wawasan
JURNAL ILMIAH AGAMA DAN SOSIAL BUDAYA

Essay

Toward a Mutual Change of Religion and Urban Space: A Comparative Perspective

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Abstract: From a historical perspective, cities have served as more than mere locations where religious practices are observed; they have consistently exhibited an elevated level of historical documentation. The claim advanced here is that the interrelationship between religious change and urban development necessitates thorough analysis. It is imperative to critically examine the significant developments in local and trans-local religions, particularly emphasising their distinct urban contextual factors. At the same time, such urban conditions, the practices, and discourse that shape the understanding of these conditions as urban are not independent variables in the study of religious change. Rather, they are influenced by religious practices and individuals, thereby forming a reciprocal relationship. The choice of areas is an assumption that the pertinent aspect in establishing a connection is the spatial character of religious practices and ideas and their material manifestation in physical space. The article concisely examines various aspects related to the transformation of urban spaces and religious practices. These include the process of monumentalising urban areas and gods, the public display and the articulation of communication with God and gods, the imaginative and widespread utilisation of scripture in religious activities and thought, the increasing division of labour and professionalisation, the emergence of individual urban actors who are not solely defined by their ancestral lineage, the formation of religious groups, the religious organisation of time and the influence of temporal concepts on religious ideas and practices, and lastly, the conceptualisation of alternatives to urban life through the religious exaggeration of rural and natural environments. Such a cursory review of religious changes in urban settings and their impact on urbanism does not yield any definitive assertions on these developments. However, the collective evidence confirms the effectiveness of the presented approach. The article contributes to the historical study of religion by proposing a heuristic framework of eight interrelated processes that explain the reciprocal relationship between religious change and the transformation of urban space.

Keywords: religious change; urban religion; monumentality; rituals; individuality.

Abstrak: Dari sudut pandang sejarah, kota-kota tidak hanya berfungsi sebagai lokasi tempat praktik keagamaan dilakukan; kota-kota tersebut secara konsisten menunjukkan tingkat dokumentasi sejarah yang tinggi. Pendapat yang dikemukakan di sini adalah bahwa keterkaitan antara perubahan keagamaan dan pembangunan perkotaan memerlukan analisis yang mendalam. Sangatlah penting untuk menelaah secara kritis perkembangan signifikan dalam agama-agama lokal dan trans-lokal, dengan penekanan khusus pada faktor-faktor kontekstual perkotaan yang khas. Pada saat yang sama, kondisi perkotaan tersebut, praktik-praktik, dan wacana yang membentuk pemahaman tentang kondisi-kondisi ini sebagai hal yang perkotaan bukanlah variabel independen dalam studi tentang perubahan keagamaan. Sebaliknya, hal-hal tersebut dipengaruhi oleh praktik-praktik keagamaan dan individu-individu, sehingga membentuk hubungan timbal balik. Pemilihan wilayah didasarkan pada asumsi bahwa aspek yang relevan dalam membangun hubungan adalah karakter spasial dari praktik dan gagasan keagamaan serta perwujudan materialnya dalam ruang fisik. Artikel ini secara ringkas mengkaji berbagai aspek yang berkaitan dengan transformasi ruang perkotaan dan praktik

keagamaan. Aspek-aspek tersebut meliputi proses pemujaan terhadap kawasan perkotaan dan dewa-dewa, penampilan publik serta artikulasi komunikasi dengan Tuhan dan dewa-dewa, pemanfaatan imajinatif dan luas terhadap kitab suci dalam aktivitas dan pemikiran keagamaan, meningkatnya pembagian kerja dan profesionalisasi, kemunculan aktor perkotaan individu yang tidak hanya didefinisikan oleh garis keturunan leluhur mereka, pembentukan kelompok-kelompok keagamaan, pengorganisasian waktu secara keagamaan dan pengaruh konsep-konsep temporal terhadap gagasan dan praktik keagamaan, serta terakhir, konseptualisasi alternatif terhadap kehidupan perkotaan melalui penggambaran berlebihan secara keagamaan terhadap lingkungan pedesaan dan alam. Tinjauan sekilas mengenai perubahan keagamaan di lingkungan perkotaan dan dampaknya terhadap urbanisme ini tidak menghasilkan pernyataan definitif mengenai perkembangan tersebut. Namun, bukti kolektif tersebut menegaskan keefektifan pendekatan yang diusulkan. Artikel ini berkontribusi pada studi sejarah agama dengan mengusulkan kerangka kerja heuristik yang terdiri dari delapan proses saling terkait yang menjelaskan hubungan timbal balik antara perubahan keagamaan dan transformasi ruang perkotaan.

Kata Kunci: perubahan agama; agama urban; monumentalitas; ritual; individualitas.

1. Introduction

Cities, and especially today's metropolis, are changing religion extensively and in very different ways. Places of traditional religious practices become "cultural heritage" (Bosco, 2019; Kong, 2016; Narayanan, 2015; Sirisrisak, 2015; van de Port & Meyer, 2018). Religious practices move to cinemas (Luckmann, 1967), pedestrian zones, and backyards; religious organisations provide urban services and infrastructure from kindergartens to nursing homes, and cinemas become spaces for religious experiences. Religious groups form alliances, and religious identities allow one to distance oneself from the world in a way that is otherwise hardly possible. All of this has given rise to substantial research. However, changes and even fundamental changes in religious practices and beliefs are not novel phenomena that would have been produced by modernisation, globalisation, and mass migration as has been suggested in that research. Instead, this article attempts to demonstrate that urbanism has changed religion during the past five or six millennia. The thesis advanced here is that this dynamic is a basic feature of urban religion and has impacted how people thought of cities and lived urban lives to a comparable degree. “Religion” as we encounter it today - in its different media and organisational forms, its diversity from individual spirituality to utilisation by the state - is to a large extent, the result of these processes. At the same time, new religious practices and ideas have shaped urban space, urban coexistence, and ideas of urbanity within and outside of cities (Jörg Rüpke & Rau, 2020).

In the academic study of religions, the city as a site of religious phenomena or processes beyond foundational myths has been taken into account only late. For the study of ancient cities, religion was always in view. Essentially, however, its role has been limited to that of a means of domination and control. Since the 1980s, a focus on urban and regional cults has emerged with the "local history of religion" (Kippenberg & Luchesi, 1995). This was able to draw on a rich body of research on the history of individual cities and their religious architecture and actors. However, it failed to link up with the category of urban space and the Chicago School's research on urbanisation. In the latter itself, religion did not play a major role (Park et al., 1925; Wirth, 1938).

This secularist position had reasons in the history of religion. Following older traditions critical of the city, the *topos* of the loss of religion and morality through urbanisation were also present in urban research (Orsi, 2000). Thus, the enormous changes in religious organisational forms, rituals, and architecture during industrialisation in the Western world (YMCA, Salvation Army, parish church building, community centres) were hardly reflected as specifically urban developments. The question of how urbanisation changed religion and did not simply erode it has been addressed only and very gradually in individual studies since the 1950s and what was seen as a religious crisis in the 1960s (C. G. Brown, 2010; Cox, 1965) by Western theologians (Day, 2017; Jörg Rüpke, 2020).

Two very different research questions drove this development. Primarily in the U.S., and the Soviet Union, empirical research on the relationship between youth, family, and income and the change and future of religion coalesced (Vasil'evskaia, 1972; Youth and Religion, 1956). The second question focused on religious change among migrants, especially in Asian cities with large groups of Chinese immigrants, but also postcolonial developments and rural exodus. Religion increasingly appeared not only as a traditional baggage and identity of migrating people but as a result of migration processes (Bres, 1971; D. D. Brown, 1994; R. M. Miller & Marzik, 1977; Mitchell, 1974; O'Connor, 1983). Change, it became clear, extends far beyond migrant circles and possible processes of "ethnogenesis" among them. It included the removal of old temples and cemeteries, and the disintegration of local and family religious associations (A. Sun, 2019). "Urban aspirations" and "religious aspirations" are intertwined with imaginaries, expectations, and personal hopes for advancement through city life and religious practices and communalisations (Goh & van der Veer, 2016; P. van der Veer, 2015).

Subsequently, the work of social and cultural scientists under the spatial turn (Lefebvre, 1991; Lévy, 2016; Soja, 2000; Werlen, 1993), such as the results of human geography, which had not initially paid much attention to religious practices or institutions, was also made fruitful for the study of religion (Kong, 1990; Kong & Woods, 2016). Religion was no longer merely a phenomenon in cities, but an influential factor in urban life. It changed urban topography and the practices that constituted different urban spaces.

To understand the diversity of processes, various urban and spatial sociological theories were developed. An "ecological" approach characterises one line of this. Based on critical spatial research in the tradition of Lefebvre and Soja, the appropriation and the production of urban space came into view. At the same time, religious actors were examined as they were transformed by urban contexts, especially emerging religious groups. An important question that arose was the plurality of the religious and the resulting problems and perspectives of coexistence (Burchardt & Giorda, 2022; Day & Edwards, 2021). A second line perceives globalisation not only as the framework of migratory movements but also as a characteristic of religion and as a resource that supports imaginings and linkages beyond the boundaries of each city. It reinforced the focus on individual agency in tapping into this resource as a source of hopes and visions directed toward the city. Religious practices and institutionalisations can be understood as further increasing the complexity of urban "assemblages." Empirical studies revealed some trends that can be traced globally (despite all local differences): the proliferation of group formations even beyond the boundaries of the mainstream of religious traditions; the linking of religious innovations with other cultural developments in metropolises; the emphasis on body-related practices as a form of self-direction; the implementation of the "right to the city" also in "street politics"; and the manifold overlapping of religious and secular spaces (Garbin & Strhan, 2017; Lanz, 2014).

The buzzword of both research directions became the concept of "urban religion," which aims to summarise the specifics of contemporary developments in culturally pluralised and globalised cities in distinction from traditional religious formations and at the same time to overcome the narrowing of concepts such as the "fundamentalist" or "post-secular city," which ultimately remained within a framework of (Western) theories of modernization (AlSayyad & Massoumi, 2011; Beaumont & Baker, 2011; Lanz, 2018). From the beginning, however, the term has been associated with globalised modernity. However, if one understands "urban religion" not as a collection of individual phenomena or assemblages in contemporary metropolises, but as a process of mutual change of religion and urban space, the perspective thus given can be fruitfully related to a much broader historical horizon (J. Rüpke, 2021b; Emiliano Rubens Urciuoli & Rüpke, 2018). The conceptual pair "religion and urbanity" then does not simply denote two independent phenomena but a method of the history of religion (Christ et al., 2023; Jörg Rüpke & Rau, 2020).

In what follows, I will consider such mutual change from a global historical perspective. Only such a retrospective view opens up new, future scenarios for urban and religious actors to negotiate co-habitation, urban planning, and religious action. As will be briefly addressed at the end, this constellation has normative implications. Religious plurality, and especially the existence of religious

groups seen (or see themselves) as minorities, is historically often part of the practice and idea of the city. Religion and religiosity are part of "urbanity", that is, how living together as urbanites do and should work.

2. Fundamental Concepts: Religion and Urbanity

Religion and urbanity, living with distant invisible forces and living with oppressively close people, are two of the most successful strategies of the human species. By "religious practices," I mean communication with addressees who are not unquestionably plausible, with actors beyond the immediate reality, and with deceased ancestors or gods (Jörg Rüpke, 2015). From archaic advanced civilisations to recent, contemporary complex, and less complex societies, such practices and ideas that manifest themselves or become explicit in them are not just somehow attested. Rather, they seem to have played and continue to play, a visible, even important, or superior role in many societies, whether in the legitimation of rulers, the construction of public spaces and communication, or in expressing dissatisfaction and dissent (Fuchs et al., 2019b) with the ruling administration (Bellah, 2011; Jörg Rüpke, 2016; Wunn, 2005).

The phenomenon of urbanisation is much younger. Even though individual monumentalised centres for the gathering of a large number of people in Asia Minor were already built in the 9th millennium BCE Göbekli Tepe (Schmidt, 2006; Schyle, 2016) and huge circular structures appeared comparatively early in the Northern and Central European Bronze Age on temporary centres, (M. L. Smith, 2019, pp. 68–75), it took further millennia until permanent settlements were established, which are referred to as "cities" due to their size and function in production and exchange. Networks of such larger settlements were founded independently of each other in the great river valleys of China and the Indus valley, of Mesopotamia and Egypt or in the hinterland of the coasts of the eastern Mediterranean, in the Fertile Crescent and on Crete (here a contemporary view on urban life); then later in Central America and the west coast of South America (Norman Yoffee & Terrenato, 2015). But even in the urbanized regions of the Mediterranean, hardly more than ten percent of the population lived in such settlements in the first millennium CE (Clark, 2013). It is only in the very last few years that more than half of humanity on a global scale have become "city dwellers", and according to United Nations estimates, we are rapidly approaching the sixty percent mark (Robinson et al., 2016) – if not a Russian despot decides otherwise.

The modifications and inventions of religious practices in urban contexts can usefully be called ‘citification of religion’ if they are conscious and unconscious reactions by religious actors in adaptation to and appropriation of forms of urban life (E. R. Urciuoli, 2020; Uricuoli, 2021). Thus, religious practices, institutions, and ideas are created that allow people to better come to grips with the conditions of urban life, e.g., poverty on the streets or pluralistic world views (Kanungo, 2022; E. R. Urciuoli, 2021). As can be shown in many instances, such processes of change are bi-directional; religion is changed by and at the same time changing urban space and life from iconic architecture through imagining a city’s past to norms of adequate behaviour (Susanne Rau & Rüpke, 2020; Jörg Rüpke & Rau, 2020). Cities were the producers and products of religion, even if to very different extents in different places and times.

I will highlight some of these changes, yet an even broader hypothesis drives this article. I claim that the mutual formation of religion and urbanity supports the differentiation process of urbanity (understood as imaginaries of the city) and religion. The normative and self-reflexive turn that constitutes specific, not always large settlements as ‘cities’ builds on model metropolises as much as on the construction of a supposedly far-reaching dichotomy of ‘urban’ and ‘rural’ (Emiliano Rubens Urciuoli & Rüpke, 2018). It can feed on religion as it becomes more explicit and important, even institutionalised in collections of laws or administrative offices. The same discourses and practices help religion become more explicit and institutionalised, in the long run even producing ‘religions’; a process visible at the end of the ancient (as defined in this Companion) phases of urbanisation.

The urban agent in the citification of religion is neither space nor even built-up space, that is, architecture. The urban space, to which we might analytically ascribe agency, is itself socially constituted. What is called 'a city' comprises many overlapping and interacting (or, 'co-spatial') spaces of different kinds, each created by different human actors and their interests and activities (Lévy, 2008, 2013; Lévy & Lussault, 2013). I will briefly name some of them before I turn to their impact on religious practices and beliefs and how they are being shaped by such religious communication. Interest in a clearly defined but well-connected space and engagement with such a city was intensive concerning its being a place of exchange, for trade even more than production (widely dispersed in the hinterland beyond agriculture). Creating and entertaining a closed space was paramount regarding military security, as attested by the widespread construction of walls in the early phases of cities' lives. Staying in a city or being related to a city was often more important concerning cultural activities and services (Willet, 2020, pp. 226–249) compared to actual living in the city; we know of many commuting in both directions periodically for contests, games, or other types of festivals. In Greek urbanisation in a particular manner, the city as a place of political decision took a central place in urban imaginaries, even if political belonging *(polis)* went far beyond the city proper *(asty)* and was restricted to a minority of the inhabitants of both, urban centre and territory. At Rome, the senate usually made its decisions within the legal boundaries of the *urbs* but some types of popular assemblies gathered outside of it. Family members might frequently cross city boundaries, thus establishing a bipolar domestic space of accommodation and tombs. To sum up, they all engaged in creating very different, overlapping, and sometimes interacting spaces. The administrative consolidation of cities in the 20th and 21st centuries did not provide millions of inhabitants with an urban attitude to life overnight; sometimes, it just gave people headaches in dealing with now ever more distant authorities. And *vice versa*, millions of city dwellers moved to the outskirts, into sub- (Zimmermann, 2015) and peri-urban (Eckardt, 2015) areas for reasons of cost, quality of life, or in certain phases of their lives, without giving up their urban identity.

3. Eight Processes of Mutual Formation

A broad survey of research literature has led me to identify eight processes of citification of religion and concomitant changes in urban imaginaries, urban practices, and urban visions. The list is not exclusive but captures the most important processes in many, even if not all, places. They are distinct, even if not fully independent. In each case, it is not religious phenomena in urban space that are of importance, but their attestation of a religious change that is interpretable in terms of a growing differentiation under urban conditions. And it is no less important in which ways they have changed the urban lifestyle and way of life, urbanity, at the same time or subsequently.

Gods in stone

Already in a pre-urban world, tombs of prominent families were often monumentalised by the effort of their descendants, who thus located themselves both spatially and socially, often in large burial mounds. This principle of size difference was also carried into the city. The urban possibility of concentrating and organising labour and resources introduced a new type of monumentality (Osborne, 2014) beyond the city wall, a scaling-up that became a hallmark of urbanity in many paths of urbanisation (Roberts, 2016). It changed religious practices, too. Some divine addressees received places made special by the sheer size and architectural volume. The otherness of such monumentality was often stressed by the otherness of the formal language while adopting innovations by others (Kern, 2019): Greeks looking to Egypt, Renaissance princes to antiquity. Increases could concern number and size; quality was tried out and defined in communication with the divinities worshipped there. Oversize was an option for images of ancestors or deities as well as for their locations.

Those who engaged in monumentalising projects gained prestige themselves; this logic of religious investment has often been described (Gordon in (Albrecht et al., 2018). The representation and visualisation of the special others (who thus become more visible, tangible, and controllable) change religious signs and practices and their logic. The ancient scholar Varro (1st century BCE) already

suspected a connection between temple size and the familiarity of deities (Varro, *Ant. Rer. Div.* fr. 42 Cardauns, see Rüpke (2014). Names, images, and stories are more easily associated with a place; stable cult sites stabilise a polytheism of gods and divine helpers in the first place; only the image disambiguates whether the maternal side of the divine consists of a mother deity (or a mother of God) or three mothers, *matronae.* The architectural or sculptural efforts create visibility and permanent presence; only deities of such a quality can become landowners and collect capital, whether directly or through their human administrators, synagogue communities, mosque foundations (Boyar, 2013; Deguilhem, 2008; Leeuwen, 1999) or Christian mendicant orders (that programmatically reject property). The attribution of meaning and importance becomes visible in the competition of the height of churches and synagogues naves and sometimes also in competition with chimneys and factory halls in the English cities of the period of industrialisation. Architecture becomes the hallmark of religious groups or officials. Cathedrals outshine parish churches (Berglund, 2017). A central Friday mosque witnesses the presence of the urban elite more often than other mosques, for instance, the Djāmiʿ al-Manṣūr in Abbasid Baghdad. New temples or churches may have quickly pushed other prayer rooms into a marginal existence as in Erfurt in Germany (Perlich & Hurlbeck, 2018).

The architectural presence and the struggle for significance are not without influence on the atmosphere of the city. In many regions and epochs, urban rulers, administrators, and simple city dwellers present their city under the graphical trademark of religious sites from St. Peter's church in Rome to the Imam Reza shrine in Mashhad. Religious architecture can shape the urban "atmosphere" (Anderson, 2009) far beyond its immediate use. Other urban actors can appropriate such places as a common "heritage" (Narayanan, 2015). It can be not very pleasant, but it can also grant religious sponsors undreamt-of visibility and perhaps even financial means. Places like today's Moscow, Lagos, Ashgabat, or Tashkent feature monumental religious architecture financed by rulers or their administrations as an urban skyline (Moser, 2013).

For visitors to places they want to understand as cities, the legibility of the place as a city may result precisely from its monumentality, from being visible from afar.

Watching instead of believing

Religious communication might often take place in parallel, smaller groups. In many places, however, ritual forms were developed or adapted that allowed a large number of people to participate. It is not simply because there is a higher concentration of people in cities, a higher density. Instead, I claim, it is due to the cultural fact that this larger number, and often potentially the entire urban population, including women and children, is understood as the body of people that needs to be addressed or involved. It is, therefore, a consequence and an indication of urbanity.

Innovations have been made beyond simply increasing the meeting space for traditional types of religious communication. Praying at an altar, the sound of which cannot be understood even at a distance of a few dozen meters, or the killing of an animal (or animals, if it is to feed a greater number of people satisfactorily), the preparation of which required hours of waiting, was no longer sufficient. Historically, important innovations were the introduction of processions and arenas of large ritual displays, including the theatre as a specific form of dramatic performances within ritual frameworks (Colangelo, 2020).

Through the theatricalisation of ritual, religious communication becomes an exhibition game. In substance, this can be sporting competitions, plays, dances, or mimetic representations of religiously charged historical events. It might take place in Olympia (the Olympic Games of antiquity), Osaka (the annual Tenjin Matsuri on July 25th since 951 CE), or be exported to the rural town of Oberammergau (the Passion Plays since 1634). The basic constellation is always that the actual addressees are deities in honour of whom these events are held. But at the same time, for a large crowd of people, this is entertainment, edification, and even intense emotional involvement: people feverishly await the carriage driver or stage protagonists, admire, clap, think along, and ahead (Csapo, 2007; Gödde, 2015; Hentschel & Hoffmann, 2004; Kleibl, 2017; Puk, 2013; Schechner, 1985; Schnusenberg, 2010; Turner, 1989).

Despite the mass of people assembled, ritual consumption is individualised. Without doubt, powerful groups can form in the course of such events, rivaling or homogenising, creating an increasingly strong sense of unity: flags can be waved and rhythmic movements accompanied by common singing, for instance, in processions connected to the Imambara of Lucknow or in Corpus Christi processions in catholic areas of Western Europe leading to large cathedrals as in Antwerp. But even such forms of religious communication primarily addressed the many individuals. The architectural efforts that make this form of sustained participation by watching (often multi-day events) possible in the first place are directed at such individual spectators. This lasting character distinguishes circuses, theatres, or stage-like temple forecourts or open fronts from the procession, which only temporarily redefines urban space into sacred space (Dasen & Schädler, 2013; Mundt, 2012; Nelis & Royo, 2014; Revell, 2013; Monica L. Smith, 2006).

Again, it is important to stress that this is not an "add-on" of religion in the city but a profound change towards urbanised religion. The forms of the media in staged rituals bring very different contents to the fore: the important and representative role of certain religious specialists in rituals; the notion of the revelation of divine will in the throwing of dice or other games producing 'meaningful' chance results (Dasen, 2018; Dasen & Schädler, 2017); the real presence of Christ in the host and thus his distance, the symbolic coffins of Ali. Religious practice has been organized as 'event religion' (Hitzler, 2011) for over two millennia.

These practices do not leave urbanity unchanged. They often create the only space of urban publicity, i. e. co-presence of many who can thus assure themselves of a common status as (for example) citizens. They offer starting points for urban "branding", as we can perceive it in large numbers for ancient as well as contemporary festival games. The loose and individualised form of participation allows the religious practice to be understood as a "culture" detached from religious premises and contents: urban entertainment, not a confessional event.

Writing

Recording systems and writing are municipal inventions in the service of the administration and "readability" of the city (Law et al., 2015). Although writing is not an invention for religious communication, it was quickly used for religious practices. It began with the recording of gifts to the gods in inscriptions, past gifts that no longer only speak at the moment of their ritual delivery but continuously are a permanent reminder to the addressed divine and also to human observers (Weiss, 2014, 2015). It leads to "sacred texts" and so-called "scriptural religions", in which reading rituals, commentary and interpretation of canonised texts are central religious practices. It also leads to other correspondence with deities and today's Internet religion (Houtman & Aupers, 2010; Kirby, 2014; Malik et al., 2007; Steffen, 2017). These practices - which are admittedly often only marginal even for members of scriptural religions - indicate a radical change of religion: They create their own sacred spaces, their forms of communication, and religious roles and produce new meanings for a variety of practices, including traditional ones, examples Bottéro (2000), ancient Israel (Toorn, 1997, 2008), Greece (Petsalis-Diomidis, 2006), space (Lowe & Zemliansky, 2011), grave (Keegan, 2013), Holocaust (Hirsch, 2012), and doctrine (Goody, 2004).

In several cases, it can be shown that these changes, this development of religious writing, influence urban writing and concepts of urbanity - and not vice versa. In the cities of Mediterranean Antiquity as well as in Central and East Asia, inscriptions for deities and ancestors carried scripturally far beyond the realm of the economic and administrative sphere and a narrow circle of "scribes", for early Egypt, see (2008). Inspired by Greek philosophy, religion became an object of "knowledge" secured and disseminated in written form. Such knowledge is a defining component of urbanites and distinguishes the educated city dweller from the country folk, the rustic (Cic. fam. 16.21.7, cf Sex. Rosc. 120; see (S. Rau, 2014b; Jörg Rüpke, 2020, pp. 73–75). It was necessity to understand biblical texts and their tradition of commentary that, beyond the upheavals of late antiquity and the loss of educational traditions, turned monasteries and later urban cathedrals into educational institutions (Lifshitz, 2014; McKitterick, 1979; Perrin, 2018) that were only surpassed by the urban universities in the European

High Middle Ages (Masuzawa, 2020). The association of Ashokan inscriptions with Buddhism and urban merchants indicates a comparable process (Olivelle, 2012).

Individuality

Urban religious practices, I claim, had become a motor of individualisation processes from early on Fuchs (2019b). The confrontation with monumental religious signs and spaces promoted the appropriation of religious ideas in individual experience. Even the shared experience of mass rituals aimed at the integration of individuals and did not reproduce family or neighbourhood bonds. The same applies to the theatricalised forms of religious practices mentioned above. They appeal to individuals and only secondarily lead to ephemeral, even if in that moment powerful, communalisations in the form of a visible reaction of an audience.

Writing offered possibilities for individual articulation or reading practices. Named authorship and the authors' staging of a special connection with the divine produced texts that could and can be consumed in individual reading in Becker & Rüpke (E.-M. Becker & Rüpke, 2019). Texts also offered models of individual religious communication, even religious achievement in reciting or copying, or financing the reproduction of religious texts among early followers of Christ (J. Rüpke, 2019). Inscriptions allow the unambiguous individual attribution of religiously relevant activities such as architectural foundations, production of images, or donations to other persons. Inscriptions identifying the deceased allow the attribution of highly individual, albeit sub-elitist, grave designs in European cemeteries (de Hemmer Gudme, 2012; Goodson et al., 2017; Moser, 2013).

In small intellectual circles (which were often imagined rather than formally established by authors), it was possible to institutionalise one's own, even if deviant, position. It can be found in Hellenistic Judaism with groups that increasingly distance themselves from the Judaic tradition as "Christian" groups (Stowers, 2011); it can be found in the South Asian *bhakti movement*, in West Asian Sūfi groups, or Central European women's mysticism, in the Beguines around Master Eckart, Suso or Tauler, in the Protestant Reformation (Fuchs et al., 2019a). In the Europe of Christian rulers, Jews were attributed a religious identity almost permanently until the age of emancipation, by rules on where to live, how to dress, and which headgear to wear, for example.

Freedom of religion as individual freedom of choice was one of the first freedoms that - already in antiquity - was formulated by urban discourse long before the abolition of slavery and the right to physical integrity. Concepts of religious individuality and belonging stood (and again: sometimes stand) in close interaction with concepts of urbanity: ancient concepts of citizenship *(politeia, civitas)* were individualised, allowing individuals entry into or exclusion from the polis or *civitas* (Ando, 2016). Conceptually, this was an association of persons connected to a territory; in fact, participation rights were associated with the presence in a "capital" *(astys, urbs)*. It was precisely this model that was adopted by large religious groups, even if some were legally constituted as associations *(thiasos, collegium)* (Eckhardt & Leonhard, 2018; Egelhaaf-Gaiser & Schäfer, 2020; Kloppenborg, 2007; Kloppenborg & Wilson, 2002; Last, 2019). In other words, urban and religious concepts of membership increasingly merged without generally becoming congruent.

Division of labour and aestheticisation

Religious communication, often invisible or only in mediated form graspable, addressees have a particularly difficult time determining whether the addressee has received, understood, and absorbed the message. That the divine is not a wish-fulfilling machine is determined not only by empirical experience but is part of the construction of this divine, whose power lies precisely in its own will (Bendlin, 2011). This insecurity invites an intensive medialisation of communication: not only praying but slaughtering animals, not only taking off shoes but building marble halls, not only thinking divine presence but making it tangible in the form of images - or prohibiting it precisely to save alterity (Arnhold et al., 2018; Belting, 2016; Estienne et al., 2015). Aesthetic and technical innovation is the result, technical in the form of crazy communicating vessels instead of simple wine pots for libations, aesthetic in the form of nouvelle-cuisine like amounts of various foods instead of a porridge bowl; furthermore,

an almost unlimited specialization of ritual roles and a comprehensive aestheticisation of ritual procedures already in the second millennium BCE Minoan culture for instance. From Chinese jade and bronze ritual tools through South Asian Hindu temples and narrative reliefs on stupas to the mandalas of Tibetan Buddhism and the collections of many museums throughout the world, the evidence is overwhelming.

These also are not just ornamentations of religious practice in the city that can simply draw on larger resources, but it is a profound urbanisation of religion, which can be exported again into what is conceptually distinguished from the urban, that is, the "rural" – just like other facets of urbanity. These developments manifest themselves in an aestheticisation of ritual practice, i.e. elaborate "liturgy", up to daily worship, which specialists can only ensure. The division of labour extends beyond the craftsmanship, beyond the various potters, blacksmiths, ivory carvers, and book copyists of both sexes (Haines-Eitzen, 2012). It is precisely the division of labour of ritual specialists that is combined with "a high" degree of self-control because of the problems of determining success: in the religious sphere in particular, we may well look for the beginnings of professionalisation in the narrower sense of the word (Jörg Rüpke, 1996).

Such processes combine in turn and advance the shaping of urbanity that is characterised by the emergence of an urban middle class from ancient Mesopotamia's Uruk and Babel through Varanasi's artists and donators of smaller or larger shrines in Kyoto from the 13th century onwards (Kanungo, 2022; Monica L. Smith, 2018; Stavros, 2014). Not only do "priests" as producers and consumers strengthen this middle class. Religion also becomes a consumer good that can be produced and consumed as an event or a work of art. In many cases, it can become an important part of urban life for various social classes and even drive this consumer orientation (Smith, 2012); however Religion can be stuck on a shelf or worn like a wedding ring, but it can also be part of private and invisible "inconspicuous consumption" (Alexander et al., 2006; Gilman et al., 1981; Monica L. Smith, 2007).

Group formation

How do processes of group formation fit into this image? Random encounters with other individuals and religious mass events are not the only, and probably not the most satisfying, forms of social interaction in cities. For those arriving voluntarily – enslaved people, other forcibly displaced persons of both sexes, and prisoners are excluded here – very different, not always accessible options open up for the development of social proximities. Accommodation - with friends (and who doesn't have friends of friends of friends somewhere?), in commercial hostels or pilgrims' homes - and food intake beyond street food – cooking shops and restaurants - are elementary in ancient Pompeii in Italy (van Andringa, 2009) or at early modern Lyon in France (S. Rau, 2014a). Further steps depend on the urban "aspiration", the hopes, expectations, and plans of those arriving (Peter van der Veer, 2015). Traders quickly find middlemen or customers, diplomats find their contacts, and specialised artisans find their colleagues. Religious practices offer another starting point: contact via (divine) third parties. Mutual perception and ritualised uniformity of actions lower the threshold for further contacts among "nodes" involved in the same de-territorialised religious network. Consequently, new networks are formed among co-religionists (an expression that does not require a membership concept). Such processes, up to the point of "ethnogenesis", do not aim at separation, but at networking and thus integration into the urban social fabric from ancient Hellenistic to modern American cities (Han, 2015; Nagel, 1994; Pohl & Heydemann, 2013; Toğuşlu et al., 2014; Verkuyten & Martinovic, 2012; Watson & Zanetti, 2016). Diversity is elevated to an ideal of urbanity, regardless of any previous difference. The newly arriving Christian in a small medieval town of England needed first to take root in a certain parish before immersing him- or herself into wider urban society (Rubin, 2020). Such an example is, however, not representative, as it already presupposes the existence of organised religion and concepts of membership, which are hard as relevant outside of a specifically Euro-Mediterranean development of religion. Here, however, from late antique beginnings, those local and supra-regional network formations have formed that are addressed as religions or even world religions, but rather appear in

forms that correspond to the pattern of "churches" and "sects" (Masuzawa, 2005; Satlow, 2006; Anna Sun, 2013).

In many, by no means all, historical contexts, such forms of group formation legitimised by religion, i.e., networks held together by uncontrollable third parties, have formed an important model of urban coexistence beyond neighbourhood and city rule or city administration. In medieval European and Islamic cities, as well as in 19th-century Chinese cities, guilds, associations, and their houses, foundations above all, shaped urban coexistence and urbanity (Deguilhem, 2008; Gruber, 2016; Herrmann-Pillath, 2016; Knost, 2009; Leeuwen, 1999; S. Rau, 2014a; Rowe, 2013). Even exclusive religious groups like Mendicant Orders with high financial requirements were thus able to settle in cities - often against the protest of parish structures. Plurality and urbanity were combined from the very first moment of those multiple flows that constituted urban settlements.

Temporal orders

Not the least part of urbanity is the attribution of a complex temporality to sites construed as cities. It is one's city as a unit of high dignity that is given a biography. Foundation stories figured prominently in ancient cities, trying to specify a date as much as a – often divine – founding agent. Boundaries of the city existed in space *and* time. Frequently invoked figures like Heracles or (in the late ancient and medieval West) Julius Caesar gave not only prestige to the place but also inserted it into a network of similar foundations. City councils could establish alliances by postulating the identity or close relations of founders (Scheer, 1993). The prominence given to certain deities and rituals here would substantially influence religious hierarchies and practices. Urban historiography could continue such a process of reshaping religious meanings (J. Rüpke, 2021a). Religious practices frequently added further 'pasts' and occasionally 'futures' to certain places. 'Futures' were even a special competence of certain religious actors.

Recurrent religious practices played a very different role in urban temporalities. In the face of uncertainty and pragmatics of agricultural production and exchange, religious festivals were established to disambiguate periods and commemorate procedures in the countryside. The multiple flows and many-layered spaces of urban 'co-spatiality', referred to in the beginning, did not hinder a successful transferal into cities. It produced a seasonality of urban life that did not reflect but shaped the temporal complexity of urban and urban-rural divisions of labor. Stereotyped rituals (sacrifices, prayers) gave daily life rhythms. They were communicated via religious agents and their sound-producing instruments like drums and wind instruments from flutes to brass, typically establishing diverse rather than a unique "clock" in Mediterranean cities of the early first millennium CE.

Such complexity and claims to order it were given the form of 'calendars' in ancient Greece and Italy, whether locally developed or copied from other cities. Calendars referred to agents beyond urban authorities and were put to work in festivals, as well as narratives. They reflected and produced different temporalities, from a pre-urban past through multiple urban pasts to the different velocities of multiple presents (birth of emperors, for instance). Whether in the actual performances, in the re-oralisation and the audiences' remembrance, or the written organisation of chronological (chronicles) or systematic knowledge attached to calendar entries, the impact of such temporal orders would include religious as much as non-religious knowledge and could well mediate that very borderline (J. Rüpke, 2006b).

Calendar-based "liturgies" became important media in various lines of tradition for the reflection and further development of religious ideas and are attested in most religious traditions. It was developed, among other things, in songs or non-vocal music, pictorial designs, or "sermons" and texts or even plays selected for the occasion (J. Rüpke, 2006a; Wallraff, 2011). What is exciting about the relationship between religion and urbanity is the survival, indeed the expansion, of originally agrarian practices. Narrating the biography of founding figures in sequences of rituals or even regular celebrations with broad participation, spread over the year, is also common in the history of religion. It applies to the Christian festivals "de tempore" from the birth to the execution of Jesus Christ but also

applies to Muhammad or Buddha, or Isis and her dismembered husband Osiris (Bieritz, 1991; El-Droubie, 1986) - or Emperor Augustus (Cancik & Hitzl, 2003; Gregori & Almagno, 2019; Herz, 1978).

Not all of these events were popular festivals, but in astonishing numbers and to an astonishing degree, urban routines are even today interrupted (Freitag, 2020) or altered by these and similarly conceived national, urban, cultural, or sporting activities (Baslez, 2017; Chattopadhyaya, 2010). Actors from various administrative and economic sectors compete in changing cities in the time called "Christmas"; carnival parades or festivals, even below globalised Olympics, paralyse cities for a time. This, too, seems to have become an early and widespread element of urbanity that is not limited to the religious sphere. Conversely, this urbanity forms the matrix for the tolerant or even supportive handling of new calendar-based religious practices. In Germany, for example, the "Sugar Festival" as the end of the Muslim fasting period gains public presence and acceptance through the agency and practice of Turkish families. Even different, coexisting calendars may alternately (or simultaneously, as in the case of Chanukkah and Christmas) occupy public space.

Beyond the city

For all its adaptation to life in urban settlements, to the densely built-up space, and the multitude of movements and exchanges within the city and beyond its borders (Robinson et al., 2016, p. 5), many religious narratives, reflections, and practices seem to address the city as a problematic, alien place. In ancient Rome, large temples presented themselves as inner-city green spaces with elaborately planted trees. The same applies to Buddhist and Shintoist sanctuaries in Japan (Hunt, 2016; J. Rüpke, 2018, pp. 229–234) or India (Cecil & Bisschop, 2019). Urban criticism is at home in the biblical tradition with the history of the Tower of Babel and the divine dispersal of urban density and hubris even in early layers. On the Christian side, this is followed in late antiquity by the equation of the city and prostitution, or the reflections of theologians who pointed out that Jesus was born in a manger, that is to say, in the countryside and not in the city (Bettini, 2018). It is revealing because this contradicts the biblical text but does not experience any contradiction.

Of course, this strand of religious history was only one among many: Concepts of heaven tend to be urban rather than rural, even though Judaeo-Christian fantasies of a vertical city as in the tower parable of the "Shepherd of Hermas" (vis. 8) and the heavenly, completely walled Jerusalem may be extreme examples. More importantly, it seems the urbanity itself often feeds not only on the exclusion of the non-urban but also a certain arrogance towards the rural population. Rather, nature is integrated into urban space. It can be small gardens and balcony gardens, the banks of inner-city rivers *(ghat)* (Kanungo, 2022), the staging of the number one foodstuff, water, in a *mikva,* for example, or parks - right up to the idea of the garden city of the nineteenth-century.

The non-urban, however, also remains an idyll, a place of longing. Pragmatic and aesthetic demands are combined: Sacred spaces require natural light, especially when they are artistically staged. The discussion of the location of burial grounds, conducted over the millennia with very different arguments and results, is where, for example, religious practices and ideas determine urbanity just as much as its developments massively influence them.

4. Religion and Urbanity: A Mutual Dependency

I started with a critique of a quickly growing field of research that investigates urban religion as a field of religious change under modernisation, globalisation, and mass migration. Criticising the lack of historical depth in such analyses, I have suggested applying a methodical approach characterised by the dual focus on religion and urbanity (as the subjective reflection and practice of urbanism). I applied a heuristic device of eight processes of change. Reviewing phenomena typically classified as religious in a great historical depth and global breadth, I have shown that major changes in local histories of religious practices and religious materiality turn out to be part and parcel of changes in the concepts of urbanism, urban practices, and urban space. From a historical perspective, cities are not just places where religion is attested, and typically better attested throughout history. Taking as a heuristic grid eight different lines of modifications and inventions of ritual practices, religious media, and

institutional developments, the combined evidence supports the methodological claim advanced in the beginning: Religious change and changes of urbanity must be analysed in their mutual dependency. Many crucial developments in local and trans-local religions need to be reviewed, specifically in terms of their urban conditionality. At the same time, such urban conditions and the very discourses and practices that defined conditions as urban have not been "independent variables" for religious change but are the outcome of religious practices and agents.

The selection of lines of development followed here was based on the assumption that the spatial character of religious practices and ideas and the material presence in space – conceptualised as "media" in a framework of "communication" – might be the relevant factor in the link. Consequently, such preconditions cannot be corroborated by the data thus produced.

5. Conclusion

As indicated in the beginning, there is a further consequence to this necessarily superficial and far-ranging review, which could neither claim completeness nor representativity about the many different processes of urbanisation in global history. If neither religion nor urbanity are simply given, but the results of complicated interactions, we also must see the problems and opportunities arising from both in conjunction with each other. It applies to the question of whether and how we as city dwellers want to live together and how we want to deal with the heritage, the opportunity, and the mission of the settlement form "city" beyond its being the primary target of military violence. This question cannot be separated from the question of how we want to deal with and live with religious practices, ideas, and perhaps even institutions of others or, if necessary, our own. Unlike "agglomerations", "city" is not a measurable fact but is defined by urbanity. The history of religion, my discipline, cannot answer these normative questions, but it can point to their pertinence even today.

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