SPACE AND SPEECH:
DISCURSIVE ENVIRONMENTS ACROSS NON-ARAB ISLAM
SARRATT STUDENT CENTER, ROOM 216-220

THURSDAY 07 SEPTEMBER 2017

08:00-08:30 COFFEE AND TEA

08:30-08:45 INTRODUCTIONS AND WELCOME

LAUREN BENTON
Dean, College of Arts and Humanities, Vanderbilt University

MONA C. FREDERICK
Executive Director, Robert Penn Warren Center for the Humanities, Vanderbilt University

08:45-09:00 THE MAPPING OF THE INTELLECTUAL PROJECT

TONY K. STEWART
Gertrude Conaway Vanderbilt Chair in Humanities, Professor and Chair, Department of Religious Studies, and Sawyer Seminar Co-Director, Vanderbilt University

09:00-11:00 CHAIR: DAVID J. WASSERSTEIN, Sawyer Seminar Co-Director, Professor of History and Eugene Greener, Jr. Professor of Jewish Studies, Vanderbilt University

ISMAIL ALATAS
Assistant Professor, Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies, New York University
“Dreaming Saints, Building Shrines: Genealogy, Prophecy, and the Making of Islamic Pilgrimage Sites in Central Java, Indonesia”

LEOR HALEVI
Associate Professor, Departments of History and Law, Vanderbilt University
“When the Fringe Discovers the Center of Islam: A Chinese Request for An Arabic Fatwa”

11:00-11:15 BREAK

11:15-12:15 CHAIR: TONY K. STEWART, Vanderbilt University

SHAHZAD BASHIR
Aga Khan Professor of Islamic Studies, Brown University
“Genre, Voice, and Subjectivity in Persian Writing in Early Modern India”

12:15-13:00 LUNCH

13:00-15:00 CHAIR: RICHARD MCGREGOR, Associate Professor of Religious Studies and Coordinator of Islamic Studies, Vanderbilt University

JOHN E. SAWYER SEMINAR, FUNDED BY THE ANDREW W. MELLON FOUNDATION AND THE ROBERT PENN WARREN CENTER FOR THE HUMANITIES, VANDERBILT UNIVERSITY
RUSSELL GUILBAULT  
Undergraduate Presidential Scholar, University at Buffalo  
“Submission and Cultivation in Chinese Islam”

MAX STILLE  
Post-Doctoral Research Scholar, Max-Planck-Institut für Bildungsforschung  
“The Importance of Being Mediated: Poetic and Performative Exegesis in Bengali Sermons”

15:00-15:15 BREAK

15:15-17:15 CHAIR: WILLIAM MURRELL, PhD Candidate, History, Vanderbilt University

UNDINE OTT  
PhD Candidate, Department of Arabic and Islamic Studies, Universität Göttingen  
“Pilgrimage Sites in Central Asia (12th to 14th Centuries): Mirrors of Islamization, Regionalization and Nativization”

HANNAH THEAKER  
DPhil Candidate, Oriental Studies, St. Anne’s College, Oxford University  
“The Case of the Mufti 穆夫提: Space, Adaptation, and Accommodation within a Chinese Sufi Path, 1633 – 1911”

FRIDAY 08 SEPTEMBER 2017

08:30-09:00 TEA AND COFFEE

09:00-11:00 CHAIR: JULIA PHILLIPS COHEN, Associate Professor of History and Modern Jewish History, Vanderbilt University

DARAKHSHAN KHAN  
Post-Doctoral Research Fellow, International Institute of Islamic Thought, Herndon, VA  
“The Many Abodes of Islam: Narratives of Muslim Belonging from Small Town India”

TIMUR HAMMOND  
Assistant Professor, Department of Geography, Syracuse University  
“Reshaping the Mediums of Belief: Istanbul, Islam, and the Place of the Prophet’s Companions”

11:00-11:15 BREAK

11:15-12:15 CHAIR: DANIEL BIRCHOK, Assistant Professor of Anthropology, University of Michigan-Flint

MOHAMAD TAVAKOLI-TARGHI  
Professor, Departments of History, Historical Studies, and Near and Middle Eastern Civilizations, University of Toronto at Mississauga  
“From Medical to Engineering Islam: Epistemological Shifts in Modern Islamic Discourse”
12:15-13:00 LUNCH

13:00-15:00 CHAIR: SAMIRA SHEIKH, Sawyer Seminar Co-Director and Associate Professor of History, Vanderbilt University

HAN HSIENT LIEW
PhD Candidate, History and Middle Eastern Studies, Harvard University
“Alexander the Great in the Articulation of Malay Islamic Kingship”

JAHFAR SHAREEF
PhD Candidate, Centre for the Study of Social Systems, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi
“‘Jasad-ul-Muslim’; Sailing across ‘Duniyav’: A Ship Painting from an 18th-Century Mosque in Malabar, South India”

15:00-15:15 BREAK

15:15-16:15 CHAIR: DIANNA BELL, Independent Scholar, Cape Town, South Africa

TONY K. STEWART
Gertrude Conaway Vanderbilt Chair in Humanities, Vanderbilt University
“Parody, Appropriation, and Displacement in Early Modern Bengali Sufi Fictions”

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SATURDAY 09 SEPTEMBER 2017

08:30-09:00 TEA AND COFFEE

09:00-11:00 CHAIR: MOSES OCHONU, Cornelius Vanderbilt Chair in History, Vanderbilt University

BENJAMIN SOARES
Professor, Department of Religion, University of Florida
“Religiosity and its Others: Notes on Lived Islam in West Africa”

EMILY GREBLE
Associate Professor, Departments of History and German, Russian and East European Studies, Vanderbilt University
“Europe’s First Muslim Citizens (1878-1915)”

11:00 CLOSING REMARKS

FAISAL DEVJI
University Reader in Modern Asian History, and Director, Asian Studies Centre, St. Antony’s College, Oxford University & Conference Commentator-at-Large

SAMIRA SHEIKH, DAVID J. WASSERSTEIN, AND TONY K. STEWART
Sawyer Seminar Co-Directors

JOHN E. SAWYER SEMINAR, FUNDED BY THE ANDREW W. MELLON FOUNDATION AND THE ROBERT PENN WARREN CENTER FOR THE HUMANITIES, VANDERBILT UNIVERSITY
Speech and Space: Discursive Environments Across non-Arab Islam
Vanderbilt University
07-09 September 2017

WORKSHOP PROPOSAL

As Islam extended its reach beyond the Arab world, its practitioners found themselves inhabiting and domesticating new physical environments. To do this, these same figures found themselves similarly inhabiting ever-more diverse language communities, which allowed Islam to be habitudated into those new settings. The hallmark of both of these necessarily linked sets of activities — the appropriation and domestication of local speech and space — was an innovation that was and continues to be balanced against an expression of Islam as something that transcends the purely local, that links back to its inspirational source. These processes of domestication hinge initially on translation: speaking through the various media of architecture, ritual practices and objects, texts, music, assorted new technologies, and even legal systems to construct new conceptual worlds of Islam appropriate to local concerns. Yet whatever the local variation, these activities inevitably convey a recognizable sense of what it means to be a Muslim no matter where — we especially acknowledge the concept of the “Balkans to Bengal complex” articulated by Shahab Ahmed in *What is Islam? The Importance of Being Islamic* (Princeton, 2016). In contrast to the core Arabic-speaking world of Islam that, through that common language, sought and continues today to seek a unity that reflects the universality of the *shariʿa*— the combined constraints of history, theology, and law as closely defined — the Islam that has been domesticated in the non-Arab world appears of necessity to be more dialogic in its action. Until fairly recently, once Muslims naturalized space and speech for any locale, it was through pilgrimage that they could and did integrate themselves into the rest of the Islamic world. Through this constant movement of people in local and regional networks (that do not depend on the mandated pilgrimage to Mecca) distinctive Islamic communities could share and integrate their visions. From tombs and shrines of saints to sites connected to sacred histories, localized pilgrimages consolidate different configurations of community, which are more often than not linguistically and culturally linked. New technologies, especially in media, have changed the nature of these linkages, expanding or even creating new discursive spaces in which practitioners can enact being Muslim.

WORKSHOP THEMES

**SPEECH**
The intricacies of language adaptation and appropriation for Islamic expression and how local expression generates unique affective responses;

**SPACE**
The ways the environment yielded to Muslim inhabitants and the concomitant repurposing of local material culture and new technologies to reflect these ideas; and

**INTEGRATION**
How networks of local and regional pilgrimage consolidated conceptions of being Islamic in locally meaningful ways.