

Introduction: Spaces and Frontiers of Islamic Art and Archaeology

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Lines of demarcation, aiming to separate spaces which are perceived as distinct, appear to be innate in most human communities in the same way as, on a more abstract level, the existence of definitions which are formulated to express the exact meaning and essence of things. The inhabitants of the realms behind these lines might identify with the spaces in which they find themselves, yet they might also be willing to transcend them, while a definition might either be accepted at face value or considered untrue, requiring periodic redefinition.

The concepts of frontier, boundary, and border, and consequently of spaces and regions they delimit, have left a persistent mark on the perception of geography, whether expounded in pre-modern Muslim textual sources, or by modern geostrategists. The medieval *Hudūd al-Ālam* (Limits of the World, 372/982) suggests, encapsulating in its title the defining significance of boundaries, that such divisions, imposed by mountains, rivers, or deserts, are inherent and natural markers to differentiate spaces and regions. This work describes the world as the totality of its constituent parts, and it rarely employs further markers, among them ethnic, linguistic, religious, or social, for subdivisions. Some seven centuries later, in an era of growing cartographic literacy, the peace conferences of Karlowitz (1110/1699) and Passarowitz (1130/1718) established modern state boundaries, instead of mere transitory zones, between not only the Habsburg and Ottoman Empires but also two distinct civilisations, based on the first modern maps of South-Eastern Europe. The spatial turn, related also to changes in Central and Eastern Europe not so many years ago, has brought the concept to the forefront once again, also in scholarship on visual and material culture, art history, and archaeology.

Attempts to do away with the constraints of the inherited perception of a trans-regional Muslim world have brought about new approaches of looking at them. Such experiments have inevitably created new, perhaps more subtle, ruptures: temporal junctures between past and present understandings of things, and new, globalised distinctions. Spatial and regional delimitations rely on conceptual frames within which entities are explicated, yet definitions themselves remain fluid despite our dependence on the very idea of definition. “Islamic art” is among the definitions that fall short of assuming a generally accepted outline, often particularly in the regional art historiography of the countries that supposedly are covered by the term. Postulating sets of criteria to imply that the visual and material culture of a Muslim community, or Muslim society, was perceived by that community or society as “Islamic” may lead to unsatisfying results, yet scholarly discourse on art and archaeology needs a discussion of these attempts.

Having been an outpost of the Islamic world between 1541 and 1686, Budapest, the venue of the Fifteenth Ernst Herzfeld Colloquium, would become far removed from this heritage by the nineteenth century. With the growth of temporal and geographic distance, it became natural to turn to Islamic studies in the way other European nations did, whether urged by romantic zeal, or scientific scrutiny. The dramatic reconfigurations of the University of Budapest, now named after the celebrated physicist Baron Loránd Eötvös (1848–1919),

reflect the spatial shifts and changing frontiers of Hungary and its region. It was founded by Cardinal Archbishop Péter Pázmány (1570–1637) in 1635 as an instrument of Catholic revival, at Nagyszombat, now Trnava, in what is now Slovakia, 220 kilometers away from Ottoman-occupied Buda and Pest, given its safe distance from the Ottomans and proximity to Vienna. In the next century, after the end of Ottoman rule and the reconstruction of the old royal capital Buda, the university was moved there, inside the largely vacant royal palace. Finally, during the abolition of monastic orders in the 1780s, it was relocated again from the capital to an abandoned convent on the other bank of the Danube, turning Pest, this emerging commercial hub, into a centre of learning. While the university has never left its new hometown since the eighteenth century, the small town of Pest around it has evolved into another, much more spacious, municipality, the twin city of Budapest. During the 1800s, the University of Budapest quickly grew to become a leading European institution, with renowned schools of Islamic, and in general non-western, studies. In particular, Semitic, especially Arabic, studies should be mentioned, but also the Department of Turkish. The latter, while being the product of the twentieth century, is the oldest of its kind in any university. The host of this colloquium, the Department of Iranian Studies, has become fully established in the twenty-first century, largely due to the efforts of co-organiser Professor Éva Jeremiás. Despite these developments, Islamic art and archaeology has played only a marginal role in local scholarship, except for the study of the heritage of Ottoman Hungary, making our event a significant exception or, perhaps, a turning point.

The contributions to this volume are arranged in a chronological, as opposed to a geographic or thematic, order. They cover a vast territorial range between Central Europe to South Asia and they discuss the themes of frontiers and spaces from a broad variety of perspectives. Spatial liminality is the main concern of Aila Santi's study in which the equation of the House and Mosque of the Prophet in Medina is brought into question, identifying them as two strictly distinct architectural entities where, on the one hand, private and public spheres are separated and, on the other, mundane and sacred spaces set apart. In the essay by Balázs Major, the spatial, functional, and aesthetic repercussions of a military takeover are examined through the case of the Mediaeval Syrian fortress of Qal'at al-Marqab. Laura Hinrichsen follows the routes and fortunes of Mediaeval Arabic manuscripts from Ḥafṣid Tunis to scholarly libraries in Europe in the wake of the Habsburg conquest of Tunis in 1535. Staying in the Habsburg-Muslim contact zone, Maximilian Hartmuth draws attention to an unanticipated dialogue between domed mosques, rear guards of Ottoman splendour, built on both sides of the nineteenth-century border between a retreating Ottoman and – most surprisingly – an advancing Austro-Hungarian Empire. Two mind frames are juxtaposed in the article by Elahe Helbig: that of the inquiring nineteenth-century Swiss industrialist and collector Karl Emil Alpiger (1841–1905), on one side of the camera lens, and the inhabitants of a rural Persia with their changing world, on the other. Filiz Tütüncü Çağlar re-examines both the Eurocentric and Turkified nationalist perceptions of late-Ottoman archaeology, bringing some non-Western yet not non-Muslim protagonists to centre stage and also reminding the reader of the inevitability of international collaboration in archaeological work. Another historiographical survey is offered by Zehra Tonbul who pinpoints two major tendencies below the surface of some heated debates in the scholarly circles of fin-de-siècle Berlin and Vienna: one, hallmarked by Josef Strzygowski (1862–1941), according to which the main carriers of change in art history are migration and geographic diffusion, and another one, led by Carl Becker (1876–1933), which regards changes as the results of a universal cultural histori-

cal development. In Berenike Metzler's theoretical study the hermeneutical border between writing, text, and image, is examined in Arabic and Persian treatises on calligraphy, while Gregory Minissale traces the Mughal concept of space as far as the Mughalesque compositions of contemporary Pakistani artists. Finally, the volume includes an analysis by Yuka Kadoi (originally presented at the Strasbourg colloquium in 2018), about the East Asian sartorial fashion adopted by the Persian Surūsh, a liminal character between this world and the other.

This conference could not have been arranged as smoothly as it was, were it not for the devoted assistance, technical, logistical, and financial alike, of the Avicenna Institute of Middle Eastern Studies, the co-host of the colloquium. Established in 2001 and located in Piliscsaba, just outside Budapest, the Avicenna Institute is the first and only Hungarian research centre which is devoted entirely to the study of the Islamic world. Our warmest thanks, therefore, go to Director Miklós Maróth. I extend my thanks to László Borhy, Rector of the Eötvös Loránd University, for funding the publication of the present volume.

