

The Islamic City: Historicity and Abstraction

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Course Description

One of the oldest yet most contentious concepts in the study of Islamic history and culture is that of the Islamic City. Both as a religion and as a way of life, Islam was originally framed in a city, indeed The City, al-Medina. That initial model was supplanted by a series of models that were either adopted from the various cultures which Muslims came in contact with or developed in response to the ever-changing cultural, environmental, and social conditions. But the notion of al-Medina seems never to have lost its paradigmatic appeal, particularly in the writing of utopian jurists and philosophers until today. Medieval historians and geographers, on the other hand, evolved a formal and descriptive approach that recorded the changes they witnessed in the cities, although they seldom attempted to explain these changes or to contextualize them. When they did, they offered historical, sociological, and ecological interpretations, and very rarely religious or idealist ones.

Modern historians and social scientists up until the 1970s somehow reversed that approach. Informed by a Weberian notion of the ideal-type, they postulated a rather essentialist Islamic City concept based on a set of morphological and legal criteria they attributed to Islam which seem to transcend the movement of history. They then tried to validate the ideal-type construct by looking for evidence in a tiny sample of pre-modern cities in North Africa and Syria.

This seminar is a quest for a historical framework for the Islamic City both as an urban phenomenon and as a modern analytical concept. It proposes an approach based on the relationship between architectural typology and urban form for the investigation of the morphology and sociology of cities in Islamic history. Through analysis of primary texts and architectural/archaeological data, we will try to identify and examine the leading factors in shaping civic forms and structures in several model cities in the Islamic world from the Medina of the Prophet to pre-modern times. We will assess the role of various urban legacies in the shaping of different Islamic cities and the elements that affected the degree and form of that appropriation. We will probe how Muslims themselves conceptualized, understood, and represented their cities both textually and visually.

We will also reconstruct the history of the concept of the Islamic City from the first remarks of nineteenth-century Orientalist savants and Muslim reformers to the contemporary academic and polemical formulations. We will critically review the body of literature on the Islamic City and evaluate its two general abstractions, the structural and the formal. Finally, we will consider the relevance of the concept itself for the study of cities in Islamic history.

Medina of the Prophet: The Qur'anic Definition

The approach and limits of investigation into the urban history of Islamic cities.

Madina, meaning and etymology of the word.

Madina of the Prophet Muhammad: ideal-type or postmortem reconstruction

Reading:

- Preziosi, Donald, "The Mechanisms of Urban Meaning," in Bierman, Abou-El-Haj, and Preziosi, eds. *The Ottoman city and its parts : urban structure and social order*, 1991. Pp. 3-11
- Campo, Juan Eduardo. *The Other Sides of Paradise: Explorations into the Religious Meanings of Domestic Space in Islam*. Columbia, S C, 1991. Pp. 48-73

Khitat and The Tribal Model

The first garrison towns of Islam. Kufa, Basra, Fustat, Qayrawan.

Orthogonal planning? What model?

City-center: religious and administrative

Tribal structure: Khitat

Reading:

- Djaït, Hichem. *Al-Kufa, naissance de la ville islamique*. Paris, 1986. An English summary of his reconstruction of this pristine Islamic city is in *Encyclopedia of Islam*, 2d edition, vol. 5 See also the articles on Basra, Fustat , and Kairawan.
- Akbar, Jamel. "Khatta and the Territorial Structure of Early Muslim Towns," *Muqarnas*, 6 (1990): 22-32.
- Kubiak, Wladyslaw. *Al-Fustat, Its Foundation and Early Urban Development*. Cairo: American University Press, 1987. Pp 58-75.
- Nezar AlSayyad, *Cities and caliphs : on the genesis of Arab Muslim urbanism*. New York, 1991. Pp. 43-76.

The Classical Model

The Hellenistic and Roman legacy in the Levant. Transformations, continuities, and decadence.

The Umayyad capitals: Damascus and Jerusalem.

The Umayyad cities in the desert: Qasr al-Hayr East, Khirbet al-Mafjar, 'Anjar.

Modified Roman castrum or condensed madina?

Critique of the French theories (Sauvaget and Éliasséeff) on the form of the Islamic City as resulting from the gradual transformation of the orthogonal street pattern of the cities of antiquity.

Reading:

- Kennedy, Hugh. "From Polis to Madina: Urban Change in Late Antique and Early Islamic Syria," *Past & Present* 106 (Feb 1985): 3-27.
- Nezar AlSayyad, *Cities and caliphs*. Pp. 79-111.
- Nimrod Luz, "The Construction of an Islamic City in Palestine: The Case of Umayyad al-Ramla," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, Series 37, 1 (1997): 27-54.

Suggested Reading

- Sauvaget, Jean. "Le plan antique de Damas," Syria 26 (1949): 314-58.
- Idem. Mémorial Jean Sauvaget. Damascus, 1954. Especially the articles on Laodicée-sur-mer, the Citadel of Aleppo, and Sergiopolis, which cover the full range of Sauvaget's interest in pre-Islamic urbanism in the Levant.
- Elisséeff, Nikita. "Damas à la lumière des théories de Jean Sauvaget," in Serjeant, The Islamic City. Pp.157-77.
- Grabar, Oleg, et al. City in the Desert, Qasr al-Hayr East. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1978. Pp. 148-73.
- K.A.C. Creswell. A Short Account of Early Muslim Architecture. ed. James W. Allan. Pp. 91-216, for an architectural overview of all the Umayyad palaces known to us.

The Oriental Model

The Eastern Model: Baghdad of al-Mansur, Hiraqla and al-Qatul (Qadisiyya) of al-Rashid.

Organized plan: Samarra.

Changes in administrative and military structures:

The Development of a Provincial Capital: Fustat, Qata'i', 'Askar, al-Qahira.

The influence of the center's model: was Samarra the urban or the structural paradigm?

Environmental factors, security factors, persistence of old models. Is there a common type of development in provincial capitals?

Reading:

- C. Wendell, "Baghdad: Imago Mundi and Other Foundation Lore," IJMES 2 (1971): 99-128.
- Valerai Fiorani Piacentini, "Madina/Shahr, Qarya/Deh, Nahiya/Rustaq. The city as political-administrative institution: the continuity of a Sasanian model," Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam 17, (1994): 85-107.
- Jacob Lassner, The Topography of Baghdad in the Early Middle Ages. (Selections).
- Idem, "The Caliph's Personal Domain, The City Plan of Baghdad Re-Examined," in Hourani and Stern, The Islamic City: A Colloquium. Pp. 103-18.

Suggested Reading

- K.A.C. Creswell, A Short Account of Early Muslim Architecture, ed. James W. Allan. Pp. 229-42 (Baghdad); 331-44 (Samarra).
- Saleh Ahmad El-Ali, "The Foundation of Baghdad," in Hourani and Stern, The Islamic City: A Colloquium. Pp. 87-101.
- J. M. Rogers, "Samarra: A Study in Medieval Town Planning," in Hourani and Stern, The Islamic City. Pp. 119-56.

The Morphology of the Medieval Model

The question of the Citadel.

The ruler's city and the ruled's city.

The Citadel and the City: Cairo; Aleppo; Granada.

Reading:

- Ayalon, David. "The Muslim City and the Mamluk Military Aristocracy," *Proceedings of the Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities* 2 (1968): 311-29.
- Bacharach, Jere L. *Administrative Complexes, Palaces, and Citadels: Changes in the Loci of Medieval Muslim Rule*, in Bierman, Abou-El-Haj, and Preziosi, eds. *The Ottoman city and its parts : urban structure and social order*, 1991. Pp. 11-28
- Grabar, Oleg. "The Architecture of Power: Palaces, Citadels and Fortifications," in G. Michell, *Architecture of the Islamic World: Its History and Social Meaning*. London, 1978. Pp. 65-79.
- Tabbaa, Yasser. "Circles of Power: Palace, Citadel, and City in Ayyubid Aleppo." *Ars Orientalis* 23 (1993): 181-200.

The Sociology of the Medieval Model

What happened after the introduction of the citadel as the physically-separate residence of the ruling class?

The alienation of the foreign ruling class from the urban population.

The fragmentation of the city's fabric into smaller units whose security was the responsibility of the inhabitants.

Capital cities in early and medieval Islam and the politico-military background of their structures.

Reading:

- Lapidus, Ira. *Muslim Cities in the Later Middle Ages*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1967. Esp. Chapter Two: The Mamluk Regime in the Life of the Cities.
- Idem, "Urban Society in Mamluk Syria," in Hourani and Stern, *The Islamic City*. Pp. 195-205.
- Michael Chamberlain, *Knowledge and Social Practice in Medieval Damascus, 1190-1350*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994. Pp. 27-68.

Background Reading for the Medieval Period:

- Hodgson, Marshall G.S. *The Venture of Islam: Conscience and History in a World Civilization*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974. Vol. 2, *The Expansion of Islam in the Middle Periods*. Pp. 12-151.

Suggested Reading

- Humphreys, R. Stephen. "Urban Topography and Urban Society: Damascus under the Ayyubids and Mamluks." In his, *Islamic History: A Framework for Inquiry*. Minneapolis, 1988. Pp. 209-32.
- Rabbat, Nasser. "The Ideological Significance of the Dar al-'Adl in the Medieval Islamic Orient." *The International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 27, 1 (Feb 1995): 3-28.

The View from Within: Ibn Khaldun and Maqrizi

The View from Within: Ibn Khaldun, Maqrizi, Ibn Battuta

The legal basis of the Muslim urban community. The Muslim State.

Reading:

- Ibn Khaldun, *The Muqaddimah : an introduction to history*; translated from the Arabic by Franz Rosenthal; abridged by N. J. Dawood. Princeton, 1969. Pp. 35-48; 91-295.
- Tarif khalidi, "Some Classical Islamic Views of the City," in *Studia Arabica and Islamica: Festschrift for Ihsan 'Abbas*, ed. Wadad al-Qadi, Beirut, 1981. Pp. 265-76.
- Al-Farabi, *Mabadi' Ara' Ahl al-Madina al-Fadila*. Trans. R. Walzer, Oxford, Clarendon, 1985. (Selections).

Suggested Reading

- Grabar, Oleg. "The Architecture of the Middle Eastern City from Past to Present: The Case of the Mosque," In: Ira Lapidus, *Middle Eastern Cities: A Symposium*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1969. Pp. 26-46.
- Sylvie Denoix, *Decrire le Caire Fustat-Misr d'apres Ibn Duqmaq et Maqrizi : l'histoire d'une partie de la ville du Caire d'apres deux historiens egyptiens des XIVE-XVe siecles*, Cairo: Institut francais d'archeologie orientale du Caire, 1992.
- Ahmad ibn Ali Maqrizi, *Mamluk economics : a study and translation of al-Maqrizi's Ighathat al-ummah bi-kashf al-ghummah*, ed. Adel Allouche, Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1994.

The View from Within: Travelers and Illustrators

Ibn Battuta

Wasiti

Matrakci

Reading:

- Norman J. Johnston, "The Urban World of the Matraki Manuscript," *Near Eastern Studies Journal* 30, (1971): 159-76.
- Ibn Battuta, *Travels of Ibn Battuta*, Trans. H. A. R. Gibb, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1962. (Selections).
- Grabar, O., *The Illustrated Maqamat of the Thirteenth Century: the Bourgeoisie and the Arts*, in *The Islamic City: A Colloquium*. pp. 207-22.
- Grabar, O., "Pictures or Commentaries: The Illustration of the Maqamat of al-Hariri," in *Studies in Art and Literature of the Near East in Honor of Richard Ettinghausen*, edited by P.J. Chelkowski, New York University Press, New York, 1974. Pp. 85-110.

Suggested Reading

- A. Karamustafa, "Introduction to Ottoman Cartography", *History of Cartography*, ed. J. B. Harley and David woodward, vol.2.book 1, p.206-227

- J.M.Rogers, "Itineraries and Town Views in Ottoman Histories", History of Cartography, ed. J. B. Harley and David Woodward, vol.2.book 1, p.228-255

Modern Concept of the Islamic City

The modern abstractions of the Islamic city: structural and formal.

Reading:

- Grunbaum, Gustave von. "The Structure of the Muslim Town," In: Islam: Essays in the Nature and Growth of a Cultural Tradition. London: 1961. Pp. 141-58.
- Marçais, Georges. "L'urbanisme musulman," in: Articles et conférences, mélanges d'histoire et d'archéologie de l'occident musulman, vol. 1. Algiers: 1957. Pp. 211-31.
- Serjeant, R.B., ed. The Islamic City: Selected Papers from the Colloquium held at the Middle East Center, Faculty of Oriental Studies, Cambridge, UK, 19 to 23 July 1976, Paris, 1980.
- Wheatley, Paul. "Levels of Space Awareness in the Traditional Islamic City," Ekistics 253 (Dec 1976): 354-66.

Suggested Reading

- Max Weber, The City. Trans. D. Martindale and G. Neuwirth, New York, Free Press, 1958. (Selections).
- Wheatley, Paul. "The Concept of Urbanism," In: Ucko, Tringham and Dimbleby, Man, Settlement and Urbanism. London, 1972. Pp. 601-37.

Critiques of the Concept

Critics of the theories on the Islamic city: a review

Reading:

- Stern, Samuel. "The Constitution of the Islamic City," In: A. Hourani and S. Stern, The Islamic City: A Colloquium. Pp. 1-30.
- Ilbert, Robert. "La ville islamique: réalité et abstraction," Les cahiers de la recherche architecturale 10/11 (1982): 6-13.
- Abu-Lughod, Janet. "The Islamic City- Historical Myth, Islamic Essence, and Contemporary Relevance," IJMES, 19 (May1987) 155-76.

Suggested Reading

- Abu-Lughod, Janet. Before European Hegemony, The World System A.D. 1250-1350, N. Y., 1989.
- André Raymond, The Great Arab Cities in the 16th-18th centuries: An Introduction, New York and London: New York University Press, 1984. (Selections)
- Bianquis, Thierry. "Derrière qui prieras-tu, vendredi? Reflexions sur les espaces publics et privés, dans la ville arabe médiévale," Bulletin d'Études Orientales 17-18 (1988): 7-21.
- Bulliet, Richard. The Camel and the Wheel. Cambridge, 1975. Pp 216-36

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- Abu-Lughod, Janet. *Before European Hegemony, The World System A.D. 1250-1350*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1989.
- AlSayyad, Nezar. *Cities and caliphs : on the genesis of Arab Muslim urbanism*. New York: Greenwood Press, 1991.
- Bierman, Irene A., Rifaat A. Abou-El-Haj, Donald Preziosi, eds. *The Ottoman city and its parts : urban structure and social order*. New Rochelle, N.Y. : A.D. Caratzas, 1991.
- Bulliet, Richard. *The Camel and the Wheel*. New York : Columbia University Press, 1990. Reprint, with new pref. Originally published: Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1975.
- Chellavier, Dominique, ed. *L'espace social de la ville arabe*, Paris: Maisonneuve et Larose, 1979.
- Creswell, K.A.C. *A Short Account of Early Muslim Architecture*, James W. Allan ed., Cairo: American University Press, 1989.
- Cuneo, Paolo. *Storia dell'urbanistica. Il mondo islamico*, Roma-Bari: Editori Laterza, 1986.
- Djaït, Hichem. *Al-Kufa, naissance de la ville islamique*. Paris: Maisonneuve et Larose, 1986.
- Grabar, Oleg, et al. *City in the Desert, Qasr al-Hayr East*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1978.
- Hodgson, Marshall G. S. *The venture of Islam; conscience and history in a world civilization*. 3 vols. Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1974.
- Hourani, A. and S. Stern. *The Islamic City: A Colloquium*. Oxford: Cassirer, 1970.
- Jones, A.H.M. *The Cities of the Eastern Roman Provinces*. London: Oxford University Press, 1971.
- Ibn Khaldun. *The Muqaddimah : an introduction to history; translated from the Arabic by Franz Rosenthal ; abridged and edited by N. J. Dawood*. Princeton, N.J. : Princeton University Press, 1969. SERIES: Bollingen series, 160.
- Kubiak, Wladyslaw. *Al-Fustat, Its Foundation and Early Urban Development*. Cairo: American University Press, 1987.
- Lapidus, Ira. *Muslim Cities in the Later Middle Ages*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1967. and/or Ira Marvin Lapidus, *Muslim Cities in the Later Middle Ages*. Student edition, Cambridge [Cambridgeshire] ; New York : Cambridge University Press, 1984.
- Lapidus, Ira, ed. *Middle Eastern Cities: A Symposium on Ancient, Islamic, and Contemporary Middle Eastern Urbanism*, Berkeley & Los Angeles: California University Press, 1969.
- Lassner, Jacob. *The Topography of Baghdad in the Early Middle Ages*. Detroit: Wayne University Press, 1970.
- Le Strange, G. *Baghdad during the Abbasid Caliphate from Contemporary Arabic and Persian Sources*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1900.
- Pascual, Jean-Paul, ed. *Villes au Levant: Hommage a André Raymond*, Aix-en-Provence: Numéro Spécial de la Revue du Monde Musulman et de la Méditerranée, vols. 55/56, 1990.
- Raymond, André. *The Great Arab Cities in the 16th-18th centuries: An Introduction*, New York and London: New York University Press, 1984.
- Serageldin, Ismail and Samir el-Sadek, eds. *The Arab City, its Character and Islamic Cultural Heritage: Proceedings of a Symposium Held in Medina, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia*, Meidna: The Arab Towns Organization, 1981.

- Serjeant, R.B., ed. *The Islamic City: Selected Papers from the Colloquium held at the Middle East Center, Faculty of Oriental Studies, Cambridge, UK, from 19 to 23 July 1976*, Paris: UNESCO, 1980.
- Sauvaget, Jean. *Alep, Essai sur le développement d'une grande ville syrienne, des origines au milieu du XIXe siècle*. Paris: Librairie Orientaliste P. Geuthner, 1941.
- Sauvaget, Jean. *Mémorial Jean Sauvaget*. Damascus: Institut Français de Damas, 1954.
- Schacht, Joseph and C.E. Bosworth. *The Legacy of Islam, Second Edition*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979.
- Sourdel, Dominique. *Medieval Islam*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1983.
- Yukawa, T., ed. *The Proceedings of International Conference on Urbanism in Islam (ICUIT)*. Tokyo: The Middle Eastern Culture Center in Japan, 1989.
- Fustel de Coulanges, *The Ancient City*. New York, Doubleday, 1956. (Selections).