

***Daaira*, Devotional Acts, and the Transformation of Space in Senegal, West Africa**

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In this article I concern myself with spaces of worship and acts of devotion that are conducted in everyday places in the lives of Senegalese Sufi Muslims in West Africa. These places might include the house and domestic courtyard or the market-place, and my concern is with how individuals experience and manage the transformation of mundane, quotidian space to that set apart for acts of prayer and devotion. I draw on a range of contexts to illustrate how these transformations of space occur, with a view to arguing that the demarcation of physical places for devotional activities points to the conception of imagined spaces in which spiritual experience and transcendence become a reality for the devotee. These spaces require a set of procedures to be enacted by human beings in order to gain a sense of control over disruptive forces with the potential to undermine the experience of mystical union sought by the faithful.

I turn first to examine in general terms the *daaira*, the focus of worship and devotion for many Senegalese Sufi Muslims. I then move on to consider forms of voluntary association in a settlement (Thiaroye) on the outskirts of the Dakar conurbation in the Cap Vert peninsula, with particular reference to developments over time in the social relations comprising two types of local community action. This investigation leads on to a discussion of the transformations of space that occur at the heart of these associations.

The *Daaira*

One of the central institutions examined below is the *daaira* or *dahira*,¹ a Senegalese term derived from the Arabic for “circle,” referring to a cell or local unit of a Sufi order dedicated to its leader or head – a “grand marabout” or “sheikh,” a person through whom God’s grace or *baraka* is revealed. *Daairas* are a relatively recent phenomenon, growing in number over the last 50 years or more in Senegal’s urban areas, and are associated with the ru-

ral exodus and the processes of adaptation to new forms of sociality evident in towns and cities (Monteil 1980). They meet regularly (once a week or less frequently) in specific neighbourhoods or *quartiers* in order to sing religious songs, perform prayers, engage in other acts of devotion, and organise religious activities of numerous kinds.

Daairas have received some attention in scholarly literature, although little study has been given to them as the foci of acts of devotion and worship. They have, for example, been described as “structures of collective allegiance” to a religious leader (Villalón 1995: 150). The name and the organisation of these circles of followers are unique to Senegal, and where they are found outside the borders of the country in neighbouring states, they are usually the product of migrant Senegalese residents coming together to celebrate their allegiance to a Senegalese marabout. The uniquely Senegalese character of this institution is summed up by Villalón: “If Sufism can be called the ‘Senegalese mode of Islamic devotion,’ the *daaira* is the Senegalese mode of urban Sufism” (1995: 151).

It is as a form of social organisation that the *daaira* has gained most of its exposure in academic writing. A type of voluntary association organised by residents of a neighbourhood, by workers in the same factory or business enterprise, or by students at university, the *daaira* functions in a number of ways. It presides over evening meetings of prayer, devotional exercises, religious singing, discussions of the life and work of the brotherhood’s founder, as well as involving lectures and sermonising. The meetings are often held in open areas of ground temporarily occupied by awnings and rented chairs for the assembled faithful or on a smaller scale in the houses of individual members. They also act as mutual aid societies, as rotating credit and savings associations, in which members make small, regular financial contributions to the group, and on which members draw funds in turn by lots to support family ceremonies – life cycle rituals such as the naming of a child seven days after birth, marriage celebrations, or funeral expenses. In addition to providing the means for families to meet large and sometimes unexpected financial burdens, the group coordinates the collection of donations (*addiya*) from members to be handed over to their marabout at major annual celebrations of a Sufi order held at its respective important religious sites or centres: for instance, the town of Touba for the Murids, or Tivouane for the Tijans. These communal visits to a marabout by his disciples, organised at a local level by the *daaira*, are referred to as *siyara* (a term derived from the Arabic *ziara*) and conducted as part of the an-

¹ These alternative spellings derive from different orthographic conventions. “*Dahira*” is the conventional spelling in most French texts, whereas *daaira* or *daa’ira* has now been adopted in most English language writings on the subject.

nual *gammu* or *maggal*, a time of celebration and pilgrimage to the religious centre of a Sufi order, where acts of devotion, submission, and dedication to a brotherhood are performed.

The sociological and political importance of *daairas* has been noted by numerous commentators.² They point out how the organisations provide tangible material benefits to members through the mutual aid and support, as well as the credit and underlying trust, they offer each other; they also build a sense of solidarity and network of communal relations in urban areas. Furthermore, they are institutional channels that link an individual disciple to his or her marabout, thereby establishing the foundation for the way in which a person may build a personal affective tie and sense of allegiance to a religious leader. The interpretative frameworks in which such commentaries have often been placed tend emphasise the functional attributes of the *daaira* as an institution: namely: the role that it plays in the generation and maintenance of social cohesion in urban locales; how it operates as a crucial form of social organisation in “the articulation of Senegal’s religiously based civil society” (Villalón 1995: 150).

That the institution of the *daaira* arose during colonial times appears to be well established in the literature. Cruise O’Brien (1971, 1988) plots the shifts in the organisational structure of the Murid brotherhood from its rural roots in the central hinterland of Senegal to the burgeoning towns and cities in the post-World War II period, when from the 1950s onwards urban associations of many sorts proliferated. The first *daairas*, however, seem to have appeared as early as the 1920s among the Tijaniyya, and as an institution they were not, and are not, linked uniquely or exclusively to any specific brotherhood, but are common to all Senegalese *turuq* (spiritual paths).

The institution of the *dara* (from *dâr* or “house” in Arabic), a form of Qur’anic school and system of collective farming in rural areas among Murids, was the basis of the wealth and power of this brotherhood. This agrarian base, in which disciples worked for the promise of redemption and paradise, was progressively displaced by the *daaira* system as rural populations migrated to towns in search of new forms of employment and opportunity. The marabouts, however, remained in the villages where their estates were located and their predecessors buried. Thus, the *daaira* system was an innovation to reconnect sheikh and disciple, to bridge the gap

that had grown between the rural religious leader and urban follower. Some marabouts established fields on the outskirts of towns, such as on the Cap Vert peninsula outside Dakar, to where the faithful urbanites might travel to work on the cultivation of crops for their master’s benefit. However, payments by town-based disciples to their marabouts soon replaced this system of support, and the “Wednesday payment” (*allarba*) was soon developed as a substitute for labouring in the “Wednesday field.” The *daaira* became, therefore, the urban counterpart to “le champ du mercredi” (Diop 1981: 80). Those marabouts who relocated in towns adapted the *dara* as a dedicated Qur’anic school based in their own houses, attracting as pupils the children of the neighbourhood whose role was to be sent out on the streets by their master to beg on their teacher’s behalf to support their education.

Villalón, in a study of the town of Fatick in central Senegal, has pointed out significantly that the *daaira* is a local response to the social transformations that accompanied the experience of the colonial period, specifically to urbanisation. Furthermore, he argues that the “organizational structures owe more to political than religious logic,” and that “this local transformation of Islam answers directly to a non-religious imperative” (1995: 154). In support of this case, he alerts us to the internal organisation of the associations that is based on a model that reflects colonial experience, as evinced by the number of officials and the proliferation of titles with the groups. The vocabulary and terminology that is used to refer to offices and functions within *daairas* are in French (e.g., Président, Trésorier Général, etc.), rather than in Wolof, Pulaar, or Arabic, although French is never the working language of them (Villalón 1995). While the impress of colonialism on consciousness of local Muslims may be thus apparent, it must not be forgotten that “It is ... religious fervour, the shared belief in one man’s charismatic gift, which is at the bottom of this ... success story” (Cruise O’Brien 1988: 142). It is, therefore, to the acts of devotion and worship, and to personal religious experience, that I now turn as a counterpoint to the secular purposes of religious ritual and association.

Two Ethnographic Vignettes

The ethnography that I draw upon was collected during numerous periods of fieldwork conducted since 1980 in the town of Thiaroye, located on the outskirts of the Dakar conurbation. Urban development over the last 50 years or so has progressively

² E.g., Cruise O’Brien (1971); Diop (1981); Rosander (1997); Villalón (1995). – See E. Evers Rosander 1997 for an important contribution to our understanding of women’s associations and their role in *daairas*.

spread east from the tip of the Cap Vert peninsula toward the old colonial port of Rufisque. Over the period of over 30 years since the start of my fieldwork, a number of different forms of association have developed in the area, and these have been the foci of acts of devotion and worship linked to a specific Sufi brotherhood, the Tijaniyya.

Haalpulaar Cultural Associations

In the mid 1960s, during the early stages of settlement of a *quartier* in Thiaroye, nineteen or so Haalpulaar or “Tukulor” families had formed a mutual aid and support group called the “Fedde Sahabaabe,” or literally the “Age-set of the Companions of the Prophet.”³ These families had migrated from Fuuta Toro in the north of the country and established themselves in a new urban milieu. The Fedde was a mutual aid association that organised savings for members, each of whom paid a weekly subscription.⁴ It was also the focus of rituals and celebrations on the occasion of the births, marriages, or deaths of its families’ members, and it helped members meet the expenses of Muslim festivals such as Tabaski (the local name for Id al-Adha or al-Kabir) at which a ram is sacrificed in memory of Abraham’s devotion to God.

The group would meet each Thursday evening (Friday eve) for entertainment and a meal, and these weekly *soirées* were held in turn in members’ households. During such meetings, subscriptions (275 FCFA) would be collected and the funds allocated to one individual member whose name was drawn by lot from a hat. After all members had received such an allotment, the cycle would start over again. At the outset, there were around two hundred names of members of the association, which was headed by a *Président* who would retain 5,000 FCFA to defray his own personal expenses incurred in administering the group. Not all names in the list of subscribers were active members, and many fewer (around 20 or so) actually turned up to attend the Thursday evening meetings. Membership was drawn from all of the social categories of Haalpulaar society, from the high status *toorobe* “clerics” to “casted” craftsmen and women, and individuals of former servile status. The founding president of the association was a high status “cleric,” and

most of the group’s major offices were occupied by individuals from the higher echelons of society.

In this context, the specialised roles of each of the social categories represented by its members were played out within the association’s gatherings. At a feast to celebrate the president’s return from Mecca, for example, the domestic serviles associated with the patron’s family turned up to assist with the preparations, and some of the craftsmen and women-folk performed menial tasks for the occasion. Similar kinds of role were played out in the Thursday evening meetings, for which guests turned up at the selected venue from around 5.30 to 6 P.M. Mint tea (*ataya*) and peanuts (*gerite*) would be served to folk on arrival. This would be followed by a meal prepared by the household’s women, no matter what the status of the host’s family. Conventional social roles were nonetheless crucial in the organisation of events that followed during the evening.

For example, during a dispute between members of the association about the failure of one of their number to make regular contributions, the matter was resolved once the women’s and men’s section had broken off separately to come to a view over the way forward. The views of each party were broadcast to the assembled members by “caste” spokesmen, whose conventional role it is to disseminate the words and thoughts of others in public settings.

Members of specialised “castes” whose expertise lay in music and poetry would break into song during the Thursday evening gatherings, the singers being accompanied by a young *bambaado* or *hoddu*-player.⁵ The singer, from the weaver social category, would recite the histories and genealogies of renowned Haalpulaar families; he would sing of the beauty of the river Senegal that flows through their homeland of Fuuta Toro in the north, of the fine features and graceful stature of Futanke women, of the characteristics of cattle, and of the pride felt in cultivating treasured plots of land in the river flood basins. These were songs of reminiscence and nostalgia for the lands they had left behind for the urban realities they now experienced. The “Fedde” was very much an institution geared towards the maintenance and celebration of forms of cultural life specific to Haalpulaar individuals, particularly those forms they had known in Fuuta Toro. It was as much a vehicle for the conservation of the language of Pulaar, of their cultural knowledge, and social specialisations in a social milieu dominated by Wolofs, whose language was the *lingua franca*

3 The Pulaar word *fedde* refers to an age-set of males or females who undergo initiation into adulthood together.

4 The association was also referred to as a *giite*, which can be translated as a *nat* in Wolof, *tontine* in French, or a rotating savings and credit organisation in most literature in English.

5 A *hoddu* is a kind of 5-stringed guitar played by members of a specific “caste,” the *wambaabe*.

of the central regions of the country which they now inhabited.

At the heart of the meetings there were other agendas too, linked especially to prayer (*salaatu*) and devotional exercises (*zihr*). The last two prayers of the day (known locally as *futuro* or *timis* and *isha* or *geuye*) would be performed at the meeting, around dusk at 7 P.M. and during hours of darkness towards 9 P.M. The men would lay out their prayer mats or animal skins⁶ in the courtyard of the host's house to form a large almost continuous carpeted area, which constituted the praying ground. The women would gather individually or in small groups on the periphery of the yard to prepare to pray. The ritual ablutions (*sallige*) having been performed, and the direction of the *qibla* established, prayers were led by the *imam es salat*, a man most usually drawn from one of the higher social categories.⁷ The faithful (*maamum*) would line up in rows behind him in no particular order of status, and follow his lead in the recital of prayers. The canonical or ritual prayers were terminated by the recitation of *duwo*, a petitionary prayer offered up by the Bilal,⁸ during which the congregation hold the palms of their hands open to heaven and draw them down over their faces onto their chests as the prayer comes to an end. This is an act of anointing oneself with the divine blessing the prayer is thought to invoke. The end of evening is often thought to be an appropriate moment to recite the *wazifa*, one of the formulary prayers of the Tijani *wird* or litany, which was performed by those in the group who had not completed the cycle of *zikr* or remembrances of God that day. The individuals concerned would remain kneeling on their prayer mats quietly uttering the prayers to themselves until all nine parts of the *wazifa* were finished. The group would disperse after the last prayer of the day.

The Tijani Daaira

A *daaira* linked to the Tijaniyya started to operate in Thiaroye, and it became popular in the mid-

1990s among those remaining members of the Fedde, which by now was reduced in number. The Haalpulaar community that had established itself in the *quartier* was centred around the household of a *toorodo* cleric, El Hajj Demba Ngaydo, who had acted as Président of the Fedde. He had been the patron (*njartigi*) to a number of men-of-skill (*nyeenybe*) or low caste families in the *quartier*, but by 1995 he was dead and only 5 or 6 members of the Fedde continued to meet on an intermittent basis. Many of the members had themselves died and the association seemed to be on its last legs.

The new *daaira* was led by a local marabout who was not of high social status (of fisherman origin), and the relationships between the faithful in the group took on a different character from those in the Fedde. One of the "casted" craftsmen, someone who had a fine reputation as a weaver, singer, and healer, had now become on occasion the *imam-as-salat*, the leader of the group prayers, who chanted the litany and performed the *rakahs* which the congregation would follow. This role contrasted with the one he occupied in the Fedde, where he had a lower profile position and would defer to the religious authority of group members of higher social status. The role he took was that of the *naybu*, the one who stood in for the imam when he was not present. The *daaira* nonetheless operated as a savings and credit association for its members, as well as being a channel through which funds were directed towards the leaders of the Tijani brotherhood.

This group would also meet on a Thursday evening in the household of one of its members, but the tone of the meetings was more devotional than recreational, focused more on Muslim imperatives than those dealing with the cultural identity of a displaced migrant population. The two evening prayers would be offered up in much the same manner as in the Fedde, and a prayer ground was established by the congregation, but this time by placing down one large woven "Perisan" carpet in the courtyard of the house specifically for the purpose of prayer. This was reminiscent of the kind of fine quality, sumptuous carpets laid out in large local mosques. Indeed, it was considered that if twelve or more worshippers met in such a group, the setting would "become a mosque" in its own right; if there were fewer than twelve persons, they would have to go to a mosque, especially if it were a Friday when it was expected that the devout should attend a recognised place of worship for afternoon prayer and devotions. After the canonical prayers, the faithful would remain kneeling in their ranks, and a set of devotional exercises would be performed.

One important activity was the singing of devo-

6 An animal skin that serves as a prayer mat is called *salliguru* (*calliguri*, pl.), a term which has the same root as the verb *salligaade*, meaning "to perform ritual ablutions before prayer."

7 "To lead prayers" is translated in Pulaar by the verb *juuluude*. "To pray" is *juulde*, and a Muslim is referred to as a *juuldo*, "one who prays." The identity of being a local Muslim is expressed through this ritual act of devotion.

8 *Duwo* is derived from the Arabic *du'â'*, "a call upon God"; the Bilal is a term often used to refer to the person who opens and closes the canonical prayers, and is the name of Moham-med's black slave who became the first muezzin.

tional poems written by the grand marabouts of the Tijaniyya order in Senegal. This genre of song is known as *teysir* amongst Tijans or more generally *qasida* (pl. *qasa'id*), a praise-song directed to an illustrious figure.⁹ One famous 19th-century *qasida* in Pulaar is a eulogy by Muhammadu Aliou Tyam of the life and deeds of Al Hajj Omar Tal, the prominent Tijani sheikh who is remembered as the one who introduced the brotherhood to the Western Sudan.¹⁰ The *qasa'id* sung on these occasions were the ones written by grand marabouts in praise of the Prophet Mohammed, and it was considered to be an essential part of devotional practice to recite these verses and have the words act upon the individual persons present. It was the craftsman-singer's role to perform these verses in the *daaira*, and other people present would accompany him in those parts they knew by heart.

Members of the group held that the Sufi saints who composed these verses were elevated to their status by the fact that the Prophet Mohammed was so swayed by the praise and devotion contained within the songs that he connected them directly to the Almighty. Their status as holy men derives in the most part, therefore, from the power of the songs they composed in the Prophet's name. The importance of singing these songs in devotional settings is that the group of worshippers would as a consequence be showered with the *baraka* or God's blessings trapped within the words.

Another powerful set of devotional practices for the members of the *daaira* was the recital of the *wazifa*, one part of the Tijani litany. Whereas the *lazima*, the first part of the litany, was considered to be part of one's private acts of devotion to be performed before leaving the house in the morning or the evening, the chanting of *wazifa* had a particular significance for the group. Commonly performed at mosques on a Friday, but equally possible in the *daaira* if it numbered more than twelve members, the group would form a circle around the *wazifa* blanket (a piece of white cotton cloth two metres wide by four long) and the chanting of the supernumerary prayers would begin.

The *wazifa* contains a number of formulary prayers and litanies, but of especial significance are the *salatul fatih* (The Blessing of the One Who Locks), to be repeated fifty times, and the *jawharat-kamal* (The Pearl Or Jewel of Perfection), to be

repeated twelve times.¹¹ The latter, "The Jewel," is a praise song written by Cheikh Ahmadou Tidiane, the name used locally to refer to the founder of the Tijaniyya,¹² for the Prophet Mohammed. It is considered by Tijans to be part of a pact forged between the Khalifa and the Prophet, who allowed the founder direct access to Allah. The pact suggests that should your deeds be not sufficient to grant you paradise after death, the Prophet will intercede on your behalf since He recognises you through your participation in the chanting of the *wazifa*. It is held, furthermore, that in the group recitation of this formulary prayer, during the fourth recital of the prayer, and once the fourth bead on the rosary has been reached, the Prophet and his four Caliphs are summoned as witnesses.¹³ They come and sit within the circle, and through their presence blessings are brought to all who are gathered there. Through such acts of devotion God's blessing is diffused throughout the being of each individual participant.

Claims about evoking God's presence through the medium of Tijani litany are controversial to many non-Tijani Muslims and to Islamists, who consider that they bring the brotherhood into disre-

11 Ryan (2000: 210f.) offers a translation from Arabic into English of these two supererogatory prayers; see Appendix. Translations from Arabic into French can be found in "Wird Tidiane," by Cheikh Ahmadou Tidiane (n. d.).

12 The person Cheikh Ahmadou Tidiane is conventionally referred to as Ahmad al-Tijani (1737–1815) in English orthography.

13 Membership of a particular Sufi brotherhood is indicated by the number and arrangement of beads on the rosary (*kurus*) used by disciples. A Tijani rosary consists of one hundred beads separated by markers or "witnesses" (*seede*) placed at various points around the whole string. They are arranged in runs of 12, 18, and 20 beads, the order of which is repeated in reverse to the end of the rosary, which is indicated by the "large witness" or *wuudu*, a carved elongated piece from which two additional strings of 10 beads are attached. These are for keeping count of the number of completed cycles of the rosary for multiple recitations of litanies. The Murid rosary, by contrast, comprises only 99 beads set in three runs of 33, each marked by a "witness."

No single arrangement of the rosary offers an easy solution to count the repetitions of prayers. The Tijani litany demands multiples of 30, 50, 100, 12, 1000, and 600. These are easily tracked by the arrangement of beads into distinct runs, and using them in various combinations as multiples until the requisite number of repetitions has been reached. However, the ending of the Friday litany said in the mosque demands the repetition of the formulas "Subhana llaha," "Alhamdulillah," and "Allahu Akbar" thirty-three times – something easily negotiated on the Murid rosary but more problematic on the Tijani one. Individual solutions to this problem are various and include: completing three recitals on three fingers and continuing for the remaining 30 following the first two runs of beads; or leaving out the first bead of the run of 12, and repeating three recitals of the verse for each of the eleven remaining beads in the first run.

9 Murids recite *khassides* of Sheikh Amadu Bamba, verses written in honour and praise of the Prophet Mohammed.

10 This *qasida* was translated and annotated by Henri Gaden and published in 1935 in French (Tyam 1935). It became very popular, and parts of which were incorporated into devotional verse.

pute. These condemnations are compounded in the face of the idea offered by some Tijani commentators that a recitation of the *salatul fatih* (The One Who Unlocks) offers the devotee merit “equivalent to that of the recitation of all the prayers of glorification to God (*tasbīh*) that have ever been said in the universe, all sufi prayers of remembrance of God (*dhikr*), and every invocation (*du‘ā*) long or short, and the [recitation of the] Qur’an six thousand times” (quoted in Ryan 2000: 210).

Transformations of Space

All of the contexts of prayer and devotion described above are located in the everyday worlds of experience of devotees, that is predominantly in the houses and courtyards of persons who set apart areas for significant forms of individual and group spiritual practice. Gilson refers to the spaces set apart for prayer in places outside the mosque as “sacred” (1982: 179). He points out that all a person is required to do to pray anywhere is to perform the proper ritual ablutions and direct himself towards Mecca. He thereby constitutes an invisible but highly defined zone around him – “his sacred space” (179). To quote him at length (180):

At the moment when he is most stripped of his worldly identities, most alone with the God of the community of Muslims, the space around him is an active field that must be controlled if the prayer itself is not to be disrupted.

This is certainly the case for how Senegalese Sufi Muslims appear to conduct themselves, and I would suggest that it is the aspect of control that is of especial significance in delimiting a space that is safe and appropriate for prayer.

In spaces outside the mosque, particular care has to be taken to ensure that the chosen area is free of any possible pollution, just as the devotee has to be prepared by recourse to ritual ablutions. The extent of the ritual ablutions to be performed by an individual depends upon his or her activities prior to pray. The “lesser ablution” (*wudhu*, Ar.) performed routinely before any prayer involves the following: washing the hands three times, starting with the right; washing out the mouth; flushing the nose with water cupped in the right hand; washing the face, and then hands and arms to the elbow; passing the moistened right hand over the hair; washing the ears without allowing the water to penetrate too deeply; and finally washing the feet up to the ankles. The “greater ablution” (*ghusl* [Ar.] or *lootngal ja-naab* [Pulaar]) is performed after sexual intercourse

or, in addition, on the 6th day after menstruation for a woman. This begins by washing the hands three times, again starting with the right, and is followed by a complete cleansing of the body, especially the sexual organs. If water is not available, then either desert or sea sand, or indeed a black pebble from the sea, can be used.

To prepare a place for prayer a parallel form of “spatial” ablution is performed. This activity can be illustrated by a series of observations made in Diourbel market, which in the 1980s was one of the major points of distribution of locally produced cotton cloth. The midday and late afternoon prayers (*tisbar* and *takkusan*) were conducted in the market-place, and were led by a group of Haalpulaar traders dealing in cloth. One of their stalls was set on a raised verandah and was used as the prayer ground. Prior to *tisbar* at around 2 P.M., the area was prepared for worship. It would be swept clean and the *imam es-salat* would then walk across the verandah sprinkling water and uttering petitionary prayers that all evil – of human or non-human origin – may be banished. Once the ablution was completed, the prayer carpets and mats were laid out, and they would remain in place until after the late afternoon prayer time at around 5 P.M. At the end of the day, the carpets were rolled up and stored in the corner of the lock-up kiosk until the following afternoon. One of the traders acted as the muezzin (Bilal or *salli*), calling the whole of the market to prayer with the words “*juli, juli, juli.*” This included not just the cloth traders but also every vendor who might be working that day across the open expanse of the marketplace. These individuals would pray next to their respective stalls, each unfurling his or her own prayer-mat and performing the canonical prayers in their own individual spaces in concert with the imam and assembled traders on the verandah.

The act of purification of the verandah, together with the assembly of a critical mass of 12 or more worshippers, would constitute the space as a temporary “mosque” (*jamaa*) in its own right. This transformation of space from an everyday place of secular activity – of haggling and trade – to one cleansed and controlled by the collective body of the faithful was effected through the performance of a spatial ablution mirroring that performed by the worshippers themselves. It was only in this context that I witnessed such elaborate preparations prior to prayer. The cleansing of place and the banishment of forces disruptive to devotional activity were considered indispensable for an area that was public, which belonged to no one in particular, and was beyond human control and surveillance once the market was closed.

By contrast, devotional spaces established elsewhere, particularly in the house or courtyard, were more regularly occupied and policed on an everyday basis. The homestead was considered to be a less threatening place than those found beyond the four walls of the courtyard. It would appear, therefore, that fewer preparatory acts were required to convert such places into spaces appropriate for prayer. Any place not polluted by urine, faeces, or staining dirt (such as sexual fluids) could be used for prayer. The use of a prayer mat, while not considered essential, could nonetheless afford additional protection to the worshipper from unrecognised pollution. Indeed, the Pulaar term *juulirde* for both the individual space of prayer or the mat used for praying is suggestive of this nonessential sense.

The delimitation of a personal and a collective space for prayer involves a range of procedures that are specific to the kind of place undergoing transformation. The significance of the prayer mat is not to be found in the quality of the mat as an object (Gilsenan 1982), but in the fact that it delimits an imagined space that can be thought to exist irrespective of its physical demarcation.¹⁴ This imagined space is nonetheless frequently given physical expression, either by use of a mat or by other objects placed in front of the devotee or group of devotees. Such a marker is referred to as a “witness” (*seede*), and can be anything from a piece of wood or iron stuck in the ground, a chair, or a bench. It is placed one cubit, or the length of the forearm and hand, from the place of prayer. People should not pass between the worshipper and the witness, since this act could jeopardise the effectiveness of the prayer. Individuals who wish to join with another in prayer should do so from the side or from the rear, avoiding the space in front of the group or individual person.

The use of carpets and mats to delimit a space of worship with respect to some of the devotional acts performed by members of a *daaira* suggest another level of significance. First, as in the case of the assembly of market traders on the verandah too, the laying of a continuous carpeted area for gatherings of 12 or more persons establishes the place as a mosque, an imagined space for prayer and devotion. The collective space of prayer becomes more than the sum of the individual spaces of private devotion. Second, in Tijani *daairas*, a large white cloth is stretched out across the floor for the recital of the *wazifa*, and around this cloth members come together in a circle to chant “The Jewel of Perfection.” A very particular kind of space is created here,

one aimed at the union of humans, gathered in an act of intense supplication, and divine forces, in order to achieve a moment of spiritual transcendence for the devotees. It is said by *daaira* members that the white cloth should be of a size sufficiently large (2 by 4 metres) to accommodate the presence of the Prophet Mohammed and the four Caliphs, who are summoned as witnesses to the act of devotion and remembrance.

If we return to consider the quality of social relations obtaining between members of associations which meet for prayer and devotion, one possible conclusion might be drawn: that *daairas* establish a form of social space in which the hierarchical divisions separating human beings in this world are momentarily suspended in the context of devotion wherein individuals are put in personal communication with the Almighty. But this conclusion needs qualification. While the arrangement of social relations may be modified from the context of an association such as the Fedde to that of the *daaira* – as described above –, this is not always the case with every *daaira* (see Rosander 1997; Villalón 1995). Indeed, whether or not the leading positions and offices of any group are occupied by high status individuals, the imagined devotional space the group creates for the devotee is as important as the social regulation of relationships. The community of the faithful is an ideal form of association that is supposed to transcend the wider social and cultural identities of its individual members. Some associations seem to be more successful than others in achieving this ideal. Yet, it is a sense of this possibility, whether fully realized or not in the organization of the group’s social relations, with which the devotee engages in a space established for devotional activity. The moment of transcendence a member of the group might experience in the recital of the *wazifa* concerns not only a dissolving of the sense of self in the presence of divinity, but also a transcendence of more mundane social divisions that can be achieved in the most ordinary of places.

Appendix

The Blessing of the One Who Unlocks

O our God, bless our master, Muḥammad,
 the one who unlocks what is impenetrable,
 the one who seals up what has gone before,
 the agent of Truth’s victory in Truth,
 the guide to your straight path,
 and [bless] his household.
 [This is] truly due to him
 by his destiny and his exalted position.

¹⁴ The use of animal skins to serve as a prayer mat (*salliguru*) is accepted as long as the animal was *halal* (ritually allowed).

The Jewel of Perfection

O our God, bless and grant peace to the source of
divine mercy,
the true gem encompassing the center of all under-
standing and meaning,
the light of all things that have been brought into
being,
the son of Adam possessed of divine Truth,
the most luminous bolt of lightning in the driving
storm clouds that fill all seas and vessels exposed
to the rain,
Your brilliant light with which You have filled Your
created universe, that encompasses all places in
existence.

O our God, bless and grant peace to the source of
Truth
from which shine out the dwelling places of all re-
ality,
the most upright source of all understanding,
Your perfect and [straightest] path.

O our God, bless and grant peace to
the manifestation of Truth through the Truth, the
greatest treasure,
Your emanation issuing from Yourself and return-
ing to Yourself,
the encompassing of mystical light.

May God bless him and his people with a blessing
that enables us to know Him!

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Gedanken zu einem Werbeplakat mit einem "tätowierten" Maori als Motiv

Ein Beitrag zur europäischen Repräsentation der Indigenen Neuseelands

Georg Schifko

Vor einigen Jahren hatte man insbesondere an den von den Wiener Verkehrsbetrieben zur Verfügung gestellten Werbeflächen Plakate der Sprachschule Inlingua angebracht, die einen Maori mit aufgemalter Gesichtstätowierung, weit aufgerissenen Augen und herausgestreckter Zunge zeigten. Bezugnehmend auf dieses Gesicht stand darunter: "Manche Dinge werden Sie nie ganz verstehen. Mit der Sprache haben Sie's bedeutend leichter" (siehe Abb. 1). Obgleich das Plakat in der Zwischenzeit aus Wiens Stadtbild verschwunden ist, taucht das Motiv leicht abgewandelt im Branchenverzeichnis – den sog. "Gelben Seiten" – noch immer auf. Somit kommt diesem Bild beinahe die Bedeutung eines Firmenlogos zu.

Der Ethnologe Hans Fischer (1998a: 1) weist zu Recht darauf hin, dass Plakate genauso wie Comics innerhalb der Völkerkunde einen bisher vernachlässigten Bereich darstellen. Das hier zu besprechende