

# Introduction

How do people share a place? Answering that question involves negotiating many linked issues: what defines these places, where those places are, and which people, histories, practices, and meanings are linked to them. Because of Istanbul's historical, social, and cultural complexity, these questions are especially urgent. Alongside the specificities of Istanbul, shared understandings of place are also relevant to the geographies of Islam because places are woven into the traditions, identities, and broader worlds that define how Muslims understand themselves as Muslim. Sharing a place involves far more than mere location.

*Placing Islam* argues that rather than beginning with a definition of what Islam is, we ought to begin by examining the practices by which people enact the *where* of Islam. This book focuses on how people have made one especially rich and textured place of Islam: Eyüp. Here, these practices include how people tell stories, how they write and publish popular and academic histories, how they visit mosques and tombs, how they evaluate the other people visiting alongside them, and how they engage with and move through the urban landscape. We can follow municipal restoration and redevelopment projects, seminars hosted by civil society organizations, and tourism companies advertising Eyüp as a destination. These practices are undertaken by people who define themselves (or are defined by others) in many ways: as Muslim and non-Muslim; as local, native, or foreigner; as Turk, European, American, Arab, Kurd; as rich or poor; as observant in their religious practice or not; as man or woman; and as educated or ignorant.

Making places is central to an experience of being in the world.<sup>1</sup> Although places are made through human activity, they are not simply reducible to human intention or activity.<sup>2</sup> Rather, they are sites of “mediation . . . at which we come to be who we are through the detour of something alien to ourselves.”<sup>3</sup> Places of Islam emerge through the practices of social life, but miracles, dreams, and worlds beyond human agency also play a role in placing Islam.<sup>4</sup> Precisely because many of these materials and substances are distinct from a world of mundane human

activity, they can serve as powerful and charismatic agents. At the same time, the capacity of these places to mediate between humans and the divine also makes them sites of contestation and debate.<sup>5</sup>

Making places of Islam is not simply a question of defining *where* they are; it also involves defining *when* they are.<sup>6</sup> Again, however, there are many temporalities that come together to make Eyüp. There is, for example, the way that most Sunni Muslims understand the unchanging and unchanged nature of God's revelation.<sup>7</sup> There are the stories that link Halid bin Zeyd to the Prophet Muhammad, as well as the chronicles that narrate—albeit inconsistently—the discovery of Halid bin Zeyd's tomb. There are mosques, tombs, and graveyards, built and rebuilt upon each other over centuries. There are lived stories of families, the memories of Sufi lodges, the echoes of factories along the Golden Horn. There are the rhythms of the natural world, ranging from the waters that flow through Eyüp to its storks and pigeons. Taken as a whole, the temporalities of Eyüp—this place of Islam—require that we imagine place and time as something other than a neat, bounded envelope.

Places of Islam are where people develop a sense of themselves as Muslim, articulate definitions of Islam, and encounter Islam as something in the world distinct from their own subjective experience. These places take many forms, ranging from homes to dormitories to shrines to mosques to cities, nations, and even the world. These places are made through the work of different actors engaged in diverse practices, but some places—like Eyüp—are especially important because they seem to be permanent, stable, and separate from the flux and instability of an unstable world.

Rather than simply *read* places or *consume* them, people *reckon* with them. Extending Donald Preziosi's apt phrasing, even as people inhabit places, places inhabit them.<sup>8</sup> Places are not merely "local" contexts or neutral backdrops but "articulated moments in networks of social relations and understandings . . . where a large proportion of those relations, experiences and understandings are constructed on a far larger [geographical and temporal] scale than . . . the place itself."<sup>9</sup>

How do we recognize those articulations? We follow multiple forms of connection. In Eyüp we might begin with Halid bin Zeyd, whose tomb connects Istanbul to Medina by means of his body, or the precious objects that adorn the tomb, whose giving linked givers with this place and cemented their power and authority. There are water and power lines that connect the mosque to a wider urban infrastructure; we can listen to stories of belief, visitation, and even miracles that circulate through various media and modes of communication; and then there are the people who visit the mosque from innumerable other places, their bodies materializing social positions, religious affiliation, political allegiance, citizenship, and more.

Places of Islam are also defined by a generative contradiction. On the one hand, places of Islam are immutable, sites whose force is directly related to their unchanged and unchanging nature. On the other, places of Islam are also mutable, enacted through practices and necessarily in dynamic relationship with other places, peoples, and times.<sup>10</sup> This tension is especially important to Eyüp, where appeals to its unchanged significance and observations about its wholesale transformation exist side by side. While geographers and others have long grappled with these discussions of relational place, *Placing Islam* develops a specific analytic to examine how Eyüp has been enacted as a place of Islam: *building stories*.<sup>11</sup>

At first glance, those two terms seem to operate in mutually exclusive ways: where buildings are often encountered as static objects, deeply rooted in specific locations, stories are imagined to be mobile, circulating widely across time and space. If buildings are concrete, tangible, and durable, stories are fleeting, ephemeral, the stuff of dreams and rumor and fiction. Yet as a range of scholars have helped us understand, stories and buildings are in fact closely linked.

*Building stories* call our attention to the way that people bring themselves into relation with their material environments. In Eyüp, stories about Halid bin Zeyd are also almost always stories about the urban landscape. This mode of storytelling echoes countless other forms of the “texted past” throughout the Muslim world.<sup>12</sup> Through stories, elements of the built environment—mosques and tombs, but also homes, squares, avenues, graveyards, and even factories—come to be meaningful.<sup>13</sup> In telling stories, people communicate judgments about how a building should be used and by whom; they justify its construction, repair, redevelopment, or even destruction; they link buildings to other places and other times. In the process, the built environment comes to mediate everyday life, serving as one key medium through which people develop a sense of themselves, their community, and their position in the world.

At the same time, thinking in terms of *building stories* also calls our attention to the material dimensions of storytelling: just as buildings are storied, so too are stories built. Stories are inscribed on and transmitted through materials that both enable and constrain their meanings.<sup>14</sup> The practice of storytelling plays out in those “messy, material, placed contexts [where] . . . relations are continually made and remade.”<sup>15</sup> In telling stories, people come to articulate a relationship with the land that sometimes—but not always—aligns with the legible lines of the map.<sup>16</sup> Stories are material practices, told by people and through things in ways that reshape material relations and thus remake the world.<sup>17</sup>

This book’s interest in building stories benefits from a rapidly expanding scholarship on material culture and material religion.<sup>18</sup> This scholarship challenges

simple summary. However, one key commitment is its focus on material objects (and the world more generally) not as incidental to a purified world of belief but as entangled.<sup>19</sup> Focusing on the role that media plays in “connect[ing] people with each other and the divine,”<sup>20</sup> and showing how changing media reshape “the conditions of existence that make the expression of religion possible,”<sup>21</sup> these scholars show how mediation helps to make places of Islam.

Building stories have different shapes. For example, when asked to explain why Eyüp is important, some of my interlocutors would return to the person buried at its center: Eyüp is sacred because of Halid bin Zeyd, they would say. This mode of storytelling could be termed a chronotope of origins.<sup>22</sup> In these chronotopes, something—a person, an event, an idea, or a location—serves as the essential core of the world.<sup>23</sup> This core thus comes to explain the shape and the trajectory of the world’s history.<sup>24</sup> Because these chronotopes of origin tend to underpin exclusive claims to place, they are often used to justify a broader politics of exclusion. These chronotopes are by no means unique to Eyüp, Istanbul, or even Turkey, but Eyüp (as a person, a tomb, a mosque, and a district) has come to function as one particularly durable example. Yet this way of explaining Eyüp’s essential meaning in which Halid bin Zeyd defines the center of a “neat and tidy ‘envelope of space-time’” is incomplete for two linked reasons.<sup>25</sup>

First, origin chronotopes ignore the work of transmission through which different actors and institutions have sought to define and communicate Eyüp’s significance and meanings over time and place.<sup>26</sup> Assigning agency to a time and point of origin (“If he hadn’t existed, this would never have been”) elides the complicated and often contested practices through which people establish, document, communicate, instruct, and narrate traditions over time. Crucially, this mode of storytelling can underpin a politics whereby those in power represent themselves as always having been there.<sup>27</sup>

Second, these origin chronotopes are also poorly equipped to explain the importance of transformation and change. As Çiğdem Kafescioğlu has noted, even “Ottoman” Eyüp was always a “palimpsest of additions, alterations, restorations, and reconstructions.”<sup>28</sup> Precisely because this mode of storytelling depends on “pure” essences threatened by transformation, we should look for alternative forms of building stories. Indeed, Eyüp provides a remarkable opportunity to consider how change and continuity can be co-present.

The chronotope of origins is one of many possible shapes for a building story. This book traces instead a chronotope of conjunctions. My invocation of “placing” Islam is not designed to offer a single interpretive framework for understanding the geographies of Islam. Rather, and in the spirit of Shahzad Bashir’s recent critique of “Islamic history,” *Placing Islam* seeks to provide an opportunity for “expand[ing] the interpretive possibilities” both within and beyond Islamic studies.<sup>29</sup> Emerging out of geography’s core conceptual debates, this book also seeks to expand an interdisciplinary conversation between geographers and a range of scholarship on

Islam. Its conceptual intervention—focusing on place as multiple—is less a radical shift in approach and more a reworking of three long-standing debates.

#### PLACE AND GEOGRAPHIES OF CONNECTION

One central challenge for scholars of Islam has been negotiating the relationship between a “universal” Islam and its “local” contexts and practices. There is a clear throughline from Dale Eickelman’s call for a “middle ground” between village locales and “the Islam of all times and places”<sup>30</sup> and Talal Asad’s conceptualization of Islam as a “discursive tradition”<sup>31</sup> to Shahab Ahmed’s recent call to focus on “the local Muslim’s idea and perception of being a member of the diverse and differentiated universal ummah of Islam [because] local islams conceive (even if differently) of universal Islam and of themselves by reference to it.”<sup>32</sup>

Scholars have taken up the challenge of negotiating between the local and the universal in a variety of ways. Working both archivally and ethnographically, some have followed the routes and networks through which Muslims move.<sup>33</sup> Others have examined how different Muslims imagine their worlds, helping us understand that the *ummah* (communities of believers) is a flexible and contingent geography.<sup>34</sup> Another approach reminds us that the religious significance of ostensibly local sites and spaces depends upon relationships to elsewhere.<sup>35</sup> Finally, others have offered the “ecumene” as an alternative to concepts like “civilization” and “community,” arguing that it can “[represent] the overlapping . . . dimensions of a potentially global, cohesive nexus.”<sup>36</sup>

Despite the richness of this scholarship and the spatial vocabulary that informs much of it, this scholarship often begins with a definition of *what* Islam is rather than *where* it is. As Samuli Schielke and Georg Stauth argue, however, formulations of “discursive traditions” can efface local specificity because they primarily highlight elements that are able to travel between different sites. They offer “locality” as an alternative framework for understanding “Islam [as] only one of the many parameters that are important when people relate to cities, villages, landscapes, and the place of the sacred and saintly within them.”<sup>37</sup> However, even terms like “local” and “location” tend to take for granted an image of space as a grid “within which objects are located and events occur.”<sup>38</sup> Despite these terms’ analytical richness, the close etymological linkage between “locality,” “local,” and “location” can lead us back to the familiar oppositions between local/global and particular/universal. I build upon this work but argue that we need a term that captures both these deeply sedimented and complex relationships between people and specific locales and the engaged universals that move across and between localities and cultures.<sup>39</sup> One such concept is *place*.<sup>40</sup>

Alongside debates about the relative merits of “local” and “universal” Islam, a second debate has turned on the relative emphasis on what is “inside” or “outside” Islam. This debate has taken many forms. For example, scholars once told “arrival

stories” about Islam, focusing on how the worlds of Islam—typically assumed to be traditional, unchanging, static, and rooted—were transformed by the arrival of capitalism, Westernization, and modernization from “outside.” Challenging the idea that Islam was only transformed by “outside” processes, Asad insisted instead on the historically dynamic nature of Islam as a discursive tradition, calling us to begin with the “instituted practice[s] (set in a particular context, and having a particular history) in which Muslims are inducted *as* Muslims.”<sup>41</sup>

These scholars thus provide a way of understanding change within traditions not as the result of an “outside” acting upon Islam but as the result of reasoned decisions and deliberation within the tradition of Islam.<sup>42</sup> In the process, this scholarship has also undercut the assumption that modernness is essentially “Western.” By looking at the “daily enmeshments” of Islam and everyday life, scholars have helped us think about the role that “comparison, boundaries between groups, relations of power, identity, similitude, and difference” play in defining one’s sense of being Muslim.<sup>43</sup>

Recently, however, scholars have refined these discussions of “inside” and “outside” in two linked ways. First, recent scholarship has critically engaged with the framework of “self-cultivation” because it can overemphasize the coherence of “inside” and “outside” in the first place. Instead, scholars have examined how practices and communities can exist within overlapping and sometimes ambivalent networks of signification,<sup>44</sup> how dreams and miracles create other dimensions of religiosity,<sup>45</sup> and how urban landscapes are authenticated and experienced.<sup>46</sup>

Second, *where* is “inside” and “outside”? Geographers have also been especially attentive to the projects of boundary making that create “inside” and “outside” in the first place.<sup>47</sup> By focusing on the contingency of these boundaries—how they are made, transformed, and policed—they demonstrate the historicity of categories like the religious and the secular and their distinctive *geographies*.<sup>48</sup> Such approaches help us understand how geographies and religious identities come to be defined in mutually constitutive but contingent ways.<sup>49</sup>

Mobilizations of “inside” and “outside” tend to assume a particular kind of spatiality, in which space is imagined to be a container within which a tradition exists. These containers can be many sizes, ranging from the “local” to the “national” to the “civilizational.” Left unexamined is the idea that being “in space” is the only possible way of imagining space and place.<sup>50</sup>

*Placing Islam* provides one alternative by shifting metaphors from “space-as-container” to “places-of-connection,” where places are defined by the nature of their connections and relationships.<sup>51</sup> To share a place involves sharing the “connection[s] . . . established between two elements,” where those elements can be people, objects, histories, or other places.<sup>52</sup> Thinking in terms of places-of-connection serves not as a substitute for space-as-container but as a vital complement. When we imagine locations as existing in space—a room inside a house, for example, or a building in a neighborhood—mapping inside and outside

largely consists of identifying walls and boundaries. Proximity is primarily defined in physical terms. When we begin with place-of-connection, by contrast, we begin by considering different kinds of connection.<sup>53</sup>

Extending Enseng Ho's phrasing, places help to give "representational shape" to a given tradition.<sup>54</sup> Being part of a tradition—and a place—thus involves more than simply existing within a given space and requires cultivating relations that mutually define traditions, communities, and the places where they emerge. Both traditions and places are always connected elsewhere, and their geographies do not trace neatly onto the map. This approach complements recent conceptualizations of the "Islamic ecumene."<sup>55</sup> Similarly, it builds on recent critiques of "thinking about Islam [and] hajj . . . as things or objects" simply managed or instrumentalized, instead drawing our attention to the simultaneously embodied and imagined relations that define geographies of pilgrimage.<sup>56</sup>

The third and final debate upon which I build involves the places of sacredness. In addition to the debate's extensive tradition within the discipline of geography,<sup>57</sup> scholars in anthropology, religious studies, and sociology, among other fields, have also been deeply invested in these questions.<sup>58</sup> In parallel with scholarship on material religion, geographers have also explored how the meanings of landscapes, spaces, and places are not static representations but instead emergent, in flux, and assembled through a range of human and nonhuman practices.<sup>59</sup> Across much of this scholarship, metaphors of "networks" and "webs" help geographers capture the relational and dynamic dimensions of religion.<sup>60</sup>

In addition to its interest in networks, recent geographical scholarship has been especially interested in the concept of the "postsecular." At its best, this approach asks us not to take the "religious" and "secular" as given and stable categories but instead to examine "the maintenance, contestations, and meanings attributed to these divisions" in the first place.<sup>61</sup> However, I find Veronica della Dora's discussion of the "infrasecular" a more useful concept, a paradigm "able to capture the complexity of multi-layered coexistences and materialities [and] able to bring to light 'the stuff in-between.'"<sup>62</sup>

Geographers, however, should deepen their engagement with scholarship on the materiality of Islam.<sup>63</sup> In many ways, this disciplinary divide also reproduces a geographical divide. As Amy Mills and Banu Gökariksel have noted, geographical scholarship on Islam and Muslim life has tended to focus on Muslim-minority contexts,<sup>64</sup> with the notable exception of scholarship on Muslim urbanism and Islamic cities.<sup>65</sup>

*Building stories* and their geographies of connection provide one framework for expanding an interdisciplinary conversation between geography and other disciplinary traditions. Attentiveness to language, cultural practice, and all the other hallmarks of humanistic scholarship challenge geographers—and not just geographers of religion—to broaden the intellectual worlds within which they work. Similarly, although concepts of space, place, and landscape have a long

history outside geography, I see new opportunities for humanistic scholarship to think differently about the implicit geographies that underpin their work. *Placing Islam* offers one model for building these linkages in a new way.

EYÜP: BEYOND THE CONTAINERS OF ISLAM,  
ISTANBUL, AND TURKEY

In both academic and popular conversation, the Republic of Turkey is usually considered through the lenses of religion and secularism. There are good reasons for this. Particularly in the first two decades following the establishment of the Republic of Turkey in 1923, state authorities sought to materialize a specific vision of secular modernity. This project was most obvious in the new capital of Ankara, in new urban centers in provincial cities, and in Istanbul districts like Taksim.<sup>66</sup> When many of these areas were “Islamized” beginning in the 1990s, their transformation precipitated fierce debates.<sup>67</sup> Over the past two decades, the fault lines over Islam have been transformed. While a debate between “Islamist” and “secular” positions still matters, we have also come to see growing struggles between different self-identified Muslim groups, most notably the struggle between the movement associated with Fethullah Gülen and communities affiliated with the current government.

These debates—while urgent and important—look different when considered from an “out-of-the-way” place. Eyüp was imaginatively and physically distant from the centers of secular spectacle, but it did not remain unchanged. Rather than assume that Eyüp’s importance is somehow fixed and frozen in time, *Placing Islam* opens a way of understanding the changing, overlapping relationships that tie Eyüp to the world beyond in multiple ways. In doing so, it departs from three perspectives that underpin scholarship on Islam in Istanbul specifically and Turkey more generally.

First, the book reconsiders a frame that defines Istanbul’s differences in terms of its specific districts. For anyone familiar with Istanbul, this may seem counterintuitive. After all, Istanbul’s urban geography correlates ethnic, cultural, economic, political, and religious difference with a mental map of the city’s districts: rich ones, poor ones, cosmopolitan ones, insular ones, traditional ones, modern ones, secular ones. This mental map helps us see how social difference can be spatialized. At their best, writers who mobilize this trope help us to imagine the mosaic of Istanbul’s stories, ways of life, social norms, and imaginaries of the past and future.<sup>68</sup> They push us to think about the kinds of mobility and accessibility that shape who can move through the city, and why and how they do so.

But this frame can also flatten our sense of the city’s differences, reducing them to a mere function of geography. Fatih is conservative because it is Fatih, Kadıköy is liberal because it is Kadıköy, Eyüp is religious because it is Eyüp, and so on. As a result, we spend relatively less time engaging with the complex ways that people

experience these districts. Moreover, we miss the multifaceted means through which those meanings are transmitted over time and place. *Placing Islam* attends both to powerful continuities and moments when Eyüp's meaning has been reconfigured. Emphasizing these contingent continuities seriously challenges claims to authority based on an unchanged Islam.

The second frame I reconfigure is that of Istanbul as a "Muslim" city. While relatively rare within academic writing, characterizations of Istanbul as a Muslim or Islamic city tend to recur throughout the Turkish-language and English-language popular press. These stories take multiple forms but often conflate two observations. First, they link the visual prominence of mosques throughout Istanbul and its historic peninsula with an assumption that Islam is an ideology or belief system. The (hyper)visibility of some buildings obscures how people come to learn about and use the city around them. Second, these Muslim city stories tend to place an essential event, person, or landmark at the center of their narrative and then use that "core truth" as the reference against which the present is defined. This rhetorical move erases how geographies are made.

My critique of this frame is not designed to place another narrative at the city's center (e.g., Istanbul is "really" a Greek city or a Christian city). It is similarly incorrect to represent cities as essentially modern, capitalist, nationalist, or any other -ist. Rather than locate an unchanging essence at the core of a city, we ought to be asking how a given city—its diversity, built environments, economies, and other attributes—provides possibilities, opportunities, and challenges for residents and visitors to develop a sense of being Muslim.

Accordingly, Istanbul is a Muslim city for many and sometimes contradictory reasons: because people who live in the city develop a sense of themselves as Muslim in relation to sites ranging from its spectacular mosques to their intimate, domestic environments; because authorities, experts, and academics draw distinctions between what is Muslim or Islamic and what is not; because religious associations and Sufi orders organize their activities by means of the city's landscapes; and because visitors arrive in Istanbul with certain expectations about what Islam is and where it should (and should not) be found.<sup>69</sup> These uneven encounters with the city transform both the built environment and the stories that different groups tell about what Islam is. In turn, these place-based encounters shape how later audiences make sense of being Muslim.

The third frame I reorient is that defined by the linkage between nation, Islam, and politics. The simple version of this story begins with the founding of the Republic of Turkey in 1923. Leaders of this new nation established their authority through linked projects of secularization and modernization that helped to demarcate the secular modern from a religious, traditional past. However, scholars have complicated this story over the past three decades.<sup>70</sup> They have shown that the establishment of Turkey in 1923 was not a break from the Ottoman past but in fact was made possible by powerful lived continuities.<sup>71</sup> They have demonstrated

that being Muslim and being modern were not mutually exclusive choices but often interwoven in myriad ways.<sup>72</sup> They have examined how the making of the “secular” actually involved the redefinition, incorporation, and institutionalization of Islam.<sup>73</sup> They have challenged static oppositions of state/society and center/periphery and instead pushed us to consider more complicated topographies and temporalities of experience and identity.<sup>74</sup> Finally, they have provided careful analyses of the architecture and spatial politics of Islam.<sup>75</sup>

Yet despite these careful analyses of religion in contemporary Turkey, much of this scholarship depends explicitly or implicitly on the “nation” to frame its analysis. Although these scholars help us understand the historical contingency of both the nation and Islam’s position with it, they nevertheless privilege the nation as the geography that matters. There are good reasons that “Turkish” Islam continues to an object of study, but in assuming that “Turkish” Islam necessarily maps onto the territory of “Turkey,” we miss other forms of geography. Thinking in terms of place provides one approach for understanding the forms of imagining, making, and maintaining geographies that exceed or otherwise elude the nation.

Thinking in terms of place provides a way to analyze Islam without assuming that all discussions of Islam are necessarily about “official” politics. While recent scholarship has done much to shift our attention from the “nation” to the uneven terrains of the vernacular, the local, and the everyday, much of this scholarship continues to emphasize how practices of Islam are (or are not) linked to the politics of state institutions. As a result, nuances in how people’s political subjectivity and sense of themselves as Muslims are either flattened or assumed. Beginning from the question of place—and not Islam or politics—becomes one opportunity to explore how individuals come to understand themselves in geographies that don’t necessarily sit neatly within the containers of national politics or a global Muslim solidarity.

#### STUDYING PLACE MAKING

*Placing Islam* has elements of both ethnography and history, although it is not precisely a work of either.<sup>76</sup> It draws on methods of reading the landscape and archival fieldwork, but the book’s core arguments are shaped by participant observation carried out between August 2011 and September 2013, when I lived full-time in Istanbul. I would visit Eyüp several days a week, traveling by a combination of ferry, bus, and foot from my home in Üsküdar to the district. Much of my time was spent at the *sıbyan mektebi* (primary school) described in the preface. Affiliated with the Association for the Dissemination of Knowledge (İlim Yayma Cemiyeti), it hosted a variety of free events, including courses in reciting the Qur’an, instruction in Arabic, classes for learning to read Ottoman Turkish, instruction in playing the *ney*, and public lectures, among other events. The school was a diverse place, visited by a mixture of the young and the elderly, some as families and

others as individuals. Many of the residents lived nearby, although few identified as “Eyüplü.”

In addition, I would regularly attend classes in reading Ottoman Turkish offered at the nearby Language and Literature Association (Dil ve Edebiyat Derneği). In contrast to the *sıbyan mektebi*, this latter location drew a more educated audience, who often lived in districts other than Eyüp. The relationships that emerged through these iterative, everyday activities helped me understand Eyüp’s religious identity not simply through the lens of a particular religious community but as a texture of urban life. They also provided contexts to negotiate my relationship to the people, histories, expectations, and assumptions that defined Eyüp.<sup>77</sup>

My gender, social class, educational background, and citizenship status all shaped the questions I felt able to ask and the answers I received. For example, being male made it easier for me to wander through various public spaces. At the same time, my gender also shaped expectations for how, when, and where I was able to interact with friends, acquaintances, and interlocutors in Eyüp and beyond. The fact that I was able to live in Turkey without any apparent work other than research set me apart from many of the people I interacted with daily in Eyüp. My association with universities in the United States and Turkey as well as the “proper” character of my Turkish marked me as a kind of “educated” body. It also meant that the people I was most comfortable interacting with spoke similarly “educated” forms of Turkish, relatively unmarked by regional accents or slang. My American citizenship was—for some—a marker of my fundamental difference, a reminder that however much time I spent in Eyüp I would always be an outsider.

Although this project is deeply grounded in Eyüp, its sites of research are not limited to Eyüp. After first learning about Eyüp in Orhan Pamuk’s memoir, my next encounter with Eyüp came in the form of conference proceedings published by the Eyüp Municipality that had passed into the holdings of the UCLA Library. I looked for Eyüp in periodical collections housed at the Atatürk Library near Taksim Square, in municipal correspondence at the Prime Minister’s Ottoman Archives, in books stored at the National Library in Ankara, and in the papers of the Council for the Preservation of Antiquities.<sup>78</sup> After I finished my primary fieldwork in 2013, I continued to benefit from the digitized collections hosted by SALT Research, the Center for Islamic Studies (İslam Araştırmaları Merkezi, or İSAM), Şehir University, and Hathitrust. I have also benefited from the *Islam Encyclopedia (İslam Ansiklopedisi)*, published by the Foundation of the Turkish Ministry of Religious Affairs.

Extending over a decade of research in and beyond Istanbul, this project links “side-glancing with settling in: taking time to learn about the fullness of what was going on in particular times and places, not just the fragments surfaced among search results.”<sup>79</sup> Yet in turning to these archives, I remain acutely aware of their absences and blind spots; in particular, the overwhelming majority of my primary and secondary sources were written by men. The place of Islam that emerges

through my research is only one of many multiples. That there are other ways to study place and map a cultural geography of Islam should be taken in the spirit suggested by Taymiya Zaman's recent observation: our fields of research and our sites of writing are "animated by registers of truth we have yet to consider."<sup>80</sup>

### BOOK OVERVIEW

While places of Islam—like places more generally—are made through a range of practices, I organize this book in relation to two practices that are especially important to twentieth-century Eyüp: storytelling and building. Each section begins with a short conceptual introduction. Before turning to those two practices, however, I provide a short historical introduction to Eyüp to furnish readers less familiar with Istanbul and its histories a basic orientation. Its citations also offer a point of departure for those interested in further reading.

After that orientation I begin part 1 with the story at the center of Eyüp, that of Halid bin Zeyd, Companion (*sahabe*) of the Prophet Muhammad.<sup>81</sup> The chapter juxtaposes three moments that his story has been told, moving from the 1920s to the 1950s to the 2010s. As I explain, there are powerful continuities in how this Companion's story has been told, but there are also small, important shifts. Contextualizing the practice of storying the *sahabe* shows how multiple social, political, and urban contexts have shaped the possibility and the urgency of his story.

From there, I shift to a key decade for Eyüp (and Istanbul more generally), the 1950s. A decade when the city was reshaped by far-reaching political, urban, and social shifts, the 1950s were also a key period of generational transition as writers and intellectuals who came of age in the final decades of the Ottoman Empire began to pass away. I trace how new publics were articulated in relation to an old Islam. Paying attention to this geography helps us describe a topography shaped by debates over history, religious practice, cultural memory, and changing urban norms.

I close part 1 with a speculative chapter that examines the place of water. Water is everywhere in Eyüp, delivered and channeled by means of multiple infrastructures. Focusing on this fluid geography, the chapter further develops the book's argument for attending to the ways that places are made through connection. However, water's capacity to be shared and to leak through boundaries of proper Islamic practice also make it an object of contestation. Mixing ethnographic observation and archival sources, the chapter thus helps us consider how many possible traditions continue to coexist in Eyüp.

Part 2 shifts focus from stories and those who tell them to buildings and those who build them. It begins by examining a key period in Eyüp's twentieth-century history: the district's transformations following the 1994 municipal election that brought the Welfare Party to power. Examining projects of public history and restoration, the chapter argues that Eyüp was made Ottoman in a new way during

this period. Rather than see this project as a recovery of an untouched essence at Eyüp's core, it shows how the past came to be placed through new connections and associations.

The next chapter analyzes the “rules of place” that operate in and around the Mosque of Eyüp Sultan. Although one might assume the rules of a given building—and especially a mosque—are consistent, coherent, and clearly demarcated, the rules are in fact more flexible than they first appear. Because the mosque complex functions today as both a devotional site and a tourist destination, how people move through the mosque often emerges as an object of debate. Paying attention to these rules, their different but overlapping audiences, and their uneven forms of enforcement shows that the mosque is not a sacred space sealed off from the world around it, but rather a place embedded within broader networks of signification, circulation, and tradition.

I finish part 2 by focusing on the geography of Ramadan, the month of fasting that is one of the most important temporal markers of Muslim life. Eyüp's urban landscape has become one especially popular center for the public observance of Ramadan in contemporary Istanbul. Focusing on a series of debates that played out in 2012 and 2013, I show how the temporal observance of Ramadan also involves contested forms of place making that elevate the position and power of some groups while marginalizing others. In the process, the chapter helps us see how making place for Ramadan can bring bodies and buildings into new relationships.

In the conclusion, I summarize some of the major changes that have played out in Eyüp since 2013, when I moved from Turkey to the United States. I then return to the book's conceptual arguments and close with a brief story about hospitality in a changing city.