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Cosmology and architecture in premodern Islam : an architectural reading of mystical ideas

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Abstrak

This fascinating interdisciplinary study reveals connections between architecture, cosmology and mysticism. Samer Akkach demonstrates how space ordering in premodern Islamic architecture reflects the transcendental, and the sublime. The book features many new translations a number from unpublished sources, and several illustrations. Referencing a wide range of mystical texts, and with a special focus on the works of the great Suft master Ibn Arabi, Akkach introduces a notion of spatial sensibility that is shaped by religious conceptions of time and space. Religious beliefs about the cosmos, geography, the human body, and constructed forms are all underpinned by a consistent spatial sensibility anchored in medieval geocentrism. Within this geometrically defined and ordered universe, nothing stands in isolation or ambiguity: everything is interrelated and carefully positioned in an intricate hierarchy. Through detailed mapping of this intricate order the book shows the significance of this mode of seeing the world for those who lived in the premodern Islamic era and how cosmological ideas became manifest in the buildings and spaces of their everyday lives. This is a highly original work that provides important insights on Islamic aesthetics and culture, on the history of architecture, and on the relationship of art and religion, creativity and spirituality.