



Habitats and Habitus: Politics and Aesthetics of Religious World-Making

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Zanzibari door; Hanna Nieber, 2012

In many settings in contemporary Africa different religious worlds rub against, as well as interfere with, each other in arenas of diversity and pluralism. It is high time to challenge the division of the study of religion into distinct anthropologies of Islam and Christianity.

Developing research that places Christian and Islamic movements in one framework so as to explore similarities, differences, as well as conflicts between them, the central concern of this project is to contribute to creating new research synergies by linking the spheres of the study of Islam and Christianity. This project takes a "material" approach that places on centre stage the politico-aesthetic religious practices of forming the world in a concrete sense, whether in buildings and architecture or design, the use of audio-visual and material culture, or the shaping of (gendered) bodies, senses and sensibilities. This approach is grounded in an understanding of religion as a medium that operates via particular "sensational forms" that mould religious subjects, shape strong, desired personal and collective identities and social relationships, and produce a shared environment.

Two doctoral research projects, focusing on Zanzibar and Nigeria respectively, explore the links between Christian and Muslim techniques of the self – *the habitus* – and the politico-aesthetic practices that shape the material environment (home, city, religious spaces, architecture, circulation of images, scriptures and soundscapes) – *the habitats*.



Selection of books sold on the streets of Zanzibar; Hanna Nieber, 2012

Scripture Practices on Zanzibar: Comparing Muslim and Christian Contexts

Hanna Nieber

Scripture practices entail a variety of activities and routines that make use of holy texts and thereby constitute them as such. The processes through which material script on Zanzibar becomes scripture and thus a means for accessing the transcendent (a "sensational form") entails bundles of practices that shape the people's habitus and their habitat Zanzibar Town. This project aims to explore how the variety of prevalent scriptures on Zanzibar is used and how the respective practices shape the political aesthetics of the Zanzibari urban space.



Combined Jumu'at prayer (Central Mosque Jos); Courtesy of Dauda Abubakar, 2006

Sensation, Sight and Sound of Nigerian Religious Movements: A Comparative Study of Christ Embassy and Nasrullahi-Fathi Society (NASFAT)

Murtala Ibrahim

The aim of this research project is to undertake a thorough study of Christ Embassy and NASFAT in a comparative framework. The central focus is on their salient and outspoken material expressive forms: music, texts, images and buildings. In addition, the research will explore how material forms and, more broadly, the religious aesthetics, of Christ Embassy and NASFAT operate as media that link members with spiritual realm.