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Patrick Eisenlohr (Göttingen)

Twelver Shi'i Muslims' right to the city: Public performance, media practices, and urban atmospheres in Mumbai

Public religious performances and media practices are central to the position of Twelver Shi'i Muslims in Mumbai. I argue that such practices produce intertwined claims of belonging on multiple levels that establish certain neighborhoods of the city as specifically "Shia." This creation of urban localities as "Shia" operates not just through discourse and imagery, but also through giving such localities an atmospheric feel, particularly in their sonic and movement-related dimensions. These practices thus seek to underline the long-standing presence of Twelver Shi'i Muslims in the city in an environment characterized not only by long histories of communalism but also ever-increasing intra-Islamic sectarianism. Closely related to such claims are a local Shi'i media center's public campaigns to portray Shi'i Muslims as ideal Indian citizens. Finally, Twelver Shi'i public performances and media practices also feature the creation and reproduction of transregional links to key sites of Shi'i religious authority and pilgrimage. I show how these practices achieve insertion in Indian nationalist narratives, a sense of belonging to the city, and the establishment of transregional links simultaneously. Shi'is thereby seek to counter their marginalization in the city and the nation, while producing transnational and transregional geographies as alternative sources of belonging and recognition.

Patrick Eisenlohr heads the research group "Society and Culture in Modern India" at the Centre for Modern Indian Studies (CeMIS) in Göttingen. He completed his PhD in anthropology at the University of Chicago in 2001. From 2001 to 2007 he was assistant professor of anthropology at Washington University in St. Louis, he held an appointment as visiting professor at New York University in 2004, and from 2008 to 2014 he was professor of cultural anthropology at Utrecht University.

Patrick Eisenlohr has worked on a range of issues in the anthropology of media, linguistic anthropology and sound studies, especially on the sonic dimensions of religion, media and religion, language, religion, and citizenship, as well as language and diaspora.

Recent publication: Eisenlohr, Patrick (2018). *Sounding Islam: Voice, Media, and Sonic Atmospheres in an Indian Ocean World*. California: University of California Press. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1525/luminos.53>

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