

[Call For Papers: Liminal Spaces from Sacred to Urban: The Friday Mosque and the City](#)

Discussion published by Suzan Yalman on Tuesday, June 9, 2015

Call For Papers:

Liminal Spaces from Sacred to Urban: The Friday Mosque and the City

Targeted contributions are sought for an edited volume exploring the dynamic relationship between the Friday Mosque and the city, specifically the liminality between sacred and urban spaces.

Islamic law requires believers to congregate on Fridays as a social code. The Prophet himself was instrumental in establishing the first congregational space in Medina. Whatever the original terminology was to define this space, it is usually accepted as the prototype of the “mosque” by the architectural historians. The English term “mosque” derives from the Arabic *masjid*, a term designating a place of prostration, whereas the term *jāmi'* which is translated variously as Friday mosque, great mosque or congregational mosque, originates from the Arabic term *jama'* -that is, to gather. The distinctions in terminology are important because, according to Islamic legal tradition, the presence of a Friday mosque was an important parameter in defining a “city” (*madina*).

As the dominion of Islam (*dar al-Islam*) spread across continents, they gradually embraced local socio-cultural traditions, which became reflected in the overall designs of these buildings and their dependencies. Thanks to the symbolic importance of the Friday sermon (*khutba*), mosques also became the loci for displays of power and declarations of independence that became increasingly important with the proliferation of Islamic states. As embodiments of the inter-state rivalry, Friday mosques were instrumental in the urban development and identity of new Islamic capital cities. The concepts of the Friday mosque and the “Islamic City” have been independently discussed at great length and widely studied by historians of Islamic architecture and urbanism and are therefore not the focus of our attention. Instead, we are particularly interested in the functional and spatial ambiguity of the transition between the city and the Friday mosque.

In understanding the relationship between the Friday mosque and the city, what constitutes the boundaries of one versus the other is often difficult to define. Moreover, those “urban thresholds”, which changed over time and geography, act as liminal spaces between the sacred and urban. So, where does liminality or sacredness begin? And in the context of Friday mosques, is the sanctuary defined by the interior of the mosque? Or does sacredness extend to ambiguous spaces as well? For example when one enters the *ziyada* of the Ibn Tulun Mosque in Cairo, do the rules of the sacred precinct apply? Similar questions can be asked in relation to courtyards or portico entrances (*son cemaat yeri*) in Ottoman mosques.

The development of the complex complicates this discussion further as the different social and historical contexts gave various meanings to such spaces. What happens when a mosque is combined with dependencies and is thereby transformed into a complex, such as the Khuand Khatun Complex in Kayseri? Or even when the buildings are conceptualized together, as in the case of many Ottoman

mosque complexes in Istanbul, at what point does one enter the sacred zone?

Outlined above are some of the issues that we hope to address in this volume. We welcome works from all periods and geographies where Friday mosques were built.

Possible themes may include (but not limited to):

- the role of the Friday mosque in urban development
- the mosque as a complex
- the ambiguity of interior / exterior zones
- everyday life in and around the mosques
- Friday mosques as urban public spaces
- the intended versus actual usage of “urban thresholds”
- cross-cultural interactions in mosque architecture
- converted mosques and urban implications

Interested colleagues should send an abstract of 800-1000 words and a CV to the editors Drs. A. Hilâl Uğurlu and Suzan Yalman (liminalspaces2016@gmail.com) by 21 August 2015. Potential contributors should plan on submitting their papers for peer review by 29 February 2016. For the final publication, we are currently in the process of discussion with university and academic publishers.

For further questions and comments please contact the editors at liminalspaces2016@gmail.com.

Deadlines & Dates

Abstract submission deadline (800-1000 words)	21 August 2015
Notification of abstract acceptance	02 October 2015
Full paper submission for peer review deadline	29 February 2016
Return of peer reviewed papers	01 June 2016
Final Submission	01 August 2016