges from the intentions of their architects, from official religious interpretations, from the expectations of their users and from the aspirations of their owners. Religious buildings are sites at which cosmology and the personal touch, even as the cumulative effects of a building far exceed the imagination, devotions and embodiments of any particular individual, group or tradition associated with it. This is in no small part because the life of a building is so much longer than that of a person. The immobility of a building highlights the transformations all about it. Staying right in place, a building becomes history. It is this tension between the expected and the excessive, the scripted and the undisciplined, the fleeting and the enduring as these are continually negotiated through a religious building that is intriguing.

In some ways, this process of a religious building at work is comparable to ritual. In ritual too there is a dynamic tension between cosmological, ideological and individual meaning, as well as between fluid cultural construction and formal rigidity. This enables an experience of “excess” that is exquisitely “beyond” the ordinary and the individual’s everyday shuffling through the un-ritualized here and now.<sup>1</sup> At the same time, it is only as a building immanently situated at a nodal intersection of ontologies, social relations, texts, practices and economics that it becomes a “building.” That is to say, buildings are

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social creatures. Without the social, a building is simply a pile of stones. As a social construction, then, religious buildings integrate multiple planes of experience: secular and religious, but also sensual, multimedial, political and financial. And it is this social practice of a building acting through the embodied, mediated and structured experiences of those in touch with it to which I refer with the term “perform.”

Last but not least: when is a building religious? The concept of “religion” has become quite problematic these days for a variety of reasons, including its implicit Christian theological assumptions, its complicity in colonialism, and its entanglement with modern projects of secular state-formation, not to mention its multifarious definitions and virtually infinite malleability through time and space.<sup>2</sup> As a solution to this challenge – in a larger project developing a comparison of the politics of public religions in world cities – I pragmatically and strategically make use of the concept of religion in three ways. To begin with: in the classic substantive sense of referring to traditions and communities that we in common parlance today quite unselfconsciously and regularly call “religions.” In the case of this paper, all three buildings that I consider are associated with Islam one of the “world religions.” Secondly: I use the phrase “religion” in a more structural-functionalist sense to mean social and political projects that are positioned as “religious” in order to assert or realize certain claims to authority, recognition and contestation in relation to the “secular” state within which they are situated. And thirdly, I use the term “religious” in a distinctly unorthodox but productive sense that entails religion as a flow, stance or apparatus of “desire” within a larger field of desires extending to politics, sexuality and capital. The basic argument for this last definition, which I cannot develop fully here, is that through globalization (in its contemporary form) those areas of human life rationalized into distinct domains under high modernity are fragmenting and inter-penetrating in such a way that the distinction between religion, politics, sexuality and capital at critical moments loses its resonance, relevance, necessity and appeal. In fact, it becomes quite productive to transgress these actively and publicly, as well as intellectually.<sup>3</sup> Critically, this does not mean that desire is freed up in any absolute sense: only that its organization is transformed, rechanneled, and re-imagined. What becomes fascinating, then, returning to our topic, is watching how today these entangled lines of longing are incarnated through the performances of religious buildings.

In the following few pages, I will briefly sketch three examples of such performative buildings, too briefly to analyze each in depth, but enough to

suggest some of what is possible by way of interpretation. These buildings are located in three cities on three continents: Western Europe, South Asia and North America. Two of these buildings have not been built but have generated tremendous controversy: one a large, multifunctional, neighborhood mosque and one a large multifunctional Islamic cultural center that includes a prayer center. The third building – a Sufi shrine – is dilapidated and on the brink of falling apart. In all three cases, this transitional precarity, in which the very possibility of the buildings' being has been at stake – has opened up possibilities and necessities for contests over the religious production of the buildings and concerted efforts to shape the form and direction of their future. These developments give us particular insights into the work of religion in and through its material, social and ideological forms and the means through which religious buildings in their very immobility generate fantastic circuits of mobility, exchange and desire.

## Going Dutch

Let me begin close to home. In the early 1990s, a Dutch branch of the transnational Turkish Milli Görüş movement decided to build a mosque in an Amsterdam neighborhood called “de Baarsjes.” Both the local borough council and the neighborhood were deeply suspicious of this Islamicist movement and resistant to its plans, as were secular Leftist migrant organizations. Milli Görüş staged street demonstrations, even as the media regularly presented the movement as fundamentalist and (potentially) dangerous. This impasse was broken in the late 1990s, however, after there was a shift both in the local political constellation and in the international Milli Görüş movement. In 1998 a new borough council was elected, just as a new director was appointed for Milli Görüş (North Holland), a man who quickly became popular in the media for his accommodation of homosexuals and apostasy, his loud critique of Muslim scholars who accept husbands beating their wives, and his desire to make Turkish immigrants and Muslims a part of Dutch society.

Within a short time a close collaboration was established between the head of the borough council, the director and financial director of Milli Görüş and the director of the Amsterdam housing society active in the Baarsjes. By 2006, the first stone for the mosque – a “Dutch brick” – was laid. The Dutch Minister of Justice spoke, as did a rabbi, a Protestant (woman) pastor, and an imam. Dutch neighbors and Turkish(-Dutch) Muslims mingled, Turkish music played, and more than one audience member had tears in his eyes. The

mosque, designed by a Jewish-French team, would have a classic Ottoman design, layered tiers of cupolas and rising minarets, realized in the red-brick style of Berlage's "Amsterdam School," and embedded in a host of other facilities that would serve the whole neighborhood. Now renamed the Western Mosque rather than Aya Sofia, and having one shared entrance for women and men (a first in the Netherlands), it would be as Dutch as it was Islamic: materially, aesthetically, theologically, historically, and socio-politically.

But then suddenly everything shifted. The central headquarters of Milli Görüş (located in Germany) were displeased that they had a less than central role in recent developments and soon both the director and financial director of the Amsterdam branch of Milli Görüş departed. Not long after, there were also new elections for the 'Baarsjes' borough council. The politics of suspicion and mutual recrimination returned: the new city council demanded that the new board of Milli Görüş (North Holland) sign a form promising the mosque would promote a liberal form of Islam; the new financial director of Milli Görüş threatened to notify Al-Jazeera about the council's resistance and to generate European-wide demonstrations if they would not be allowed to build the mosque they preferred with a more traditional design. All of this culminating in a court case. The complicated financial entanglements of the mosque and building corporation, however, made it impossible to divorce and early in 2009 the court sentenced all parties to continue working together. Neither the demonstration nor further collaboration occurred, and the mosque's terrain today remains a fenced void marked by pockets of quicksand.<sup>4</sup>

Though not yet built, this building has generated an impressive amount of activity. In fact, it is in part *because* it has not been built that there is so much activity. The Western mosque is intended to be a building that houses, mediates and enables a religion – Islam – and the collective rituals it requires and sustains. At the same time, there are intense contests about the appropriate type and practice of Islam the mosque will actually support and propagate. Highly problematic is the fact that as a community, tradition and movement, both Islam more generally and Milli Görüş specifically encompass multiple tendencies that range from the orthodox Islamicist to the liberally Islamic and from the universalist "ummatic" to the diasporic (Turkish) nationalist to the integrative and localist Dutch/Euro-Turkik. A crucial aspect of the building's effect, then, is the desires it arouses for purifying Islamic thought and practice of anything considered to diverge, disrupt or pollute various ideal Islams. So the energies of virtually all involved in building this mosque are driven by potent fantasies of transforming the historically and socially Islamic from a

complex, contradictory set of beliefs, practices and social relations into a more pure one. Each hopes to establish a building whose coherence and purity will project only one (or a select few) of the multiple ideologies, tendencies and traditions giving rise to its construction, while repressing or hiding others. This is not only in the interest of sustaining this or that form of Islamic religiosity per se, but also of sustaining the social, economic and political position of its supporters and their authority in the highly charged domain of public images, rhetoric and debate. In this way, the classically “religious” function of the building as a site of Islamic worship is from the beginning entangled with both the “incoherence” of religious traditions and their own deep entanglement with equally incoherent and deeply politicized social relations, here embodied by contests over the definition, composition and organization of a neighborhood, a city and a transnational socio-religious movement.

The religious in this case is not “Islam,” then, which emerges as a shifting identity and content, highly adaptable to being converted into both a progressive “Amsterdam-Dutch” and a conservative, Turkish-transnational “Islamist” framework. Instead it is the logic of conversion itself that is key, as it organizes relations between urban authority, corporate welfare, urban environment and a multiplicity of local and global identities, all through the medium of architecture, money, legal contracts, personal relations and public ritual. What we see in the case of the Western mosque is the way in which a religion (Islam), a political party (Labor), an urban neighborhood (de Baarsjes), an ideological direction (“progressive”), a transnational movement (Milli Görüş), a building (mosque), a medium (the mass media) and a national trauma (the Holocaust)<sup>5</sup>, along with municipal economics and national histories, are “converted” to the logic of this dilemma. Conversion here does not mean the abandonment of one set of beliefs in favor of another set, any more than religion itself is about belief in any pure sense untouched by social, political, and economic relations. Rather “conversion” here is the induction of all components into the struggle to realize an abstract ideal that does not yet exist publicly, visibly: namely, an Islam at home in Amsterdam and an Amsterdam at home in Islam, with all this entails politically, aesthetically, economically, spatially, culturally and religiously.

This ideal, as well as resistance to it, not only infuses every stone of the proposed mosque, but mobilizes new forms of collaboration; transforms established visions and practices of municipal governance, of Milli Görüş activism in Europe, and of Islam in the Netherlands; and instigates new forms of economic relations (between a local Dutch municipality and a transnational Islamic movement). And it is this – I would argue – which in fact constitutes

the “religion” that is “performed” by the Western mosque. It both generates an “excess” in emotion and activity – by inspiring, mobilizing, transforming and touching all those involved – while promising the realization of what is far beyond reach: the “ultimate” and viscerally yearned-for resolution of the secular and the religious, the national and the foreign, the material and the ideological, the political and the aesthetic in a building that all can see and touch.

## Going Commercial

In the Muslim neighborhoods of Dongri, close to the harbor area of Mumbai, is Gori Pir dargah. This is a memorial shrine (*chilla*) to Bava Gor, the Abyssinian ancestral saint of the Sidis. The Sidis are Sufi Muslims who originally came from Africa to India as traders, mercenaries and slaves, starting in the 13<sup>th</sup> century and continuing into the early 20<sup>th</sup>. Many Sidis settled in what is today the state of Gujarat and from there several hundred or thousand migrated to the city of Bombay (estimates of the current Sidi population in Mumbai vary from 500 to 3000). Though the area directly around Gori Pir dargah was once known as Sidi *mohalla*, most Sidis now have left the neighborhood and live dispersed through the city.<sup>6</sup> An important influence on this was the communal violence of 1992, which deeply affected the Dongri area. Home to a highly diverse community of Muslims, including not only Sufi Sidis but also Sunni Konkans, Khojas and Kutchi Memons and Shi’a Dawoodi Bhoras, Khojas and Iranians (Moghals).<sup>7</sup> After the violence, many of the rich moved out to the suburbs of Mumbai even as the neighborhood absorbed an influx of poor Muslims escaping violence from elsewhere in the city. More generally, Dongri is known not only as a Muslim area, but most often appears in the news through stereotyped accounts of criminality, prostitution, violence, poverty and the spectacular rags-to-riches careers these have made possible. Kamathipura, India’s largest and most overcrowded red-light district, filled with women migrants from all of India and beyond, is just adjacent. Yet at the same time, Dongri today is being reshaped by the entry of more Hindus and neo-liberalization and the long list of famous (Muslim) dons – Karim Lala, Dilip Aziz, Haji Mastan, Yusuf Batla, Mamu Langda, Tariq Takla, Moin Totla and Dawood Ibrahim – and their trade in illegal goods is making way for factory goods and office services.

Off on a side-street, away from the commercial main street of Muslim Mumbai – Mohammed Ali Road – is Gori Pir dargah. The cumulative effect of the departure of the rich and influx of the poor, along with the dispersal of

the Sidis across the city, has been to leave Gori Pir dargah neglected and dilapidated. Each monsoon season, the waters wreck more havoc. The roof leaks and broken musical instruments – central to Sidi celebrations – go unrepaired for years. This is particularly striking because this is the most famous Sidi shrine in Mumbai. Others, less well-known, such as that of Kamali Baba has shining marble floors, white-washed walls and radiates a comfortable affluence. Kamali Baba, however, is located in Dadar, a neighborhood that is not only better off but largely Hindu. Not only is it Hindu, but the Hindu nationalist movement Shiv Sena is a strong presence. During the violence of 1992, while Gori Pir dargah shared the same risk as other parts of Dongri of being burned and demolished, Kamali Baba was secure, unthreatened and protected by its Hindu neighbors.<sup>8</sup> At other times, it has been visited by a Chief Minister of the state who is a member of the Hindu nationalist BJP party, as well as by Congress politicians, even as the caretakers are invited to the Ganesh festivals and marriage ceremonies of their neighbors.

What marks Gori Pir dargah as “Muslim” – the way in which it performs its Islamicity – as much as through the saint it honors and the human performances that take place there, is the fact that it is located in a poor Muslim neighborhood and shares its neighbors’ “Muslim” poverty and their marginality from the political elite.<sup>9</sup> By contrast, another Sidi shrine in Mumbai, that of Bava Gor in a *jopparpatti* (shanty town) area in the northern suburbs of the city, likewise shares its neighbors poverty, but it is an economic precarity not marked as Muslim. Instead it is sustained by a highly mixed group of Hindu and Muslim devotees who seek guidance and help with problems of health, work and infertility.<sup>10</sup> Like Gori Pir dargah it too requires repairs, but it has never faced the same existential threat to its continuity as Gori Pir dargah at the time of communal conflicts.

As in Amsterdam, then, the ways a building in Mumbai represents, houses and performs “religion” is not solely determined by the actual religious practices that it enables and sustains, but just as much by its material, economic and social embeddedness. Once again, too, the “Islamic” specifically, is generated through the very precarity of the building.

Significantly, some years ago, an American ethnomusicologist from UCLA who has worked closely with Sidi communities in Gujarat, became aware of the condition of Gori Pir dargah. Viewing the challenge of maintaining the dargah and its productions – music, dances and celebrations combining Afro-Sufi and Hindu influences – from the perspective of applied anthropology, Amy Catlin-Jairazbhoy developed plans with the Sidi to hold a fund-raising concert.<sup>11</sup> In her work, Catlin-Jairazbhoy approaches the Sidi most especially

as diasporised Africans, foregrounding the musical practices, sensibilities and instruments that the Sidi share with Africans and others Afro-diasporic communities across the world. On this basis she has also organized international music tours and a CD for Sidi from Gujarat. These insert the Sidi into an international framework of multiculturalism, Afro-centric aesthetics, and spirituality quite different from their Indian context. In exchange, it offers to provide the means by which perhaps to maintain Sidi buildings as they come under pressure from shifting demographics and neoliberal economic relations that have hit Muslims especially hard.

At the same time, several local individuals were also involved in this project. One of these was Naresh Fernandes, an expert on Bombay's musical history, as well as the editor of Mumbai's *Time Out Guide* and particularly well situated to promote any musical projects the Sidi might undertake both to Mumbaikers and to tourists. In this way, the Sidi were inserted not only into international circuits of multicultural/spiritual production and consumption that take place far from Mumbai but also are put in the pathway of circuits bringing tourists to Mumbai and resident Mumbai consumers to new sites of urban culture. In addition, another participant was PUKAR, a research collective and urban knowledge production center co-founded by the anthropologist Arjun Appadurai. PUKAR is committed to bringing diverse forms of academic and local knowledge together in innovative, critical fashion, deeply anchored in the urban fabric of Mumbai (most especially Girangaon and Dharavi) while drawing on a network of scholars, journalists, activists, cultural and social analysts that reaches around the globe. In this way, then, the Sidi (Sufi) Islamicity of Gori Pir dargah, like that of the Western mosque in Amsterdam, is highly flexible, depending on the circuits and mediums into which it is inserted. As with the Western mosque, it is the physical dargah – here, in its slow degradation – that performs (Sidi) Islam as precarious religiosity in Mumbai. This socio-material precarity in turn sets in motion a performance of Sidi religious music in excess to its Mumbai/Indian specificity as “African diaspora,” “spirituality,” and “world music” as well as in its deeply local specificity as “urban knowledge.” Each of these circuits itself entails a complex and convoluted intrication of economics, politics and culture moving in non-synchronous fashion across the earth's surface and through the ether in relation to desires for mobility, innovation, moral community, cultural consumption, profit and so forth.

To discuss the dargah and its performance like this is only to touch the tip of the iceberg. There are, for example, a number of critical issues that come into play here which I cannot examine, including the complexity of the



concept “diaspora” as it overlaps with “religion”; debates about how diasporic the Sidi actually are; the subtleties of Sidi self-narration at different sites and historical moments within Mumbai in relation to their Gujarati and African origins; and the special place of the Afro-American experience in shaping the evolution of progressive American academic ethical, political and global sensibilities. Nonetheless, what is especially important to note is the extent to which something apparently so simple as the disintegration of a building is itself a “performance” of religion. In this case, quite clearly, the building’s disintegration is linked quite explicitly to its Islamic identity, as an extension of the more comprehensive failure of the Indian state to protect and ensure the welfare of Muslim minorities. Increasingly marked as “Muslim” in a way that other Sidi shrines are not – by virtue of its neighborhood and its constituency – Gori Pir dargah is faced with the choice of shifting its performance of Sidi religiosity to a global racialized and commercialized register (in the process, we should note, also slipping into the fold of what Mahmood Mamdani calls the “good Muslim” in the post-9/11 binary framework). While this offers the possibility of future economic prospects, the question – as Catlin-Jairazbhoy is very aware of – is what the insertion into this global performance of multiculturalism will do with the religious performers. More specifically, with regard to the questions being asked here: what sort of “building” does a local, all but invisible Afro-Sufi shrine become when its repudiated Islamicity – within a city sometimes terribly violent against its Muslim minorities – is transformed into visible and consumable Afro-aesthetics? What then will be the “religion” of Gori Pir dargah?

## Going Going Gone

Last but not least, in closing I want to mention one final religious building-about-to-be: Cordoba House in New York City, now renamed Park51 but most often called the Ground Zero Mosque. As with the Western mosque in Amsterdam, the chance collaboration between several men lies at the center of this much larger event. In this case, the developer Sharif El-Gamal, the director of Soho Properties, needed to develop a use for a new property, the former Burlington Coat Factory. After neighborhood research revealed the need for community facilities, he approached the imam of his nearby mosque – Feisal Abdul Rauf – and with him decided to build an Islamic community center, similar to the YMCA and the Jewish community centers that dot New York City. Plans include a two-storey prayer space, a 500-seat auditorium, theater,

performing arts center, fitness center, swimming pool, basketball court, child-care services, art exhibitions, bookstore, culinary school, and a food court serving halal dishes. The point not only was to turn a profit, but also to make a statement “opposite” to that made by the destruction of the nearby World Trade Towers by encouraging inter-faith dialogue and inter-community peace. As architect, El-Gamal hired Michel Abboud, a Catholic of French, Lebanese and Mexican origins and the director of Soma Architects, an architectural firm with offices in New York, Mexico and Beirut.

Plans for the cultural center initially sailed through municipal evaluations without any problems. The wife of Imam Rauf, Daisy Khan, was even the subject of a friendly interview on Fox, the conservative television channel. Once the New York City community board committee unanimously approved the project, however, everything quickly exploded. Following a story by AP, the anti-Islamist Pamela Gellner, directory of the group Stop Islamization of America (SIOA) began a campaign to “Stop the 911 Mosque.” This group, notably, is a copy-cat version of the Stop Islamization of Europe group, founded through a fusion of Danish and British anti-Islamists. A New York columnist called Andrea Peyser then wrote a column “Mosque Madness at Ground Zero.” And from there it took off, quickly reaching conservative radio and television shows across the country, then becoming a central item in American mid-term elections heavily polarized by the successes of the Tea Party movement, attacked by potential presidential candidates Sarah Palin and Newt Gingrich and finally requiring commentary from President Obama. Protests against the Ground Zero Mosque organized by Gellner’s group not only ensured both heavy media coverage and increased polarization among relatives of those killed in the Trade Towers, but ensured extensive international attention (as well as the participation of the Dutch anti-Islam politician Geert Wilders).

While there is much to analyze in these developments, the point most important here is the way in which the building lost virtually all ability to perform religion and instead was “performed by” Gellner and others. Though Cordoba House/Park51 does not include a mosque, the label “mosque” has come to dominate coverage; though neither located at nor visible from the site of the twin towers, it has been deeply linked to “Ground Zero”; though intended as a repudiation of the radical jihadists reading of Islam, it is overwhelmingly being read as an extension of it; though aspiring to ecumenical dialogue and peace, it is time and again understood as a one-sided declaration of Islamic war. Like the Western mosque in Amsterdam, it remains un-built, unable to resolve to intense tensions and spectacular controversies created by its multivalent and multi-national mediation of religion.

A much better comparison, however, may just be the Sufi shrine in Mumbai. While that shrine is threatened with dissolution, the Ground Zero Mosque against which Gellner has raised such ire is an utter figment of political imagination. It was never imagined and never meant to be built by the owners of Park51, even as it has become so real and effective in its mediated and highly ritualized performance that it has made Park51 utterly mute and invisible. In the shadow of the Ground Zero Mosque, Park51 is neither a building, nor even a pile of stones, but nothing more than a few drawings on a computer, lacking both the constituency and the medium to give its religion, its Islam, the body it so badly needs.

## Notes

- 1 In this section, I draw on arguments made by Birgit Meyer, "The Indispensability of Form," *The Immanent Frame: Secularism, Religion and the Public Sphere*, <<http://blogs.ssrc.org/tif/2010/11/10/indispensability-of-form/>> (posted 10 November 2010; accessed 4 April 2011) and "Aesthetics of Persuasion: Global Christianity and Pentecostalism's Sensational Forms," *South Atlantic Quarterly* 109.4 (Fall 2010): 741-763; Peter van der Veer, "Pain and Power: Reflections on Ascetic Agency," *The Anthropologist and the Native. Essays for Gananath Obeyesekere*, ed. H. L. Seneviratne (Studio Editoriale Fiorentino, Florence 2009): 201-216 and *Religious Nationalism: Hindus and Muslims in India* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994); and Catherine Bell, "Performance," *Critical Terms for Religious Studies*, ed. Mark C. Taylor (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998): 205-224.
- 2 The debate about "religion" has become a rich multi-disciplinary field. Emblematic texts include: Talal Asad, *Genealogies of Religion: Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993); Russell T. McCutcheon, *Manufacturing Religion: The Discourse of Sui Generis Religion and the Politics of Nostalgia* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997); Timothy Fitzgerald, *The Ideology of Religion Studies* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000); Daniel Dubuisson, *The Western Construction of Religion* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003) and Tomoko Masuzawa, *The Invention of World Religions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005). See also Jonathan Z. Smith, *Relating Religion: Essays in the Study of Religion* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), especially "Religion, Religions, Religious" on the evolving morphology of definitions of religion since the sixteenth century.
- 3 This framing of our world as a field of desire resonates clearly with the work of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari. Unfortunately Deleuze and Guattari appear to have

a rather reductive understanding of religion. So in *A Thousand Plateaus* they present it as a form of absolutism tied to territory and lending itself particularly well to collaboration with the State. As such, they assert, it is antithetical to the critical nomad's atheistic understanding of the absolute. See *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Brian Massumi (London: Continuum International – Athlone, 1988) pages 422-24 and remarks made *passim*. Nonetheless, Deleuze and Guattari offer an exceptionally fruitful starting point for thinking through the economies of desire that structure our world and through which religion goes to work. By way of productive contrast, see Paul W. Ludwig's *Eros and Polis: Desire and Community in Greek Political Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002) for a mapping of ancient Greek civic erotics, including in relation to Foucault; the anthropologist Elizabeth A. Povinelli's experiment in exploring the relations between forms of love and forms of liberal governance in empire: *The Empire of Love: Toward a Theory of Intimacy, Genealogy, and Carnality* (Durham: Duke UP, 2006); and Christine Mitchell on the politics of generic erotics in the Bible, "Power, Eros, and Biblical Genres," *The Bible and Critical Theory* 3.2 (2007): 18.1-18.11.

- 4 Since I wrote this, there has been a new development. The mosque association has separated from Milli Görüş (North Holland) and disentangled itself from the building society. Eager to begin building, the association has engaged in extensive wrangling with the borough council, which has been very critical of submitted paperwork. A recent compromise has been that the mosque will submit its building plans to the council one step at a time, with each step being evaluated separately, leaving open to the very end whether or not the city will approve the final step of building the actual mosque. At this point, approval has been given to prepare the ground for building.
- 5 Attention has repeatedly been drawn in the media to the fact that the architects commissioned to design the mosque are Jewish, despite the fact that this is not an explicit theme of their vision and that other work they have done for Amsterdam consists primarily of large housing projects. See <http://www.breitman-breitman.com/> (accessed 12 March 2011). In other words, the Breitman's Jewishness is only foregrounded in relation to the Islamicity of the mosque. This reproduces the globalized Middle Eastern dialectic of (Arab)Muslim/(Israeli)Jew, even as this conflict is now symbolically reconciled in the tolerant environs of Amsterdam. Such a performance of religious peace and collaboration is only possible, however, through a historic sleight of hand: Turkey (the country-of-origin of the Milli Görüş movement) is neither Arab nor an enemy of Israel, but in fact has been an important ally. At the same time, the architects' Jewishness inevitably but implicitly evokes the Holocaust – Western Europe's pre-eminent moral reference point – lending the authority of its survivors to building the moral credibility of the mosque and more generally to those who argue that the incorporation of transnational Islam into the fabric of the city is the proper solution to the dilemma

- of diversity. The ebb and flow of the Holocaust through current tensions around Islam and immigration is a much more complex process, but these points begin to suggest the significance of ritualized deployments of the Holocaust to these debates.
- 6 In the late 17<sup>th</sup> century, one branch of Sidis, the royal Sidis of Janjira (just south of Mumbai), routed the British from Bombay and ruled the city for sixteen months. Their descendants remember the history of Sidi military, naval and administrative distinction well and continue to live comfortably and privately in South Mumbai, separate from the poor, migrant Sidis in other areas
  - 7 Muslims in Mumbai have a long, rich and complex history going back centuries. Today Muslims compose 17% of the population. Hindus constitute 68%, Buddhists and Christians compose 4% and the rest consists of Parsis, Jains, Sikhs, and Jews. This religious diversity is cross-cut by other important markers of difference that include caste, gender, language and regional identity.
  - 8 See interview with the shrine's *mujavar* (caretakers) Ameena and Aisha Bi in Beheroze Shroff, "Sidis in Mumbai: Negotiating Identities between Mumbai and Gujarat," *African and Asian Studies* 6 (2007): 309-311.
  - 9 On the disproportional negative effect of neoliberalism on India's Muslims – that is to say, what might be called Indian poverty's (selective) Islamicization – see the Report of the Sachar Committee (2006), the first government report since Independence to publicly address the socio-economic degradation of Muslims in India.
  - 10 Shroff, *ibid.* 306-309.
  - 11 "Sidi Community Struggles to Save Decrepit Shrine," *The Times of India* (19 March 2004) <[http://articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/2004-03-19/mumbai/28326881\\_1\\_shrine-music-and-dance-sidis](http://articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/2004-03-19/mumbai/28326881_1_shrine-music-and-dance-sidis)> (accessed 19 June 2010).

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