



## The Islamic City--Historic Myth, Islamic Essence, and Contemporary Relevance

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*International Journal of Middle East Studies*, Vol. 19, No. 2. (May, 1987), pp. 155-176.

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*International Journal of Middle East Studies* is currently published by Cambridge University Press.

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**Janet L. Abu-Lughod**

## THE ISLAMIC CITY—HISTORIC MYTH, ISLAMIC ESSENCE, AND CONTEMPORARY RELEVANCE

At the present time of resurgence in Islamic beliefs, the question of the Islamic city has once again come to the fore. In many parts of the Arab world, and especially in Saudi Arabia and the Gulf, urban planners with a new found respect for the great achievements of the past are searching for ways to reproduce in today's cities some of the patterns of city building that have been identified as Islamic. They have been influenced, whether wittingly or not, by a body of literature produced by western Orientalists purporting to describe the essence of the Islamic city. The purpose of this article is, in Part I, to examine and criticize some of the basic works in that tradition and then, after deconstructing the concept of the Islamic city, to build up, in Part II, a somewhat different, and hopefully more dynamic and analytic model. The article ends with a brief discussion of whether and in what ways it would be feasible or desirable to build contemporary cities on Islamic principles.

### PART I—THE *ISNĀD* OF THE ISLAMIC CITY

In some ways, historiography takes the same form as the traditions of the Prophet. The authenticity of any proposition is judged by the *isnād* or “chain” by which it descended from the past. Certain chains are deemed more trustworthy than others. One makes reference to an earlier authority in order to substantiate a statement's authenticity or truth. The truth, therefore, is only as good as the *isnad* (chain) of its “construction.”

The first part of this essay is concerned with the criteria of authority, chains of authenticity, and the construction of reality in Orientalist scholarship. Its thesis is that the idea of the Islamic city was constructed by a series of Western authorities who drew upon a small and eccentric sample of pre-modern Arab cities on the eve of Westernization (domination), but more than that, drew upon one another in an *isnad* of authority we intend to trace here.

One of the earliest codifications of the characteristics of the Islamic city, at least the earliest generally cited in subsequent literature, was William Marçais' 1928 article, “L'Islamisme et la vie urbaine.”<sup>1</sup> The article introduces several themes that appear over and over again in subsequent discussions of the Islamic city.

The first is that Islam is essentially an urban religion. In support of this contention, Marçais notes that Muhammad himself was an urbanite suspicious of nomads, that the leadership cadres of the early Islamic proselytizers were members of the urban bourgeoisie of the Peninsula, and that the requirement that the Friday communal prayer be solemnized at a congregational mosque made urban living necessary for the full Muslim life. Marçais uses an earlier link in the chain of Orientalism when he cites Renan to legitimate his view. The phrase he quotes is a simple allegation: "The mosque, like the synagogue and the Church, is a thing essentially urban (*citadine*). Islamism [sic] is a religion of cities." This quotation is particularly intriguing because it undermines the whole enterprise of defining the unique character of the Islamic city; it suggests that Islam shares with Judaism and Christianity the same quality of urbanity.

However, Marçais makes a second point as well. He notes that new cities were often founded by new powers/dynasties in Islamdom, thus acknowledging that Islamic civilization was not merely a set of religious beliefs and laws but also a functioning society which was Islamic in the sense that it organized the life of Muslims into a community not just of believers but of doers.

Finally, Marçais introduces several characteristic elements of the physical city. Citing Ibn Khaldun, Arab geographers and legal doctrines, he reaches a definition of the Islamic city which he contends is quintessential: a city must have a congregational Friday mosque and it must have a market/chief bazaar nearby. Associated with the *jāmi' sūq* (mosque-market) complex was a third physical feature of Islamic cities, the public bath (*ḥammām*), of functional significance to prepare believers for the Friday prayer. Paraphrasing Renan, however, we might note that when the church was also the temporal power, medieval European cities were also defined by the presence of the cathedral and the marketplace in front of it. Thus far, therefore, we have only a very modestly etched idea of the Islamic city, one which poorly distinguishes it from cities in other religious/cultural contexts and one which has as yet no topography.

The ideas of William Marçais were incorporated into two articles written by Georges Marçais, namely "L'urbanisme musulman,"<sup>2</sup> and "La conception des villes dans l'Islam."<sup>3</sup> The former, in particular, constitutes an important link in the chain of constructing the Islamic city. The 1940 discussion begins with a paradox alluded to earlier by William Marçais, namely, that despite the fact that Islam was a religion carried by nomads, it was essentially an urban religion: The mosque created the Islamic city. He notes as well the importance of baths and of markets in the making of the Muslim city.

It is Georges Marçais, however, who gives a morphology to the Islamic city. He notes the differentiation between nonresidential and residential quarters and the fact that residential quarters are often specialized by ethnicity. Finally, he describes the physical organization of the city markets which he suggests are ordered in a certain hierarchy which is not completely accidental. I quote at length from this section because it is to appear again and again in subsequent works, either in quotation marks or paraphrased.

I have said that the center was occupied by the Great Mosque, the old political center, the religious and intellectual center of the city, where the courses were given to students from

the various schools. Near the mosque, the religious center, we find the furnishers of sacred items, the suq of the candle sellers, the merchants of incense and other perfumes. Near the mosque, the intellectual center, we find also the bookstores, the bookbinders and, near the latter, the suq of the merchants of leather and the slipper [*babouche*]-makers which also use leather. This introduces us to the clothing industries and the commerce in cloth, which occupy so large a place in the life of Islamic cities. The essential organ is a great market, a group of markets that carry the mysterious name, Qaiçariya. The Qaiçariya . . . [is] a secure place encircled by walls where foreign merchants, above all Christians, come to display their cloth materials brought from all European countries. The Qaiçariya, placed not far from the Great Mosque, as in Fez or Marrakesh, for example, is a vital center of economic activity in the city. Beyond the commerce of textiles, of the jewellers, the makers of hats [*chechias*], we find the makers of furniture and of kitchen utensils. . . . Farther out are the blacksmiths. Approaching the gates one finds places for caravans . . . then the sellers of provisions brought in from the countryside. . . . In the quarters of the periphery were the dyers, the tanners, and, almost outside the city, the potters.<sup>4</sup>

It is very important to note here that virtually all of the cases cited by Marçais in his article are North African. Note the specific references to babouches (slippers), chechias (tarbushes), Qaiçariya (cloth market)—Maghrib terms that are not generally used in other regions. Note also the contemporary reference to foreign (i.e., European) merchants.

These articles, then, set forth the physical characteristics of the Islamic city primarily as they were observed in North Africa. Much less attention was paid to the social organization of the city nor was any attempt made to explore the underlying causes of the particular patterns found in Islamic cities. This task was essentially left for Robert Brunschvig, in his often cited “Urbanisme médiéval et droit musulman.”<sup>5</sup>

In this crucial piece, Brunschvig argues that it was customary law, applied by judges, that over time yielded the type of physical pattern found in the cities of Islamdom. In his analysis, Brunschvig credits, as his *isnad*, the work of the German scholar, Otto Spies,<sup>6</sup> who examined how “the rights of the neighbors” were treated in Islam according to the Shafi‘i religious school or at least according to the principal Shafi‘i doctors of law. Brunschvig criticizes Spies for ignoring the Maliki rite, even though one of the chief works in that school (Ibn al-Imam) had already been translated into French.<sup>7</sup> (Ibn al-Imam was probably born in the 10th century in Toledo and settled first in Cordoba and then Qairawan.) Another source used by Brunschvig was written in the 14th century by Ibn al-Rami, a Tunisian master-builder later elevated to Chief Qadi.<sup>8</sup> Thus, most of Brunschvig’s analysis is based upon North African jurists, with some parts of it coming from the work of Spies based upon the Shafi‘i rite. Note that the referent for the legal work is increasingly North African, just as the chief referent for the physical structure is Fez. We will return to this point when we follow another line of development in the concept of the Islamic city.

But before doing so, let us look at the culmination of this first *isnad* in the classic 1955 article by Gustave von Grunebaum, “The Structure of the Muslim Town.”<sup>9</sup> This article represented a major step beyond his earlier discussions. Interestingly enough, in von Grunebaum’s earlier book, *Medieval Islam*, there is only the briefest discussion of the role of the city in Islam. The author merely

notes that "Islam, from its very outset unfolding in an urban milieu, favored city development."<sup>10</sup> He further remarks that only in a city, with its Friday mosque, its markets and, possibly, its public baths, can the duties of the religion be fully performed. While he ostensibly quotes the Qur<sup>ʿ</sup>an to substantiate his position, the actual footnote to this passage (appearing on page 174) sends the reader back to the 1928 article by William Marçais. By von Grunebaum's 1955 article, Georges Marçais has also been integrated, as can be seen in the following lengthy quotation which virtually reproduces the excerpt translated earlier.

Near the mosque as a religious center we will find the suppliers of the sanctuaries, the suq of the candle merchants, the dealers in incense and other perfumes. Near the mosque as the intellectual center we will also find the suq of the booksellers, the suq of the bookbinders, and, as its neighbor, the suq of the leather merchants and the makers of slippers.<sup>11</sup>

Paraphrasing Marçais further, von Grunebaum simply alleges that

Adjoining this group of markets we enter the halls of the dealers in textiles, the *qaisariyya*, the only section of the suqs which is regularly roofed and which can be locked and where, therefore, precious materials other than fabrics will also be stored and exchanged. Next to the textile trade the carpenters, locksmiths, and the producers of copper utensils will be located; and somewhat farther from the center, the smiths. Approaching to the gates [of the town] one will find . . . the makers of saddles. . . . Then the vendors of victuals. . . . On the periphery of the town will be situated such industries as . . . the dyers, the tanners, and almost outside the city limits, the potters.<sup>12</sup>

For this entire passage and its quotations von Grunebaum naturally cites the 1940 article by Georges Marçais. But what is remarkable is the fact that he neither comments on nor adds to this presentation. He merely incorporates the description of Fez, Rabat, Tunis, etc., as presented by Marçais, into his generalizations concerning the physical structure of the Islamic city.

With respect to the social organization of the Islamic city he similarly incorporates uncritically the conclusions of earlier Orientalists. He holds with the Marçais's that, in contrast to western medieval ones, Muslim towns lacked municipal organization.<sup>13</sup> Also following their lead he suggests that this lack of municipal government was compensated for by the ethnically specialized quarters with their own sheikhs. Further, he accepts the views of Louis Massignon<sup>14</sup> that guild-like organizations of trades knitted the social organization together, a view which has subsequently been rejected by Orientalists.<sup>15</sup> And finally, von Grunebaum describes how Islamic law shaped the city, paraphrasing many of Brunschvig's arguments and referring to the latter's sources which, as we have seen, deal largely with North Africa.

As one can see from even this brief treatment, the 1955 codification of the concept of the Islamic city by von Grunebaum patched together what Orientalists had agreed were the chief characteristics of the Islamic city, based chiefly on the Maghrib (although, granted, he does cite Sauvaget). Interestingly enough, between von Grunebaum's first reference and his classic article on the Islamic city in 1955, at least one new source had come out by another French North Africanist, Roger LeTourneau, but this work was not cited at all, a fact which is difficult to account for.

In 1949, LeTourneau's first book on Fez, *Fès avant le protectorat. Étude économique et sociale d'une ville de l'occident musulman*,<sup>16</sup> appeared. This book was to become central to a second attempt to build up a general description of the physical structure of the Islamic city, that of Carleton Coon. Certainly, one of the most influential books in western literature dealing with the Middle East is Carleton Coon's text, *Caravan*.<sup>17</sup> In this book, first published in 1951, the entire chapter on "Town and City" is based on the case of Fez, for which the 1949 work of LeTourneau was the chief source. (In the 33 page chapter, 28 focus on or draw their chief evidence from the city of Fez.) Despite this, Coon feels confident about glossing from this case to other Islamic cities.

The Fez case is treated again in LeTourneau's *Le vie quotidienne à Fès en 1900*,<sup>18</sup> and his summary volume, *Les villes musulmanes de l'Afrique du Nord*,<sup>19</sup> largely generalizes from Fez. One striking impression that emerges from rereading the corpus of LeTourneau's work is how redundant it is. Descriptions of Fez in 1900 are projected back to *Fez in the Age of the Marinides*<sup>20</sup> and generalizations about all cities of North Africa bear a suspicious resemblance to Fez both in 1900 and in medieval times!

The focus on the Maghrib continues in the work of Jacques Berque, particularly his oft-cited article, "Médinas, villesneuves et bidonvilles."<sup>21</sup> It is not possible to paraphrase Professor Berque, but beneath the complex prose is a preoccupation with many of the issues raised thus far. Thus, on pp. 12–13 he raises the question of what makes a city in the Maghrib, and in answer refers back to a then 30-year old source, the article by William Marçais, citing the three desiderata: a Friday mosque, markets, and a ritual public bath! Putting this into a typical Berquean transformation, he defines the Islamic city in functional terms as being a place for witness and for exchange, a somewhat different way of saying a place where one finds a mosque and a market.

If the major referent for the foregoing works on the Islamic city is North Africa and more particularly Fez, the crucial beginning point for the next isanad is Syria, drawing on the solid scholarly work of Jean Sauvaget on the cities of Aleppo<sup>22</sup> and Damascus.<sup>23</sup> These studies have had a substantial impact on the evolving image of the Islamic city, but the extent to which his findings (which detail how Islamic cities evolved from Byzantine antecedents) conflict with the image constructed on the basis of North African cities, especially Fez, has rarely been acknowledged. Scholars seem to hold both views at the same time!<sup>24</sup>

Presumably, many of the differences between new princely towns and existing evolving cities had disappeared in the Arab world by the 13th to 16th centuries, the time period covered in Ira Lapidus' now classic but somewhat grandiosely entitled *Muslim Cities in the Later Middle Ages*.<sup>25</sup> Originally a dissertation at Harvard, it was revised for publication in 1967. In the preface to this work, Lapidus modestly demurs from testing the hypotheses of Max Weber concerning the contrast between European and Asian cities and states instead that he will "confine [himself] in his book to a description of several Muslim cities. The book concentrates on Damascus and Aleppo in the period of the Mamluk Empire, 1250–1517, with supporting studies of the Mamluk capital city of Cairo." Despite this demurrer, the opening paragraphs of the body of the text pose a general question of how Muslim towns were governed, and the concluding paragraph of

the book says in broad fashion, "This system of relations constituted the government of Muslim towns."<sup>26</sup> Furthermore, the title has been given more credence than the content. I have seen this work cited by Orientalists as proving that Islamic cities lacked municipal governance.

In short, just as we find the first *isnad* to be based chiefly on French North African sources/studies, particularly focusing on the city of Fez, so we find a second *isnad* based upon the Syrian cities of Aleppo and Damascus, as studied physically by Sauvaget and sociopolitically by Lapidus. In each case, a very tentative set of place-specific comments and descriptions appears. These enter the literature and take on the quality of abstractions. With each telling, the tale of authority grows broader in its application. Forgotten is the fact that only a handful of cities are actually described. Forgotten is the fact that only certain legal codes—on which the Islamic form of city is presumed to be based—have been studied. Forgotten is the fact that Islamic cities have evolved over time and that the sociopolitical system in Damascus and Aleppo in the 14th century under Mamluk rule cannot possibly provide a convincing description of how Islamic cities *sui generis* were governed!

My own book on Cairo fell into the trap set by the Orientalists by accepting many of the earlier authorities about the nature of the Islamic city.<sup>27</sup> The edifice they had built over the years seemed to me a strong and substantial one. Only gradually did it become clear how much a conspiracy of copying and glossing had yielded this optical illusion. But criticisms were already beginning to appear.

In this connection we must turn to the 1970 volume on *The Islamic City* edited by Hourani and Stern.<sup>28</sup> This book marks the beginning of some reasonable questioning of past work. First, Hourani's introduction points out that North Africa provided too many of the cases from which generalizations had been drawn. Second, the articles by Stern and Cahen are virulent refutations of traditional work on guilds, which they suggest were not found in Islamic cities. And third, articles by Saleh Ahmad El-Ali and J. Lassner on the Round City of Baghdad suggest that at least one planned new city in Islam in no way resembled the stereotype.

Since that time, we have added a number of new case studies on Arab cities, and a few more books and many articles have been published with the term—Islamic City—somewhere in the title.<sup>29</sup> But we seem to be no clearer on the issue, well stated in Dale Eickelman's article, "Is There an Islamic City?" but only tentatively answered by Eickelman and Kenneth Brown.<sup>30</sup>

The fact is that most studies still focus on a single case and try to generalize, rather than start with the more fundamental question: Why would one expect Islamic cities to be similar and in what ways? Part II of this paper addresses this question.

Before this, however, a brief biographical note. I went to India in the late seventies, looking for (and hoping not to find) the Islamic city. To my surprise, it was easy to distinguish Muslim from Hindu urban quarters. Several cues seemed to trigger a subliminal response. First, the ratio of males to females on the street and in public places was higher in Muslim than in Hindu areas. Second, butcher shops and trades related to hides and animal products were located almost

exclusively in Muslim areas. And third, it seemed that the decibel level of sounds was higher and more animated in Muslim quarters, of which the call to prayer was only one of the added elements.

These semiotics were chiefly in public space; it was harder to penetrate semi-private and private space, except in several Hindu areas to which I had personal entree. The quarter, in the sense of a semi-private lane or courtyard apartment house, seemed as typical of poor Hindu areas as of Muslim areas, but circumspect behavior outside the private living quarters seemed less in Hindu than in Muslim areas. One explanation for this might be differences in the rules of veiling. Hindu women veil primarily before close relatives (especially fathers-in-law) whereas Muslim women veil chiefly from outsiders. Given this, one would expect Muslims to make a greater distinction between in and out of the house. In brief, it seemed that social patterns of gender segregation and social patterns of proscribed foods were the chief religion-linked variables distinguishing Muslim from Hindu quarters in mixed cities.

This, of course, was not a true test of the case, so I also tried to compare the urban patterns of Muslim-origin cities with those of Hindu-(or Vedic-) origin cities. Here again it was possible to make the distinction. Cities originally occupied by Muslims or substantially expanded by them had far more convoluted street patterns than cities founded by Vedic/Hindu populations. The latter were arranged more regularly, had straight streets unencroached by structures, and achieved privacy largely through court-houses rather than alleys and dead-ends. On the basis of this, it seemed that the most probable cause of these differences might be the nature of the law of real property, rather than religion per se.

The next logical test was to examine the literature about Muslim cities elsewhere. With reference to Africa south of the Sahara, scholars thought there were significant differences between Islamic versus non-Islamic cities. African cities inhabited by Muslim populations were said to contain complex and narrow street systems, courtyards, and the spatial segregation of males and females.

And finally, informants suggest that cities in Muslim areas of Asia (Indonesia and China, for example) exhibit distinctive street patterns, noise levels, and a sense of Islam. By the time one comes to these cases one is sure that if there is something Islamic about cities, it must be more than simple architectural patterns and designs, since the architectural vernaculars become increasingly distant from Damascus and Fez.

What, then, can it be that is distinctive?

It is easy to say what it is not. It is not a form, per se. The careful reader will have noted that the Orientalists' discussions of the Islamic city focus on a unique conjunction of forces that created a few cities they take to be prototypical. The forms of these cities at certain points in time are taken as ideal types and are further abstracted to obtain a final ideal which is created out of congruent forms. This, they suggest, was (is?) the Islamic city. Not only scholars but present practicing Muslims looking to build new Islamic cities have accepted this approach and are trying to find in the planning and architectural repertoire of the past the tricks and techniques that will reproduce it.<sup>31</sup> But these approaches—



scholarly or practical—miss the point. Cities are the products of many forces, and the forms that evolve in response to these forces are unique to the combination of those forces. A city at one point in time is a still photograph of a complex system of building and destroying, of organizing and reorganizing, etc. In short, the intellectual question we need to ask ourselves is: Out of what forces were the prototypical Islamic cities created?

#### PART II—WHAT CREATED THE “TRADITIONAL” CITY IN THE ISLAMIC WORLD

A modest list of the forces that created the traditional Islamic city would include: a terrain/climate; a technology of production, distribution and transportation; a system of social organization; and a legal/political system which, in Islamic places and times, could vary considerably.

It is exceedingly hard to unpack this complex bundle to determine the extent to which Islam influenced any one of them at any point in time. We must dismiss terrain entirely as being Islamic, even though the Arab region in which this genre of city building was developed had a characteristic climate/terrain as well as a historic inheritance which encouraged common solutions. We must also dismiss technology as being Islamic, for there is nothing religious about pack animals, handicraft production, small-scale market arrangements, etc., any more than there is something religious about terrain and climate. Once one eliminates the influence of these factors, one is left with exploring the social, political, and legal characteristics of Islam that shaped, but did not determine, the processes whereby Islamic cities were formed, transformed, and transformed again. These are the characteristics we explore in the rest of this article.<sup>32</sup>

Let us begin with an extreme statement: namely, that the division of the Middle Eastern-North African city into a nested set of territories with clear markers and defended borders was not Islamic per se but reflective of a social order that had much in common with other societies based upon the family writ large (tribalism, clans, and ethnicity). Fluctuations in the strength of the markers and the degree to which boundaries were defended were contingent more upon the state of law and order than on shifts in religious ideology. This is a clear indication that religion was not the determining variable.

However, to say that Islam was not the only cause of urban form is not to say that it was unimportant. On the contrary, it was a crucial contributing factor in shaping cities within its realms. It contributed in several important ways.

First, it made rough juridical distinctions among population classes on the basis of their relation to the *Umma* (community of believers) and thus the State. These distinctions were thus available in the repertoire of territoriality and could be translated into spatial segregation under certain conditions. Furthermore, the frequent inability of the state to transcend communal organizations and the laissez-faire attitude of the state toward civil society<sup>33</sup> left important functions to other units of social organization which strengthened them. Since many of these functions were vicinal ones (maintaining streets and utilities, guarding turf, providing lighting, supervising and sanctioning behavior, etc.), and since many

vicinal units were composed of socially related people, what we would call the neighborhood became a crucial building block of cities in the Arab world during medieval and even later times. It was therefore available in the repertoire of social responses, sometimes employed by the residents themselves when state power broke down, sometimes employed by the state as a way to control its subjects. Whether it was a mechanism for defense or a modality for control depended upon factors which were certainly not Islamic.

Second, by encouraging gender segregation, Islam created a set of architectural and spatial imperatives that had only a limited range of solutions. What Islam required was some way of dividing functions and places on the basis of gender and then of creating a visual screen between them. This structuring of space was different from what would have prevailed had freer mixing of males and females been the pattern. Such spatial divisions were a functional supplement to alternative patterns of person-marking which were also used but often not fully satisfactory. Semiotics of space in the Islamic city gave warnings and helped persons perform their required duties while still observing avoidance norms.

And finally one returns to the system of property laws that governed rights and obligations vis à vis both other property owners and the state. Such customary laws and precedents set in motion a process whereby a pattern of space was continually reproduced. Of primary importance were the pre-existing rights of individual or collective users of land and immoveable property. Of secondary importance were the rights and responsibilities of proximate neighbors, followed by those of more distant ones. Then, finally, as a residual, there was the right of the collectivity or larger administrative unit. Under such circumstances, access to entrances took priority over major thoroughfares or the reservation of land for public purposes.

I would like here to speculate on these three themes, drawing upon evidence from both medieval and modern time periods. Even though this is hardly a scientific approach, on occasion scholars must be willing to engage in free association to generate hypotheses which might be fruitfully explored, even though and perhaps especially because such hypotheses step beyond what is known.

### *Territoriality in the Arabo-Islamic City*

One of the most striking features of the cities of the Middle East and North Africa, certainly during medieval times but to some extent persisting feebly to this day in the older residential quarters, is its subdivision into smaller quarters whose approximate boundaries remain relatively constant over time and whose names continue to be employed as important referential terms, even when they do not appear on modern markers of street names, etc.

In contrast, in his study of neighborhoods in Chicago, Albert Hunter found that territorial names seldom persisted for even a generation, much less a hundred years, and that there was widespread disagreement both as to the

recognizability of many neighborhood designations and as to their geographic extent and borders.<sup>34</sup> To some extent, the contrast between the persisting boundaries and nomenclature in Arabo-Islamic cities and the unclear and changing character of Chicago neighborhoods can be attributed to spatial design and markers.

Kevin Lynch, in his brilliant book on urban form, *The Image of the City*,<sup>35</sup> tried to probe, through mental mapping, the psychology of spatial borders and spatial concepts; he concluded, interestingly enough, that some quarters and cities are more imageable than others. There is no doubt in my mind that the historic quarters of Arab cities were built to be imageable in a way that gridiron-planned Chicago was not.

The design of the Arabo-Islamic city, with its convoluted paths, was intended to subdivide space into relatively permanent quarters. But a recognition of this fact simply begs the question. Medieval European towns were equally devoid of right angles and through streets; they also were subdivided into potentially organizable subpockets. Nevertheless, they are quite different in physical pattern and were quite different in social organization from the medieval Arab city.<sup>36</sup>

One must look for more than design to explain the signification of turf in the Arabo-Islamic city. One must look for a common creator of boundaries. There may be an overarching Islamic reason for the latter. Islamic property laws about differential responsibility to neighbors and control over accessways to dwellings may have been partially responsible for the typical cellular pattern found in residential quarters of medieval Islamic cities.<sup>37</sup> However, I see Islamic law as an adaptive mechanism for helping the society to achieve its goals, rather than as a *deus ex machina* determining them. Therefore, we must go behind the issue of how imageable cells of residence were created and maintained to explore why they were so typically the building block of urban society. This brings us, then, to the three hypotheses I would like to advance.

### *Turf and Juridical Classes*

States that make juridical distinctions among residents lay the foundation for what can evolve into a system of spatial segregation. It is a necessary but, however, not a sufficient cause of residential apartheid. That is because social distance and physical distance are not necessarily the same thing. By social distance we mean the degree to which open egalitarian interaction is blocked, or rather the amount of work which must be done by two parties to overcome social barriers to intimacy. By physical distance we mean the degree to which physical contact is blocked by space or rather the amount of work which must be done to overcome spatial barriers to face-to-face contact. Clearly, we can all think of cases in which maximum social distance can coexist with minimal spatial segregation (master-valet, master-house slave) and, conversely, other cases where minimum social distance can be sustained over great physical distance (loved ones in other countries). Indeed, it is generally when lines of social distance become less marked that physical distance is intensified.

Medieval Islamic cities certainly did maintain the distinctions between juridical classes through social distance (as evidenced by sumptuary regulations, the semiotics of clothes, body postures, etc.) but spatial distance was not always a mechanism for maintaining social distance. On occasion, however, particularly during periods of tension, physical segregation was employed to intensify the social boundary markers.

For example, a juridically different category in most Middle Eastern theocracies consisted of the *dhimmīs* (Christians, Jews, and Zoroastrians enjoying a special status of protection) who, where relevant, might be subclassified by specific faith or place of origin. Always there were rules governing their behavior and regulations concerning their collective responsibilities to the state. Often there were specific restrictions on the occupations open to them. Occasionally, there were rules specifying consumption patterns (whether they could ride horses or were confined to mules, and the like) and even permitted dress. But for the most part these regulations do not seem to have been viewed as oppressive. (When they became so, as for example during the reign of al-Hakim in Cairo, they occasioned great comment about the sanity of the ruler, indicating how great a deviation from normal they were.)

Residential segregation, however, was not invariable and was seldom involuntary. Voluntary concentrations are noted over and over again in urban histories, either in relation to certain economic functions (Coptic quarters near ports in Cairo) or to certain political advantages (Jewish quarters near the palace of the ruler). Such concentrations facilitated the exercise of self-rule in matters of personal status and helped, in the proximity-based city of the time, to gather the density required to support common special services and institutions. These common services and institutions, in turn, created markers for quarters which indicated to outsiders who was supposed to live there and indicated to insiders that they belonged there.

But there were certain times and places where the potential for physical segregation was translated into the creation of absolute segregation by juridical status. In Moroccan cities, for example, Jews were not segregated into ghettos until the 19th century. The promulgation of a new government regulation was rationalized as being required for the safety of the Jewish population and it was not enforced for long. The fact that it occasioned comment and required explanation is, in itself, evidence that it was unusual to require what was often chosen.

Clearly, the extent to which territorial distinctions were based upon juridical status varied from one part of the Arabo-Islamic world to another depending in part upon the statistical representation of *dhimmīs* of various kinds. On the Peninsula this situation did not arise until the oil boom. Similarly, North Africa after the Almohads had no important Christian minority until the appearance of Europeans, and therefore the terms Christian and European were often interchangeable. A Western quarter was by definition a Christian quarter and vice versa.<sup>38</sup> This was not true for Egypt or the Fertile Crescent, where indigenous Christian minorities persisted throughout the Islamic period and continued

to play an integral role in society. Jewish communities were found scattered throughout the Arab world, although usually concentrated within only certain parts of countries. Such concentrations were often linked to political conditions, as when Jews of Morocco moved to Mogador at the behest of the Sultan to handle the trade in his new port, or when Jews concentrated in the capital city to take advantage of royal protection.

The events in Lebanon over the past 10 years have made me think a great deal about the conditions under which juridical status differences are likely to be translated into spatial segregation. It is clear that 10 years ago Beirut had the nuclei of predominantly Christian and predominantly Muslim quarters which were the result of long-term voluntary sifting and sorting, but such modest segregation was far from complete. It is interesting to review some of the social science literature about Beirut at that period. Samir Khalaf and Per Kongstad's study, *Hamra of Beirut*,<sup>39</sup> indicated enormous mixing of persons of various religious persuasions as late as the 1970s in this section of what was later to be called Muslim West Beirut. Similarly, Fuad Khuri's anthropological study of the peaceful relations between a predominantly Muslim suburb and its adjacent neighbor, a predominantly Christian suburb, stressed the intermixing of people and their co-existence.<sup>40</sup> And yet, the civil war that erupted in 1975 began at the border between Fuad Khuri's two suburbs, and Hamra was included in the so-called Muslim quarter of West Beirut in the civil war and then the siege. It was not segregation that gave rise to intercommunal tensions; rather, it was tensions that gave rise to labels which were then partially translated into reality, as population resifted and resorted itself to share a common fate. To the very end of the Israeli siege of Beirut, so-called Muslim West Beirut was never exclusively Muslim, as eyewitness accounts confirm.

Thinking over the present experience makes it possible to read back into history to try to fathom under what circumstances juridical status might have changed from a potential to a real cause of ethnic/religious segregation. It is clear that at times of outside threat when the state was weak, fragmentation was likely along the fault lines of society, which in Islamic states tend to lie along juridical status cleavages. When loyalty to the state is crucial, when defense becomes paramount, and when the state itself is under attack, one can expect segregation—either to protect or to control.

Economic threats may be as significant as military ones. The sectarian cleavages of Lebanese society were strongest in the late 19th century and appear to have been related to western commercial incursions.<sup>41</sup> The incursions of a commercial Europe into Moroccan economic life at the beginning of the 19th century seem to account for both the institution of Jewish ghettos in Fez and Rabat and the creation of Mogador as a largely Jewish commercial port.

The present experience also helps us to fathom how the transition might have taken place. Designation of a specific area as ethno-religious turf helps both to drive out others and to gather in persons of similar status. If, in addition, there are decrees or laws promulgated or if there are sanctions imposed, the segregation is intensified. (For example, after the ghetto in Rabat was established in 1807, guards were posted at the single entrance to the quarter to supervise entry

and exit. The dual function of defense of inmates and control over them is clearly evident in the semiotics of space.)

### *Gender Segregation and the Arabo-Islamic City Form*

The creation of male and female turf is perhaps the most important element of the structure of the city contributed by Islam. It is important to remember, however, that the rules of turf were not only to establish physically distinctive regions; more important, they were to establish visually distinctive or insulated regions. The object was not only to prevent physical contact but to protect visual privacy. Line-of-sight distance, rather than physical distance, was the object of urban design. Thus, Islamic law regulated the placement of windows, the heights of adjacent buildings and the mutual responsibilities of neighbors toward one another so as to guard visual privacy. Architecture assisted this process. Not only the devices of *mashribiyya* (lattice wood) screening but the layout of houses and even of quarters created the strangely asymmetrical reality that women could see men but men could not see women, except those in certain relationships with them. Here is Lane-Poole's description of an Egyptian upper-class house in the 19th century:

[As one enters the house there] is a passage, which bends sharply after the first yard or two, and bars any view into the interior from the open door. At the end of this passage we emerge into an open court. . . . Here is no sign of life; the doors are jealously closed, the windows shrouded. . . . We shall see nothing of the domestic life of the inhabitants; for the women's apartments are carefully shut off from the court. . . . The lower rooms, opening directly off the court are those into which a man may walk with impunity and no risk of meeting any of the women. . . . [another] door opens out of the court into the staircase leading to the harim rooms, and here no man but the master of the house dare penetrate. . . . When a man returns there he is in the bosom of his family, and it would need a very urgent affair to induce the doorkeeper to summon him down to anyone who called to see him.<sup>42</sup>

But one need not take the testimony of a foreign observer to substantiate the universality of some of the principles. In the *aqṣār* (castles) of southern Morocco, one can find the same bent entrances designed to create a visual blindspot. And urban building regulations were replete with requirements that the doors of buildings occupying opposite sides of the street must not face one another, another mechanism of visual control.

Similarly, within the dwelling the ideal was to segregate public from private space so that males could circulate without interfering with the movement and activities of females. Obviously, this was possible only, if at all, for the very wealthy, such as the household home that was described above. Compare Lane-Poole's account with the following description of elite housing in Jidda, Saudi Arabia, in the 1960s.

A typical old house includes a wing for the men, usually on the first floor, with an access to the garden and to the ground floor balconies. In this part of the house the head of the household has his sleeping room, study, guest rooms, and sitting rooms. The second and third floors belong to the women; one is for daily living and another for receiving guests.<sup>43</sup>

For the poor, no such absolute segregation was possible. Rather, signs and codes helped regulate spatial symbiosis, often by rules that governed timing.

The most obvious semiotic of sexual segregation in the Islamic city was the sign used in front of the public bath to indicate ladies' day. Subtler signs governed other divisions of time and/or space, however. Take, for example, the zone just outside the houses that share a common accessway in a dead-end quarter. These are found in most parts of the Arab world, from the Fertile Crescent to Morocco. I have elsewhere termed this space semi-private space, a third category between public and private which is found infrequently in sex-integrated societies but is often found in sex-segregated societies.<sup>44</sup>

The fact is that the ideal of separation between the sexes is best achieved by the wealthy who can afford to duplicate space and can afford the servant or slave girls who were never guarded from male sight or contact. Most poor women were less able to meet the ideal. For them, the family writ large permitted the doing of tasks as well as the protection from strange males because the local neighborhood was an extension of the home and therefore the family. The blind alley or dead-end court street was such a device for achieving this compromise between the exigencies of life and the directives of female seclusion. Nawal Nadim has written very sensitively on this subject in her contemporary anthropological study of life in a poor *hāra* (neighborhood) passageway in Cairo.

A large number of activities take place in the *harah* passage which in other parts of Cairo, or even during different historic stages of the *harah*, would be restricted to the physical setting of the dwelling. . . . [T]he manner and form of familiarity with which various intimate activities are carried out in the *harah* passage make it evident that the alley is actually considered by both sexes to be a private domain. Members of the two sexes in the *harah* treat each other with familiarity similar to that existing among members of the same family. Even outside the *harah*, any male resident is responsible for protecting any female member of his *harah*. He is further responsible for what she does, and he has the right to interfere in her activities if he finds them inappropriate.<sup>45</sup>

As one can see from this discussion, the family is simply written larger when it is impossible to achieve the physical and visual separation required between strangers. I am struck with the similarity of these rules in semi-private urban space to those that apply within an encampment of sedentarized bedouins, as described by Lila Abu-Lughod.<sup>46</sup>

It is clear that when densities are high and houses too small to contain the manifold activities women are supposed to do in them, the spillover space becomes appropriated as semi-private space and co-residents who might inadvertently have visual access are appropriated into a fictive kinship relationship to neutralize danger. Dress is an important part of the semiotics of space. As Nadim notes, "clothing which is acceptable for a woman within the lodging is also acceptable in the *harah*."<sup>47</sup> Nor is it only in Egypt that such adaptations take place. Elizabeth Fernea's descriptions of her *Street in Marrakech*<sup>48</sup> indicate that when women ran next door within the enclosed portion of their street, they did not cover themselves as fully as they would have, had they been going into public space. It was all in the family. Clearly, then, one of the reasons why the

older pattern of city building has been maintained in many sections of Arabo-Islamic cities, even today, is that it is still well adapted to the complex demands for visual privacy for females.

I am often struck, as I wander around Arab cities, with how easy it is to tell whether I am in public space or have blundered into semi-private space. I have often tried to identify the markers that indicate this. A sudden narrowing of the path, particularly if that narrowing has been exaggerated by the implanting of low stone posts or even a pile of bricks, is a sign of the shift, especially when the road widens again soon afterwards. But even when the spatial semiotics are absent, the personal ones are present. There is the questioning look or the approach of someone wanting to help but clearly also wanting to know.

Institutions have been retained from earlier periods, one of which is the *nadorgi* (from *nazara*, "to sight") who, in Nadim's Cairo hara, was responsible not only for overseeing proper behavior between male and female hara residents but also for spotting strangers. As she describes it, the

*nadorgi* . . . is responsible for keeping an eye on those entering the harah and detecting their movements. He is usually someone whose shop or house is close to the entrance to the harah where he remains most of the time. Besides being a source of information concerning external movement into the harah, the *nadorgi* can provide equally valuable insights into the internal movements of the various harah residents. . . . Whenever illegal activities occur in the harah, and in most cases this is the smoking or trading of hashish, the role of the *nadorgi* becomes vital since he quickly warns of the entrance of outsiders into the harah. The *nadorgi* will approach the outsider under the pretense of wishing to help him find whomever he wants. This tactic serves two purposes: first, it detains the intruder and secondly, it provides the *nadorgi* with information about the outsider's destination and contact.<sup>49</sup>

We shall return to this point when we investigate the other function of the neighborhood in the Arabo-Islamic city, namely, defensive space.

### *The Neighborhood as a Key Element in Civil Society and the State*

The final way in which Islam shaped the traditional Arabo-Islamic city was through neglect, ironic as that may seem. By failing to concern itself with matters of day-to-day maintenance Islamic states often encouraged the vitality of other sub-state functional units. One of these was definitely the residential neighborhood.

The rather more rigid segregation between commercial and residential quarters in the classic Islamic city has been attributed to the need to separate private (i.e., female) from public (i.e., male) space. Whatever the cause, such segregation certainly did have important effects. It left to the residential areas a large measure of autonomy, since many of the public functionaries (the supervisors of the market places or the supervisors of public morals) operated largely in the commercial sections of the city. Neighborhoods handled many of their internal functions on a more ad hoc basis, being unable to afford more commercialized services. For example, in the *aswāq* (markets), adjacent merchants might hire a



guard, but in the neighborhoods more informal arrangements were likely. Having functions that could only be performed on a neighborhood-wide basis certainly strengthened the cooperation within the district. It must also be acknowledged, however, that before the modern era which emphasized the separation of population on the basis of class, the neighborhood often was composed of a leading family-household, surrounded by poorer families which had a clientele relationship to the dominant household. In such cases, what we think of as municipal services were actually provided by the dominant household.

A second factor that strengthened the neighborhood was its role as protector. I would like to explore the issue of turf and defended neighborhoods because I find the literature produced by Orientalists on the role of *dhu<sup>ᶜ</sup>ār* (militant), *futuwwa* (chivalrous society), etc., in the medieval Islamic city highly deficient in sociological sense. I have been struck over and over again with the fact that the traditional Arabo-Islamic city was designed to maximize what Newman has termed defensible space.

In the introduction to his book, *Defensible Space: Crime Prevention through Urban Design*, Oscar Newman writes that he is trying to find an architectural solution to the rising disorder in American cities. He claims:

Architectural design can make evident by the physical layout that an area is the shared extension of the private realms of a group of individuals. For one group to be able to set the norms of behavior and the nature of activity possible within a particular place, it is necessary that it have clear, unquestionable control over what can occur there. Design can make it possible for both inhabitant and stranger to perceive that an area is under the undisputed influence of a particular group, that they dictate the activity taking place within it, and who its users are to be. This can be made so clearly evident that residents will not only feel confident, but that it is incumbent upon them to question the comings and goings of people to ensure the continued safety of the defined areas. Any intruder will be made to anticipate that his presence will be under question and open to challenge; so much so that a criminal can be deterred from even contemplating entry.

*Defensible space* is a model for residential environments which inhibit crime by creating the physical expression of a social fabric that defends itself.<sup>50</sup>

Certainly, what Newman has just described is the Arabo-Islamic semi-private quarter *par excellence*. But is the picture as benign as he has drawn it? Yes, the neighborhood defends itself—but perhaps it is defending its criminal activities or its warfare with the rest of society. Two non-benign parallels present themselves. These are boys' gangs and the militia turf in embattled Beirut. Both offer a seamier view of the defensible space advocated by Newman.

Boys' gangs were certainly a feature of Arabo-Islamic cities in the past and continue to be present today. *Futuwwa*, *dhu<sup>ᶜ</sup>ar*, etc. may be given exotic meaning and significance by Orientalists, but to a sociologist they have a most familiar mien. We recognize the organization of local young males for the defense of their quarter—whether such organizations are called Latin Kings or *Awlād al-Hāra*. We recognize the gang leader, whether he is called Jeff Fort or Muhammed ibn <sup>ᶜ</sup>Ali, and we recognize his role, whether he is called Doc or

*Za'īm* (Boss). Even the so-called codes of chivalry are to be found in boys' gangs.

Urban sociologist, Gerald Suttles, predated Newman in his conceptualization of a "defended neighborhood" which he defined as a "residential group which seals itself off through the efforts of delinquent gangs, by restrictive covenants, by sharp boundaries, or by a forbidding reputation."<sup>51</sup> He goes on to specify the conditions under which defended neighborhoods become important in cities (and here he is discussing places like Chicago, not Cairo, and yet the applicability is obvious):

Granted the inability of formal procedures of social control to detect and forestall all or even most forms of urban disorder, some additional mechanisms seem necessary for the maintenance of order. Among the available mechanisms, a set of rules governing and restricting spatial movement seems a likely and highly effective means of preserving order. Such a set of rules has some fairly obvious advantages: it segregates groups that are otherwise likely to come into conflict; it restricts the range of association and decreases anonymity; it thrusts people together into a common network of social relations that overlap rather than diverge from one another.<sup>52</sup>

Residents are particularly likely to intensify their defense when the order in the outside society becomes weakened.

Historically, in Arabo-Islamic cities, the neighborhood has been in dialectical process with the external society. When central power was strong and when the city-wide hierarchical structure was working smoothly, agents of the central administration operated within the neighborhoods to provide information to the center and ensure conformance with central directives. This was certainly the case with the sheikh of the hara in Cairo at certain points, when he was essentially an informer for the police as well as for the *muhtasib* (inspector of morals). He acted, in his capacity as real estate expert, to "steer" or supervise who should have access to vacant dwelling units in the quarter. Sometimes, the neighborhood was an administrative subset of the state.

More often, however, the quarter played the opposite role, that of a defended neighborhood, particularly when chaos reigned. One reads, in the historical accounts, of civil strife/invasions/street battles, the recurring phrase, "and people closed the gates to their harat." Alternatively, to gain control over the city, conquerors always had to destroy the gates to the harat, as Napoleon's forces did when they invaded Cairo.

One has only to think of contemporary Beirut to have these phrases take on fuller meaning. During the height of disorder, virtually every block belonged to a different group or faction. Checkpoints blocked entry and exit to these defended territories. Often, barricades were constructed at the boundaries. The opposite side of defense was also evident. During the Israeli siege, neighborhood assistance was organized by block committees which allocated vacant apartments, oversaw the rationing of water use, and distributed food and medical relief as needed. One cannot resist reading back into history to evaluate some of the roles neighborhoods formerly played in the Arabo-Islamic city.<sup>53</sup>

## CONCLUSIONS AND A NOTE OF WARNING

In the first part of this paper we attempted to deconstruct Orientalist thinking about the Islamic city by showing not only that the idea itself was “created” on the basis of too few cases but, even worse, was a model of outcomes rather than one of processes. By that I mean that the goal was to generalize about a specific form of city at one long historic moment without unpacking the various causes of that particular outcome. That form was then equated with the Islamic city, regardless of whether there was anything particularly Islamic about the causes.

The reason it is important to criticize this approach is that in a number of Arab countries today planners are trying to recreate Islamic cities—but by means which are terribly inappropriate because they focus on outcomes, rather than processes. Such planners hope, by edict and ordinance, to preserve and to build anew cities on an Islamic pattern. It should be clear by now, however, why this approach is likely to fail.

Cities are processes, not products. The three Islamic elements that set in motion the processes that give rise to Islamic cities were: a distinction between the members of the Umma and outsiders, which led to juridical and spatial distinction by neighborhoods; the segregation of the sexes which gave rise to a particular solution to the question of spatial organization; and a legal system which, rather than imposing general regulations over land uses of various types in various places, left to the litigation of neighbors the detailed adjudication of mutual rights over space and use. These three factors were Islamic, *per se*.

However, in addition, the historic cities that developed in Arabo-Islamic lands in premodern times were deeply influenced by such non-Islamic factors as climate, terrain, technologies of construction, circulation, and production, as well as political variables such as the relation between rulers and the ruled, the general level of intercommunal strife, and fluctuations in the degree of internal and external security. Furthermore, the nature of any Islamic city at any point in time was the result not only of the contemporaneous nature of these variables but the inherited forms which took shape under earlier and different circumstances.

It is clear, then, that one does not have the capacity to recreate Islamic cities by edict. One has only the capacity to create conditions that might set in motion processes which, in the past, generated the forms of the traditional city in the Arabo-Islamic world. But it must be recognized that one cannot do that without being willing to live with the three conditions mentioned above, namely: (1) juridical distinctions between Muslims and/or citizens and outsiders; (2) segregation by gender and a virtually complete division of labor according to it; and (3) a fully decentralized and *ex post facto* system of land use and governmental regulation over space. In today’s world, these three are considered retrogressive.

First, modern states accord basic rights and responsibilities in an egalitarian manner—at least in theory. Where distinctions are made on the basis of ascribed status they have attracted the criticism of the world. Hence, states such as South Africa which make sharp juridical distinctions on the basis of race, or Israel and certain Muslim theocracies that make similar distinctions on the basis of religion, are accused of using racist criteria. And contemporary societies that are orga-

nized on the basis of communal affiliations run the risk of fragmentation and strife, as has occurred in Lebanon.

Second, throughout the world there has been a trend toward increased equality between the sexes. Integration, not segregation, has been the ideal toward which many cultures are moving.

Finally, modern municipal governments stress the provision of community facilities through a centralized system and stress the establishment of laws that apply to whole classes of places and uses, that is, zoning laws, building codes, street alignments, subdivision regulations, etc. Such regulations, as we have tried to show, are the antithesis of the assumptions and mechanisms of property law under Islamic legal approaches.

Therefore, none of the conditions still exist which would permit us to reconstruct Islamic cities by design. Only a view of the Islamic city such as that held by earlier Orientalists would allow one to even entertain such a notion.

That is not to say, however, that we could not build better cities in the contemporary Arabo-Islamic world if we paid closer attention to some of the true achievements of the past and if we learned from them. The historic Islamic city often achieved community, privacy and beauty. It would be wise to seek these same goals, even though the old means are no longer available. But since cities are living processes rather than formalistic shells for living, they cannot be built by us. We can only encourage them to grow in the desired direction. Can we nurture neighborhoods that are supportive but not defensive? Can we foster privacy not for women alone but for households? Can we guard the rights of neighbors while still applying laws consistently? That is the task Arab city planners must set for themselves.

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#### ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Janet Abu-Lughod is Professor of Sociology, Geography, and Urban Affairs and Policy Research at Northwestern University. The support of the Center for Urban Affairs and Policy Research is gratefully acknowledged.

Part I of this article was presented initially at the November 1985 meetings of the Middle East Studies Association. A preliminary version of Part II was presented to a May 1984 colloquium sponsored by the Middle East Center and the Graduate School of Architecture and Planning at U.C.L.A.

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup>W. Marçais, "L'Islamisme et la vie urbaine," *L'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres, Comptes Rendus* (Paris: January–March 1928), pp. 86–100.

<sup>2</sup>G. Marçais, "L'urbanisme musulman," *5e Congrès de la Fédération des Sociétés Savantes de l'Afrique du Nord* (Algiers, 1940), which was reprinted on pp. 219–31 of the collection of his works, *Mélanges d'histoire et d'archéologie de l'occident musulman*, tome I, articles et conférences de Georges Marçais (Alger, 1957).

<sup>3</sup>G. Marçais, "La conception des villes dans l'Islam," *Revue d'Alger*, 2 (1945), 517-33.

<sup>4</sup>G. Marçais, "L'urbanisme musulman" as reprinted in *Mélanges . . .*, my translation from pp. 230-31.

<sup>5</sup>R. Brunschvig, "Urbanisme médiéval et droit musulman," *Revue des Études Islamiques*, 15 (1947), 127-55. I should point out here that the hierarchical arrangement of trades within the suq is ignored and Orientalists failed to see these as "economically determined."

<sup>6</sup>Otto Spies, "Islamisches Nachbarrecht nach schafaitischer Lehre," *Zeitschrift für vergleichende Rechtswissenschaft*, 42 (1927), 393-421.

<sup>7</sup>See Ibn al-Imam, translated by Barbier under the title, "Les droits et obligations entre propriétaires d'héritages voisins," *Revue Algérienne et Tunisienne de Législation et de Jurisprudence*, 1 and 2 (1900-1901).

<sup>8</sup>See *Kitāb al-ī-lān bi-ahkām al-bunyān*.

<sup>9</sup>G. von Grunebaum, "The Structure of the Muslim Town," *Islam: Essays in the Nature and Growth of a Cultural Tradition*, Memoir No. 81, The American Anthropological Association (Ann Arbor, 1955). Reissued in second edition in London in 1961.

<sup>10</sup>G. von Grunebaum, *Medieval Islam* (Chicago, 1946). Quotation taken from p. 173 of the second edition, 1954.

<sup>11</sup>G. von Grunebaum, "The Structure of the Muslim Town," 1961 edition, p. 146.

<sup>12</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 146-47.

<sup>13</sup>Shades of Max Weber's *The City*, which will not surface until the work of Ira Lapidus, *Muslim Cities in the Later Middle Ages*, to be covered later.

<sup>14</sup>See Louis Massignon, "Les corps de métiers et la cité Islamique," *Revue Internationale de Sociologie*, 28 (1920), pp. 473-87.

<sup>15</sup>Albert Hourani and S. M. Stern, eds., *The Islamic City* (Philadelphia, 1970), based on an Oxford University conference held in 1965, to be discussed below.

<sup>16</sup>Roger LeTourneau, *Fès avant le protectorat. Étude économique et sociale d'une ville de l'occident musulman* (Casablanca, 1949).

<sup>17</sup>C. Coon, *Caravan* (New York, 1951). The chapter on "Town and City" appears on pp. 226-59.

<sup>18</sup>Roger LeTourneau, *La vie quotidienne à Fès en 1900* (Paris, 1965).

<sup>19</sup>Roger LeTourneau, *Les villes musulmanes de l'Afrique du Nord* (Alger, 1957).

<sup>20</sup>Roger LeTourneau, *Fez in the Age of the Marinides*, Besse Clemen, trans. (Norman, Oklahoma, 1961).

<sup>21</sup>Jacques Berque, "Medinas, villesneuves et bidonvilles," *Les Cahiers de Tunisie* (1958), pp. 5-42.

<sup>22</sup>Jean Sauvaget, *Alép: Essai sur le développement d'une grande ville Syrienne, des origines au milieu du XIXe siècle* (Paris, 1941). In two volumes.

<sup>23</sup>Jean Sauvaget, "Esquisses d'une histoire de la ville de Damas," *Revue des Etudes Islamiques*, 8 (1934), 421-80.

<sup>24</sup>Typical of this is Xavier de Planhol's *The World of Islam* (Ithaca, 1959). Following an earlier distinction made by the Marçais, de Planhol rigorously contrasts new towns (princely and otherwise) founded by Islamic dynasties, more likely to be found in North Africa, with older towns of Roman/Byzantine base, upon which Islamic characteristics were superimposed, more likely to be found in the Fertile Crescent. The question of which of these is the true city is never resolved.

<sup>25</sup>See Ira Lapidus, *Muslim Cities in the Later Middle Ages* (Cambridge, Mass., 1967), reissued in a student edition by Cambridge University Press, 1984. The revised preface tries to place his cases in context.

<sup>26</sup>First quotation comes from p. vii of the 1967 preface. The second quotation has been taken from p. 191. In all fairness, the sentence that follows the one we have quoted does limit the reference to Mamluk cities.

<sup>27</sup>Janet Abu-Lughod, *Cairo: 1001 Years of the City Victorious* (Princeton, 1971), although the writing had been completed by 1967. Among the sources I depended upon were those incorporated into H. A. R. Gibb and Harold Bowen, *Islamic Society and the West*, Vol. I, Part I (London, 1950), especially Chapter VI, "The City: Industry and Commerce," pp. 276-313, which draws most of its examples from late Ottoman Cairo.

<sup>28</sup>Albert Hourani and S. M. Stern, eds., *The Islamic City*, cited above.

<sup>29</sup>See *inter alia*, my "Comments on the Form of Cities: Lessons from the Islamic City," *Janus: Essays in Ancient and Medieval Studies*, L. Orlin, ed. (Ann Arbor, Michigan, 1975), pp. 119–30; Paul Wheatley, "Levels of Space Awareness in the Traditional Islamic City," *Ekistics*, 253 (March 1977); R. B. Serjeant, ed., *The Islamic City* [on Sanʿa], (Paris, 1980). See also L. Carl Brown, ed., *From Medina to Metropolis* (Princeton, 1973). Nor is it only Westerners who are seeking the key to the Islamic city. Throughout the Arab world there are scholars seeking precedents for a new/old form of city building in tune with the culture and with Islamic values. See, for example, *Islamic Architecture and Urbanism*, edited by Ayden Germen, and published by King Faisal University (Dammam, Saudi Arabia, 1983). By far the best of these has just been published. Although it is now too late to integrate this work in the present article, written before I received my copy, I strongly recommend it to anyone thinking or writing about Islamic cities. See Besim Selim Hakim, *Arabic-Islamic Cities: Building and Planning Principles* (London, 1986).

<sup>30</sup>Dale Eickelman, "Is There an Islamic City?," *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 5 (1974), 274–94. As revealed by the subtitle, we have again been promised too much since it describes only one Moroccan town. However, rather than attempting to generalize, the article actually tries to test some of the propositions about the Islamic city against the reality of one contemporary Moroccan town, a significant methodological breakthrough. The book whose discussion of the Islamic city makes most sense to me is one by another anthropologist studying a different Moroccan town. See especially the introductory chapter of Kenneth Brown, *People of Salé: Tradition and Change in a Moroccan City, 1830–1930* (Cambridge, Mass., 1976).

<sup>31</sup>Many of my reservations about the Islamic city have been triggered by discussions and conferences with Muslims from the Arabian peninsula where, at present, the most serious and sincere attempts are being made to devise an operational definition of the Islamic city in order to build contemporary ones. Several students from that area, most recently at Northwestern University, have forced me to think about this topic, if only because they were charged with studying how to do it. I acknowledge their contribution here.

<sup>32</sup>See, for example, Janet Abu-Lughod, "Preserving the Living Heritage of Islamic Cities," in R. Holod, ed., *Toward an Architecture in the Spirit of Islam* (Philadelphia: Aga Khan Foundation, 1978), pp. 27–36; and "Contemporary Relevance of Islamic Urban Planning Principles," in Ayden Germen, ed., *Islamic Architecture and Urbanism*, 1983, cited earlier. I take these points further in a paper on the "Semiotics of Space in Islamic Cities," delivered May, 1984 to a conference on the subject held at UCLA. The section that follows draws heavily on that unpublished paper.

<sup>33</sup>I would not necessarily attribute this to Islam, but I would note that such a pattern was all too often associated with its politics, for whatever reason.

<sup>34</sup>Albert Hunter, *Symbolic Communities: The Persistence and Change of Chicago's Local Communities* (Chicago, 1974).

<sup>35</sup>(Cambridge, Mass., 1960).

<sup>36</sup>Gideon Sjoberg has argued, in his *The Preindustrial City* (Glencoe, 1960), that eastern and western versions were quite similar, due to their common levels of technology. However, this ignores the fact that tribalism–ethnicity was seldom the organizing principle of spatial structure in western medieval towns, nor was there as much separation between residence and business as there was in cities where gender segregation was the rule (i.e., in ancient Greece and in Islamdom).

<sup>37</sup>Besim S. Hakim, in his *Arabic-Islamic Cities*, argues this in convincing fashion, but he draws his empirical evidence almost exclusively from Tunis. I doubt whether Islamic law can be the sole explanation, for the cellular structure of communities in that climate and culture region long predates the appearance of Islam, and the alternative to the "hara, mahalla, huma," etc. system found throughout the Fertile Crescent and North Africa, namely, the tall *qasr* or apartment building found in Yemen, southern Morocco, and Saudi Arabia, is equally Islamic, in being indigenously developed and suited to the cultural and geopolitical climate.

<sup>38</sup>See, for example, Henry Munson, *The House of Si Abd Allah* (New Haven, 1983).

<sup>39</sup>Samir Khalaf and Per Kongstad, *Hamra of Beirut* (Leiden, 1973).

<sup>40</sup>Fuad Khuri, *From Village to Suburb: Order and Change in Greater Beirut* (Chicago, 1975).

<sup>41</sup>See, for example, Leila Fawaz's study, *Merchants and Migrants in Nineteenth Century Beirut* (Cambridge, Mass., 1983).

<sup>42</sup>Stanley Lane-Poole, *The Story of Cairo* (London, 1902), pp. 12–17.

<sup>43</sup>See Chapter two of Soraya Altorki's *Women in Domestic Groups: Ideology and Behavior of Jiddah Elites* (New York, 1986).

<sup>44</sup>See, for example, my article, "Contemporary Relevance of Islamic Planning Principles," *Ekistics*, 47 (Jan.–Feb. 1980), 6–10. One should note, however, that this "privatization of public space" is not exclusively a phenomenon of the Arabo-Islamic or Middle Eastern city. In fact, I have taken the term from Lyn H. Lofland, *A World of Strangers: Order and Action in Urban Public Space* (New York, 1973), who uses it to describe how Americans develop proprietary interests in public space.

<sup>45</sup>Quoted from p. 174 of Nawal Nadim, "The Relationship between the Sexes in a Harah of Cairo," Doctoral Dissertation, Department of Anthropology, Indiana University (Bloomington, 1975).

<sup>46</sup>See Chapter one of *Veiled Sentiments: Honor and Poetry in a Bedouin Society* (Berkeley, 1986).

<sup>47</sup>Nawal Nadim, "The Relationship between the Sexes," p. 180.

<sup>48</sup>Elizabeth W. Fernea, *A Street in Marrakech* (New York, 1975).

<sup>49</sup>Nawal Nadim, "The Relationship between the Sexes," pp. 187–88.

<sup>50</sup>Oscar Newman, *Defensible Space: Crime Prevention through Urban Design* (New York, 1972), pp. 2–3.

<sup>51</sup>Gerald Suttles, *The Social Construction of Community* (Chicago, 1972), p. 21.

<sup>52</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 31–32.

<sup>53</sup>Comparative studies are always valuable because they prevent us from jumping prematurely to the conclusion that our case is unique. In this connection it is interesting to note the parallels from an entirely different case, Santa Domingo, during the 1965 revolution. The social organization within a defended neighborhood is graphically portrayed by participant observer sociologist, José Moreno. See his *Barrios in Arms* (Pittsburgh, 1970).