

THE MAKING OF MUSLIM SPACES IN AN AUCKLAND SUBURB

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Introduction

With the ease of transportation and advancement of technology, people and cultures are no longer confined in their own geographical space. Political upheavals and economic pressures also seem to amplify people's motivation to migrate from one place to another for the purpose of finding a better life. Yet in reality Muslims have been on the move for a very long time. In fact travel has been encouraged for a myriad of different reasons, from an annual pilgrimage to Mecca (*hajj*) in search of embodiment of piety and of enhancement in social standing (Eickelman and Piscatori 1990a: xiv) to emigration (*hijrah*) from places where religious public expression is repressed, to those that provide more freedom to do so (Eickelman and Piscatori 1990b: 5). Indeed Muslims have always moved for reasons of trade, warfare, proselytization, learning and pilgrimage. In the past few decades there has been a rise in labour migration among Muslim countries and from Muslim states to non-Muslim countries due to an upsurge of unemployment and invasive conflict in Islamic homelands. This immigration inevitably changes the demography, cultural and religious makeup of the host country.

For Muslims, as implied by Delaney (1990: 513-514), it is impossible to make a sharp distinction between 'sacred' and 'secular' in terms of traveling. Migration and pilgrimage may both involve a secular dimension in which people move to a different place based on non-religious motives, as well as spiritual domain in which migration and/or pilgrimage are aimed to reinforce piety. This marked demarcation between sacred and secular mobility seems to be a delineation that is asserted by Western scholars to give meaning to Muslim mobile experience rather than by Muslims themselves (Delaney 1990: 514). The reality is that wherever and for whatever reasons a journey takes place, Muslims never leave behind their religious and cultural baggage. This is especially true for practicing Muslims. The consequence of such practice is that Muslim migrants have created Muslim spaces for themselves in places where they settle. The making of Muslim spaces is built upon the demand for amenities that could meet their religious requirements. Unlike other religions which tend to be more 'private' as their practices can be carried out by isolated individuals in their own private sites, Islam is more likely to require 'public' submissions (Gerholm 1994: 202). As Gerholm (1994: 202) suggests 'an authentic Muslim life demands an extensive "infrastructure": mosques, schools, butchers, cemeteries, etc.'

Muslim migration to the West, mostly to Europe and the United States, but also to some extent to Australia and New Zealand, has altered the face of public landscape

and prompted critical reaction from both non-Muslim community and secular state. As elucidated by Grillo (2004: 863) ‘public visibility of Islam and its significance for Muslims and non-Muslims in Europe have certainly increased dramatically’. Lotfi (2001: 235-236) also notes the number of mosques and Islamic centres in the United States have drastically flourished particularly since 1980s. By the early twenty-first-century there are over 2,100 mosques and Islamic centres spread across the fifty states with higher densities in certain areas like in California, New York, Illinois, Michigan and Texas than in other regions. In England, Muslim schools are seeking firm ground to negotiate and compromise their spirituality-based education system within a secular, post-modern context (Castelli and Trevathan 2005). By inhabiting a new land Muslims come to realise that there are other ways of practising Islam and of being Muslim among a diverse Muslim community besides become more aware of the commonality of faith and goals that ties them as one *ummah* (community of believers) (Eickelman and Piscatori 1990: xv). They encounter the complexities of multiple religious interpretations and practices among multi-ethnic Muslim migrants. Hence in this transnational context Muslims endeavour to define, negotiate and (re)define their religiosity.

New Zealand has been chosen as a destination by Muslims from many corners of the world. Although Muslims have migrated to this country since around 130 years ago, only in the late 1980s rapid increase in Muslim migrants occurred due to political and economic mayhem in other parts of the globe (Kolig 2010: 24–25) and to a progressive change in New Zealand immigration policy introduced in 1987 (Nachowitz 2007). The recent influx of Muslim migrants has transformed not only public urban centres but has also converted ordinary New Zealand private houses into Muslim spaces. Muslim locales are created to aim for religious identity and piety yet they have become the focal points in which multiple Muslim discourses and practices collide with secular values.

One of these locales is Mt Roskill, a neighbourhood in central Auckland with a high Muslim population. Mt Roskill is a setting in which the sacred and the secular are simultaneously lived and experienced, and it is a locale in which innovative ways of being Muslim are emerging and embodied.

Mt Roskill was a natural choice for me as a field site. Although I have never lived in the neighbourhood, many of my Muslim friends and acquaintances live in Mt Roskill and have deliberately chosen the area as their place of residence. Their intention to live there always intrigues me. What seemed to be just another suburb for other New Zealanders might have different meanings for my informants as they intentionally decided to live in this neighbourhood. Fieldwork was conducted using participant-observation between April 2010 and February 2011 in Mt Roskill in which I visited pious Sunni Muslim mothers in their homes and attended *tafsīr* and *tajwīd* classes where Muslim women learned and discussed the meaning and the interpretation of the Qur’an and how to recite the Qur’an in its proper Arabic pronunciation. These mothers were of Southeast Asian, South Asian, Middle Eastern and East African ethnicities.¹

1 For a detailed explanation of the methodology of this research including the research questions see Hartono (2011).

New Zealand's Muslim Migrants

The record shows that as early as 130 years ago the first Muslims set foot in Aotearoa. They were of Chinese descent and they worked as gold miners at the Otago goldfields near Dunedin (Kolig 2010: 21, Shepard 2006: 9-10). Unfortunately there is no detailed information on whether these men lived permanently in New Zealand or returned to their home country as soon as they had completed their job at Dunstan. However no Muslims are known among the present-day New Zealand Chinese community (Kolig 2010: 21).

Since then only a handful of Muslim men, mainly from India resided and tried to make their living in different parts of the country, like Auckland and Christchurch and it was only in late 1930s that their wives and female relatives came to join them (Kolig 2010: 22). As in 1920 the government adopted a 'White New Zealand' immigration policy, further migration of Asian descent was practically non-existent and the population of Muslims in New Zealand remained at a little above fifty in 1945. By this time Muslim mobility into the country was mostly from the Balkans, Turkey and their neighbouring countries which boosted the number of Muslims in New Zealand to 260 by 1961 (Kolig 2010: 23).

A sharp increase in Muslim population occurred since the late 1980s with a considerable influx of Fiji Indian migrants and significant numbers of Muslim migrants from the Middle East and Asian countries (Kolig 2010: 25). Since the early 1990s refugees from Somalia have made New Zealand, especially Hamilton and Christchurch, their home. Under a point system immigration law which favoured well-educated or wealthy migrants, a number of Muslim professionals resettled in this country. It is estimated that at present there are as many as 40,000 to 45,000 Muslims from around forty ethnic groups (FIANZ 2010) resident in New Zealand.

Adjusting to a secular society may not be easy for some Muslims yet others have little problem adapting to values that seem foreign to them. As noted by Willis (2010: 6) mobility to different places may 'expose individuals and groups to different social norms and resources, leading to longer-term change'. Language and cultural background may play a part in the level of adjustment experienced. English fluency and a strong community in New Zealand or a similar culture have enabled some Muslims of certain ethnic groups to adjust better than others. It is acknowledged that Fiji Indians and European Muslims such as Bosnians and the Kosovars have the least difficulty whereas Somalis are more susceptible to experience hardships in terms of their adaptations to the new environment (Kolig 2010: 26, 51). Recent research on New Zealand Muslim youth also indicates their successful adjustment to life in New Zealand despite facing discrimination and acculturation pressures (Stuart et al. 2010: 11). A strong Muslim identity and engagement in Muslim practices seems to significantly contribute to their well-adjusted being and positive adaptation in their new country.

Moving to New Zealand could mean a lifetime resettlement for some Muslims but for others it is just a stepping stone to relocate to a different country, especially Australia. On reflection, a number of Muslims of my acquaintance and their families have moved to different cities in Australia in the past few years to find jobs with better remuneration or that are more suited to their qualifications (see also Kolig 2010: 51). This is not to

say that Muslims are not firmly rooted in New Zealand, to borrow Shepard's remarks of New Zealand's Muslims (Shepard 2006: 38), since many South Asian Muslims have been here for generations.

Many Muslims live in Auckland with sizeable minorities in Hamilton, Wellington and Christchurch and even smaller communities in Dunedin, Tauranga, Palmerston North, Hastings and other cities spread across New Zealand (Shepard 2006). One of the suburbs in Auckland that is inhabited by many Muslims and most popular among Muslims of different ethnicities is Mt Roskill.

Creating Muslim Spaces in Mt Roskill

Mt Roskill in the past was unlike its present state. Although its boundaries have not altered much since 1842 when it was first defined as part of Eden County (Reidy 2007: 12), its social and cultural makeup has changed considerably. Indeed, many physical developments have taken place. But what is intriguing is how a suburb that was once known as 'the Bible belt' has become a populous area in New Zealand in terms of Muslim residents.

As part of Auckland City Council, its electoral district includes Wesley in the west, Waikowhai and Hillsborough in the south, Three Kings in the north with Onehunga and Te Papapa in its furthest east (Reidy 2007: 12). Due to the volcanic nature of the mountain it is understandable that the area became fertile farmland with luscious crops of vegetables, grain and oats, and dairy farms of beef and mutton from the 1800s, and developed into one of the major providers of Auckland city's food supplies (Reidy 2007: 29). By the 1860s the very affluent had built large homesteads surrounded by park-like grounds around the suburb, like Monte Cecilia country estate in Hillsborough (Reidy 2007: 29-32).

A major local development in terms of building construction in Mt Roskill happened when there was a chronic housing shortage and a high unemployment rate due to the Great Depression in the 1930s. This expansion, in the form of the construction of state houses, was completed in Three Kings, Mt Roskill South, Waikowhai and Wesley. By the end of the war 26,000 families were on the waiting list for a state house (Reidy 2007: 70-71). In the late 1940s and early 1950s Mt Roskill turned into a thriving suburb with its own shopping centre on Dominion Road, an adequate transport system of trams and buses to and from the city centre and new schools (Reidy 2007: 55, 57, 77, 96-97).

Under the governance of Mayor Keith Hay, Mt Roskill was justifiably known as 'the Bible belt' due to its largest ratio of churches per head in New Zealand.² With the decline of Christian belief among the wider New Zealand community during the late twentieth century, the Christian vision of Mt Roskill suburban life (Reidy 2007: 93) was a marked contrast to the rest of the country.

2 There were 26 churches for its 35,000 residents by 1988 in Mt Roskill.

However, with the recent rise in migrants and refugees the image of Mt Roskill has changed drastically. The percentage of Christians in the area is no longer higher than the country's average. Many Muslims and Hindus have made Mt Roskill their home. With a significant decline in Christian residents and substantial percentages of Muslims and Hindus the face of East meeting West in Mt Roskill becomes more apparent. Overall the percentage of Muslim and Hindus in Mt Roskill are much higher than the national average. Mt Roskill's population of 6.7 per cent Muslim and 11.9 per cent Hindu is far above the national average of 1.0 and 1.7 per cent respectively (Reidy 2007: 149, Mt Roskill electorate profile, July 2009). While Mt Roskill is perhaps an extreme case of ethnic and religious transformation, it should be seen within a wider pattern of a shift away from an explicit identification with Christianity and a move towards multiculturalism which mirrors the general public face of the new New Zealand.

Due to its proximity to the Mangere refugee centre and availability of state houses, Mt Roskill has in recent years become home to many refugees from East African countries such as Ethiopia, Somalia, Sudan and Eritrea, and the Middle East such as Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan and Kuwait. As New Zealand has been providing a safe haven for refugees from war torn countries, Mt Roskill has been selected as one of the 'ideal places' for refugees to rebuild their shattered lives and has housed the largest refugee community in the country (Reidy 2007: 138).

New migrants from Asian countries, including India, who are rapidly increasing in numbers also consciously seek Mt Roskill as a place to live. Quality schools such as Mt Roskill Grammar, which was chosen as the second best school in Auckland by *Metro* magazine's 2010 survey (Scoop n.d.), have enticed many migrants to reside in the suburb. On their website Masjid e Umar, a large mosque which is located on Stoddard Road also claims that the mosque has drawn many Muslims to live in the area (Masjid e Umar n.d.). Real estate agents intentionally use the catchwords 'close to or within walking distance of the mosque' to attract Muslim clientele to purchase or rent a house in the neighbourhood (Masjid e Umar n.d.).

The mosque itself was previously built as the Congregational Christian Church of Samoa but was put up for sale in May 1996. The Mt Roskill Islamic Trust, which was established in 1989, took an interest and successfully bid for the property in an auction in June 1996. The trust, which previously operated in a garage that was used as a prayer room and for Qur'an classes to meet the needs of Muslim families in the neighbourhood, saw the opportunity to acquire a larger building for its activities. With the financial support from local Muslims and overseas donors the purchase price of \$1.5 million was paid off in September 1996 and it was then converted into a mosque. The expansive building that could accommodate 1200 worshippers and a minister's residence is fitting to meet the growing Muslim community in the area. By 2002 the Trust had bought the adjacent properties to cater for a Muslim women's *madrassa* (Islamic religious school) (Federation of Islamic Associations of New Zealand 2005).

Despite the reality of having a mosque in the area, Mt Roskill, like other neighbourhoods with mosques in New Zealand, lacks the Islamic sounds of *adhan* (call to prayer) and the sound of Qur'anic recitation that are frequently heard in mosques

in majority Muslim countries (Metcalf 1996a: 8). The *adhan* is only recited inside the mosque without a loudspeaker so its sound cannot be heard from afar. This practice may thus create the realisation of a disparity between migrants' individual and collective pasts and their current transnational context (1996a: 9).

The mosque is open for five times daily prayers including Friday congregational prayer and *Eid* prayers for Muslim brothers. Unlike many other mosques in Auckland that cater to both male and female worshippers, this institution only provides a praying facility for males. In its *ṣalāt al-Jum'ah*³ hundreds of Muslim men, young and old, from diverse ethnicities including converts in the vicinity, attend and make their prayers. This reflects the varied cultural backgrounds of people who make Mt Roskill their home and business site. Only Sunni Muslims pray in this mosque. It is common knowledge among Muslims that Masjid e Umar is managed by Muslims from *tablighi jama'at*,⁴ although its attendances encompass many others outside the *jamaat*. *Khutbah* (sermon) for Friday prayer is conducted in English and Urdu. This reflects the dominant South Asian ethnicity of the group who manage the mosque. The mosque provides a weekly Qur'an class for women in the adjacent premises. A myriad of other activities is also offered by the mosque, including *madrasa* for children, Qur'an class and weekly lectures on Islamic tenets for men, marriage ceremonies and a *hajj* training programme.

On a Friday around noon Muslims, young and old, walk in groups of twos, threes or more toward the mosque or they come in cars that they park in the mosque grounds or around the vicinity. During school holidays some fathers come with their young sons and daughters, pre-schoolers and school-aged children. Some of the boys wear *shalwar kameez*⁵ or *thobe*⁶ and the girls in frock and *ḥijāb* (veil). Some Muslim men come out from their business premises and walk to the mosque. Many of the people look like South Asians and Middle Eastern people adorn in their best *shalwar kameez* or *thobe*. A few others wear plain Western clothing. A few are Africans, presumably Somalians, and even fewer Southeast Asian, Chinese or Western looking. Most of the old men have beards but they keep their beards short. Only a few of them wear their beards long. Most of the young men are clean-shaven. Hundreds of people come to the mosque to pray on Friday afternoon.

3 *Ṣalāt al-Jum'ah* is congregational Friday prayer required of all Sunni men but not of women.

4 *Tablighi jama'at* is Indian reform movement founded by Mawlana Muhammad Ilyas in 1927 in Delhi. It is popular with villagers and peasants. It is called for reform of personal religious practices and defence of Islam and Muslim minority populations. It is focused on religious, rather than political, aspects of Islam and spread throughout the Muslim world from 1950 on (Esposito 2003). See Dickson (2009) for ethnographic account on the *tablighi jama'at* movement in Canadian urban spaces.

5 It is a Punjabi-Urdu term (it is originally from a Persian word "*salwar*" and an Arabic word "*qamis*") for a traditional dress of South Asian women and men of loose pyjama-like trousers and a long shirt or tunic.

6 *Thobe* is an ankle-length tunic typically worn by Middle Eastern men.

Masjid e Umar has become a centre in which Muslims in Mt Roskill express their Islamic identity and embody piety. Although the mosque is visited by a Muslim community of diverse ethnicities it is still distinctly South Asian in terms of its religious and sociocultural facets. This is evidenced primarily in the way they do not allow women to pray in the premises. Although the mosque provides *tafsīr* class for women and *madrasa* for girls the two classes are placed in a different building. As Qureshi (1996: 59) points out, mosques in the South Asian region are attended only by men. The reality of gender exclusion creates a sense of contrast—a contrast with their past—for Muslim women and Muslims of minority ethnicities who live in Mt Roskill and its neighbouring suburbs. Some Muslim women, like Zahra, consequently, pray at a mosque in Blockhouse Bay that caters for women when they want to perform their prayer outside their home. Or like the Middle Eastern Muslim community around the area, they have established a new mosque in Mt Albert that welcomes both genders to pray on its premises. As Qureshi (1996: 59) explains, the participation of women in mosque worship is a standard practice of Arab Muslims, which is maintained in a transnational context. In this space multiple local religious understandings and practices collide and are contested within global Islamic discourse of the current migration context, and consequently accepting dominant discourses of Islam (D’Alisera 2004: 10-11). Different ways of dressing, facial appearance and mosque attendance create a sense of ambivalence and uncertainty as to the ‘proper’ religious practices and motivate a sense of urgency to re-examine previous experiences.

The Muslim women I worked with, by migrating to this country, have the opportunity to interact with Muslims from other parts of the world in the *tafsīr* and *tajwīd* classes they attend.⁷ This encourages them to reflect on the ways that they understood Islam and practiced the religion in their country of origin. They conveyed their intentions to be better Muslims, perhaps more pious, than they used to be as a result of their encounters with a multi-ethnic and similarly displaced groups of believers. Conflicts of practice and understanding of religious tenets within the confines of the broader transnational community creates an urge to critically examine their prior Islamic practice and understanding. For instance discussion on the propriety of music has taken centre stage among Muslims, including in the *tafsīr* class I attended. The argument for and against listening to music and playing musical instruments could illustrate how my informants are caught between various local meanings and universal belief and practice of Islam. In the space of the *tafsīr* class they experience self-examination and a sense of contrast between their previous and current understanding of music and how their view may not be similar to other Muslims and that of religious texts. They objectify the way they use music in their lives. It is in these sites that Muslim women come to realise that there are multiple meanings of religious belief and practice among the transnational Muslim community. Traditional Islam that they bring from back home

7 These classes are held either at a specified location that is owned by an Islamic trust or at different domestic spaces in which Muslims reside. The language used as medium of learning, which could be either English or a particular ethnic language or both, depends on the ethnicity of the participants of the classes.

collides with universalistic Islam from the Qur'an and the *ahādīth* which consecutively creates a sense of contrast— discontinuity with a past or discrepancy with the rest of society—that shapes their religious style.

In addition, Muslim businesses which provide goods and services for Muslim clientele also add to the appeal to live in the neighbourhood. Opposite the mosque, Khyber Foods and Spices shop retails Eastern spices and *ḥalāl* meat. It occupies an unattractive warehouse-like building with a very limited car park in front of the premises. However, its extensive selections of Middle Eastern and Indian spices with their distinct aroma would definitely lure buyers to come and visit the shop. The *ḥalāl* butchery at the back of the shop also has a good range of fresh meat and chicken. The shop has been in the area at least since 1999. The *ḥalāl* butchery in Stoddard Road had a business competitor when Mohammed's *Halāl* Meats opened its store not long after on Richardson Road. With its own modernised separate factory for processing, packaging and storage *ḥalāl* meat products in Avondale, which are delivered to its retail outlets, to hotels, restaurants, rest homes and local suppliers, and exported internationally (Mohammed's *Halāl* Meats (NZ) Ltd n.d.), Mohammed's *Halāl* Meat is a sound business indeed. From one shop front in the early days it has expanded to its neighbouring shops in recent years and has opened a fried chicken outlet a la the famous Kentucky Fried Chicken but using *ḥalāl* chicken instead. In spite of having practically no parking space, this retail shop is never free of bustling customers. Unlike Khyber *ḥalāl* meat with its Muslim-men-only vendors, Mohammed's *Halāl* Meats has at least one or two Muslim women serving the customers with other Muslim salesmen around her. Muslim businesses in Mt Roskill seem to expand every year. Only recently Moshim's which has its shops in different parts of Auckland including in Mt Roskill opened its shopping centre on Stoddard Road accommodating different Muslim shops including a *ḥalāl* supermarket, *ḥalāl* meat shop, *ḥalāl* food court, Muslim clothing store with a Christian aid and development organisation as one of its tenants. The plaza was opened on 20th June 2009 under the management of Moshim's Discount House Group of Companies owned by a Muslim entrepreneur. The group owns 24 stores throughout New Zealand and two stores in Australia (Indian Weekender June 21, 2009).

The above narratives illustrate public expressions of Muslim life in Mt Roskill in which Muslims create places of worship and facilitate their religious belief and practice through *ḥalāl* goods and services. As elucidated by Orsi (1999: 43) 'industrial and post-industrial cities have been the ground of a unique religious creativity' in which distinctly and specifically urban forms of religious practice, experience, and understanding are embodied. The focus of the current context of Mt Roskill is to ease worship and sanctioned religious practice in urban transnational landscape. Indeed there is 'newness' of meaning (Metcalf 1996a: 12) which emerges due to different circumstances of the larger society to the one they encounter back home as is shown by the modification of *adhan* and provision of a men only mosque congregation, for example. As Metcalf (1996a: 12) suggests 'Muslim ritual and practice cannot be understood as mere continuity with an "Old World" past'. In this 'peripheral centre', the Islamic dimension of Muslims' life is 'far from a mere changeover from the migrants' previous experience' (Mandel 1996: 164). The transformation of Mt Roskill from 'the Bible belt' into a multi-ethnic society

with strong influence of Islam is only made possible by the nature of the majority society of New Zealand, the legal status of immigrant Muslims — whether they are treated as permanent settlers or as ‘guest workers’ like in Germany (see Mandel 1996) — and by relationship of state and religion (see Kolig 2010). As Muslims make claims on public space, they may encounter resistance to Islam, often defined by racism that in turn shapes their behaviour (Metcalf 1996a: 12, 14, Metcalf 1996b: 124, McCloud 1996: 68, 73). What about Muslims in Mt Roskill? How do they feel about living in an environment profuse with multiculturalism, particularly Islamic nuances?

There was a spirit of multiculturalism in the neighbourhood as Huda told me during my visit to her house. She was thrilled when the refugee centre offered her and her children the opportunity to live in Mt Roskill after refusing their recommendation to reside in Three Kings due to the fact that she had not seen any people of African, Indian or Asian origins in the area. She had requested to be accommodated in a multicultural neighbourhood and not too far from the mosque. She has been happily living in her present residence ever since. She liked the fact that she could take a short drive to the mosque to drop her children off to *madrassa* and that she felt and looked the same as others around her. Even the non-Muslims in the neighbourhood, she conveyed, were familiar with and appreciative of Muslims and their values. In Huda’s road alone there were ten Muslim families of different ethnicities including Afghans, South Africans, Indians and Malaysians. On a different street yet still in the same neighbourhood, Zahra and Afifa, also have Muslim neighbours, with a few Maori and Pacific Island families. Huda even put off her decision to move to a suburb on the North Shore because Middle Eastern women (from a particular ethnicity) in the area tend to take off their *hijāb* once they live in this country. She explained that these women no longer wear *hijāb* because they were pressured by their family back home to wear it and had no proper understanding that wearing a *hijāb* is *fard* (obligatory) in Islam.

Muslim women I worked with prefer to live in some parts of Mt Roskill with high density of Muslim neighbours close by or which is relatively close to the mosque and to public schools with significant numbers of Muslim children attending in which Muslim values are respected. These secular schools endeavour as much as possible to accommodate Muslim practices and life styles that may seem foreign. The often wide gap between ‘the other’ and Muslim values is bridged by negotiation and accommodation in many aspects of school life. Confronted with a different way of dressing, the public school tries to accommodate by having a special policy for their school uniform by allowing their Muslim female students to wear a *hijāb* and a pair of long pants or a long skirt. In the context in which gender segregation is needed, like in swimming lessons at the school swimming pool, this mixed gender school tries to follow the correct practice by having single gender swimming sessions. During this allocated time male and female Muslim students can comfortably swim in their swimming togs without having to worry about the opposite sex. With many Muslim children at the school *ḥalāl* food is served in many of the school functions and events. Likewise, a weekly ‘religious’ studies class that in other schools teaches about ethics and basic religious (Christian) values, in this public school it is tailored to suit Muslim students. A special Muslim teacher conducts a weekly meeting with Muslim students to explain about Islam and its

teaching. Mt Roskill Grammar School even provides a facility for its Muslim students to perform their Friday prayer in one of its classes.

In this new place, Muslim migrants have created for themselves spaces and a community on their own terms. They fit into the existing urban social and physical structure, sites and amenities that help them to refashion, express and strengthen their religious belief and practice. Since some Muslim migrants move to this country to stay, they manage to create and define a neighbourhood that gives them the means to feel secure and protected from the profanity of the 'outside world'. For my informants, living outside Mt Roskill would mean inviting more challenges for them to live as pious Muslims. Mt Roskill becomes an alternately constructed centre of Islam to the ones they have left behind in their home country. As Werbner (1996) suggests by transforming a mundane neighbourhood into a place in which religious belief is practiced Muslims have formed meaningful relationships with the spaces they occupy (see also D'Alisera 2010: 102).

As the Muslim community in the area embrace new meanings of their religious belief and practices through their engagement with multi-ethnic Muslims and the larger non-Muslim society, they too transform their domestic space into a Muslim space. How did my informants refashion the mundane space of home, in which they have more freedom and control, into a distinctive Muslim space?

Muslim Homes

One morning with clouds hanging over Mt Roskill coupled with some drizzle, I arrived in front of Zahra's house. The house she occupied with her husband and children was located at the back of a section. So I passed her front neighbour who was also a Muslim family. Approaching the front door, I could hear from the loudspeaker in her living room a man reciting the Qur'an. It was quite loud because the windows were slightly opened. Yet the sound was not audible from her neighbour's side of the section.

I said my *salām*⁸ but I could not hear her reply. I knew she was home because I could hear her voice talking to her young daughter in Arabic. The curtains on the windows and front ranch slider door were closed. The white net curtains were thick with a big floral pattern all over so it was impossible for someone outside to see inside the living room.

She finally heard my greeting and peeked through the curtain. She welcomed me with a smile and asked me to come inside. Soon Zahra turned off the computer speaker from where the Qur'an recitation was coming. I saw a tall bookshelf with glass doors beside the computer table with a number of copies of Qur'ans inside.

Zahra's home illustrates a space of difference (McCloud 1996: 67-68) by means of the Qur'an recitation from the computer loudspeaker and copies of the Qur'an in the bookshelf. Similarly, Afifa also 'decorated' her house with the Qur'an in her bookshelf

8 It is the Islamic greeting "*Assalamu alaikum*", which means peace be upon you.

in the living room, while Aisha hung a number of calligraphies of Islamic texts, beside the Qur'an and religious books in her bookshelf. All the Qur'ans in Zahra's, Afifa's and Aisha's homes are placed on the highest shelf and are kept on one of the best pieces of furniture in the house to show a mark of respect (Qureshi 1996: 48). For them the Qur'an and any visual Islamic displays are not mere ornaments, rather as Qureshi (1996: 48) indicates, they are meant to initiate articulation and action of religious piety. In essence, Zahra, Afifa and Aisha use objects, images and sounds to create a Muslim space that provides them with a sense of Islamic identity and piety and to fill a void of imagined past. As Metcalf (1996a: 4) elucidates 'for a Muslim to feel at home or for a non-Muslim to recognise a Muslim space, the presence of certain spoken and written Arabic words is most telling'. The presence of the Holy book, the recitation and Islamic words dictate a certain attitude that Muslims live in this house in which prayer space is guaranteed.

The Qur'an recitation I heard at Zahra's house also transformed a physical space of an ordinary house into a site of religious identity. Indeed, Muslim ritual requires, at least in principle, no 'sacred place' (Metcalf 1996a: 6) as what is important for Muslims is the religious practice and not the site. But in practice my informants, like Aisha, Afifa and Zahra, were compelled to decorate their living room with Islamic texts and sounds that are mostly lacking in a largely non-Muslim environment. For instance, the sound of *adhan* and the sound of Qur'anic recitation that is usually heard from a mosque in a Muslim country are replaced by Qur'an recitation from a home computer loudspeaker, by Qur'an displayed in the bookshelf, the sound of *adhan* from an electronic *adhan* clock, and calligraphy on living room walls.

Zahra's, Afifa's and Huda's houses are relatively austere with no pictures or photographs on the wall or on the shelf. Aisha's home, on the other hand, is decorated with Islamic texts and calligraphy hung on her living room wall whereas such calligraphy was not present at Zahra's, Afifa's and Huda's home. They all recognise some shared Islamic values that pictures of animate objects including photographs of the occupants of the house displayed in the home are prohibited as prescribed by the Qur'an and the *hadīth*. Yet not all Muslims agree about the use of artistically calligraphied Qur'anic verses or other Islamic texts displayed as ornaments on the wall. Although Aisha has no objection on the matter, some other Muslims prohibit such practice on the grounds that such display may serve as an amulet, which incites *shirk*.⁹

The domestic space is viewed as a safe locale in which they have the freedom and control to practise their religion. It is in this site that Muslim women are free to unveil and wear any clothing they wish to, out of sight of their neighbours and visitors. In my visits to their home, some of my informants were not wearing their *hujub* or *niqāb* (face veil) although others still did. A Muslim female visitor is considered as a sister in Islam in which case a veil is not compulsory. When I came to Aisha's house alone she never put on her *hijāb* and *'abāya* although on other occasions when I visited her house with my husband on social visits she always wore proper Muslim clothing.

9 *Shirk* is the sin of idolatry or polytheism (Woodward 1989:216).

Engaging in the embodiment of pious self in the confinement of home also means practising gender roles when guests come to visit. Some houses are consciously demarcated in terms of gender. On my visits to Aisha's home with my husband and children on the *Eid-ul-Fitr* festivity, my daughter and I were sat in the dining room adjoining the kitchen with the curtains between the dining room and the living room drawn close. Meanwhile my husband and sons were escorted to their garage that was already transformed, especially for the occasion, into a dining room. In some other Muslim homes I was guided to one portion of the house, their study or family room for example, by the wife while my husband was having a conversation with their husband in their living room. Yet not all Muslims in Mt Roskill have the same kind of gendered spatial segregation practice in their home. My Muslim friend who lives close to the mosque with her husband and children received all their guests, male and female, in the living room and had their lunch in the same space.

In the privacy of her home Afifa designated a room especially for performing *salat*, for teaching her children about Islam and for weekly adult *tafsīr* class in which her neighbours from certain ethnicities came to discuss the Qur'an. The separate room for religious observance and education, as Peshkova (2009: 260) points out, 'enabled the occupants' socio-religious practices which, in turn, reproduced the meaning of domestic space for them as Islamic'. For Afifa a room particularly used for religious observance and education gives a sacred meaning to her and her family's religious experiences. Although my other informants have no special room in which they perform their religious practices or teach their children about Islam, they perform their prayer in their bedroom or living room where they can be without any disturbances and the space is large enough to place their *sajadah* facing the *qibla*. As also reiterated by McCloud (1996: 70) the minimal requirement for a Muslim space is a place for prayer in which Muslims can perform the prayer undisturbed while physically facing the *Ka'bah*.

Indeed the life in the house is characterised by 'words of Islam'. At the core of religious belief and practice are words: 'the words of Qur'anic Message, words that explain and interpret the Message, words that praise God and his Messenger, words that express the believer's submission to Islam' (Qureshi 1996: 48). In my informants' homes, too, 'words of Islam' are used to imbue Muslim identity and piety in their children and themselves. Our family friends who live in Mt Roskill used a colourful poster for children with ninety-nine names of *Allah* in Arabic. Although their baby was only a few months old they have already hung the poster on their living room wall so that it will be the first thing their infant sees and learns when she starts to recognise shape, colours and letters. Aisha also placed a book on prayer for children in the bookshelf in her living room, low enough for her son to access when he needed.

Unlike most of the Muslim world, which welcomes television and radio (McCloud 1996: 72), a few of the Muslim women with whom I worked try to shut out Western values and open their door only to Muslim standards. In her house, Aisha especially installed a satellite dish that enabled her and her family to watch Middle Eastern television programmes. My Muslim friend who also lived in Mt Roskill never watched New Zealand television since she had a satellite dish to watch programmes from the many channels of Indonesian television. Despite their wish to invite Muslim beliefs into

their living room and shun the Western values of New Zealand television I was never convinced that they could totally protect themselves from the outside media influences that they considered *harām* (forbidden according to Islamic rulings).¹⁰ Many of the Indonesian television *sinetron* (television dramas) shown outside the fasting month of *Ramadān* are never far from non-Islamic values, such as over exposure of boyfriend-girlfriend relationships. As Ida (2008: 49-50) suggests, the *Ramadān* month is the only time when Indonesian television is crammed with Islamic cultures and identities which are normally marginalized. In the holy month the many Indonesian television channels try to capture their audiences' attention, who are mostly Muslims, by becoming 'religious channels' with a range of programmes from talk show programmes, sermons to quizzes, music and *sinetron* intensely full with religious content (Ida 2008: 49).

The above vignettes demonstrate how Muslims make their homes into a distinctive Muslim space through decoration, signage, gender partition and practice. In this space Muslim women create an environment in which they embody religious belief and practice, and imbue worship and sanctioned practice into their children to develop them into good Muslims. The decoration, signage and practice within the home are deliberately organised to convey and embody the teachings of the Qur'an and *ahādīth*. For my informants, the home becomes a space in which Muslim behaviour is learned and practised, and in which they have control to separate themselves from the larger society and to convey a certain attitude (McCloud 1996: 68). As Darke (1994) suggests, the private realm of the home is typically understood as a space that offers freedom and control (cited in Mallet 2004). It is here that they have a lot of control over what kind of and how much transmission of cultural and religious practices takes place in their home. Indeed it does not guarantee that secular influences of public television broadcast and the Internet, for example, are totally absent from their living room. Yet they have some degree of control to organise and select whichever information is available in their home. The control of domestic space is associated with the embodiment of piety of the occupants, I would suggest. Campo (1991 cited in McCloud 1996:69) also argues that a great deal of a house's sacrality depends on the reputation of its female occupants. In circumstances in which the occupants see the home as a focal place to impart and imbue piety they would make their home into a distinctive Muslim space that could facilitate their religious belief and practice. At least within the boundary of their home, Muslim women have some freedom and control to adopt, or on the contrary to abandon, whatever values and notions try to 'sneak into'

10 My research participants observed as much as possible what actions and demeanours are considered *halāl* and *harām* according to the Islamic tenets. While there is no argument that eating pork and drinking alcohol are prohibited according to the Islamic rulings, there are a few other actions such as playing and listening to music which are debatable among some Muslims including religious teachers. For my informants music is forbidden although many other Muslims, including some religious teachers, believe that there is no ruling against music in the Islamic tenets. As long as it does not distract Muslims from God's path and contains no immoral lyrics it is permissible. Yet my informants have to accept that their children used music in their everyday lives at school (see Hartono 2011 for a detailed description on this issue).

their home. Specifically, they have some freedom and control over how they would make their home a Muslim space in the midst of diverse religious understandings of the multi-ethnic Muslim community around them.

Conclusion

Muslim transnational mobility has certainly transformed the urban spaces in which these Muslims make their home. Like many other urban centres in the West, Auckland particularly Mt Roskill has altered into a multicultural cityscape with a dominant Islamic flavour. It is true, as suggested by Metcalf (1996: 3) that as Muslims are ‘caught up in global movements...[they] carry with them a world of ritual, relationships, and symbols that creates some variety of Muslim space wherever they are present’. Indeed it is not difficult to identify the presence of Muslims through their clothing or facial appearance, for example, and through their places of worship, *halāl* meat shop and food retailer or by means of ‘Islamic’ objects and ornaments in their home, yet these easily seen ‘attributes’ are not sufficient to claim a space as a Muslim space. Sanctioned practice, ritual and narrative are essential to inscribe meaning ‘onto spaces that are not formally consecrated or architecturally Islamic’ (D’Alisera 2010: 108).

For the women I worked with, their neighbourhood and home in Mt Roskill are ‘spatial sanctuary’ in which religious values and understanding are being articulated and embodied. They feel secure and protected from the outside forces of foreign and secular values. However they also realise that there are other ways of being Muslim. Through their engagement with other Muslims in Muslim spaces of *tafsir* and *tajwid* classes and their children’s *madrassa* they learn that other Muslims may not embrace, observe and understand identical religious values and practices. In the process they seek to objectify the way they practice and understand Islam in which they critically examine themselves and others, and consciously or not they define, negotiate and (re)define their religiosity. Mt Roskill then becomes a locale in which tradition, religion and secular engagement are simultaneously lived and experienced and in which innovative ways of being Kiwi are emerging and embodied.

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