

The Resonant Tomb: Sufi Shrines in the Indo-Persian World

“The Resonant Tomb: Sufi Shrines in the Indo-Persian World” explores the importance of audition in the history of Islamic architecture. Sufi shrines make a promising and rich building typology for the purposes. They host recitation, chanting, breathing, poetry, devotional music, and other auditory practices developed by the Sufi tradition. The study of shrines in Iran and Pakistan so far reveals that the truncation of this previously connected tradition into modern nation states requires very different approaches in the two countries. In Iran, Sufi *khanqahs* have been banned from operating as public gathering spaces for devotional purposes. Their maintenance has been taken over from *mutawalis* by *Miras-e-Farhangi*, Institute of Cultural Heritage. Today they serve as beautifully preserved museums, tourist destinations, *lieux de memoire inerte*. In Pakistan, Auqaf department has replaced the hereditary *mutawalis* but kept the shrines alive. Developments in modern Islam, theories of Shia statehood, democracy and theocracy, and global heritage industry if not the confluence of religious pilgrimage and cultural tourism, have placed very different pressures on these sites in Iran and Pakistan. A comparative analysis of this intimately connected and yet radically disconnected network of spaces reveals much about the transmutations of the ritual world and spiritual experience under the sign of modernity.

The technologies of mass media have resulted in uncanny juxtapositions of sacred and profane spaces, here and there, local and global, and much more. That recently my grandmother performed the five days long *Hajj* over the Internet while confined to her bed in Peshawar, harmonizing with the loud orations of the crowds circumambulating *Kaaba*, following the directives of the Meccan *imam* for prayers rather than local calls, begs difficult questions of the relationship between virtual and actual space. Local and global geography have become intertwined in unexpected ways. By enabling vision and audition to travel without the accompanying body, we are confronted with new challenges about the status of body and perception in ritual participation.