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How does the Islamic prayer rug define the spiritual and metaphysical religious space?

The essay intends to explore the nature of the relationship between Islamic prayer rugs and the ritual practice of prayer of Muslims. To discover how the habitual usage of the prayer rug in prayer becomes a physical and metaphysical place of material witnessing and spiritual transgression towards the divine. Seyedd (1976,p.6) claims that “Islamic spirituality could not but develop a sacred art in conformity with its own revealed form”. Islamic woven prayer rugs are a form of ‘sacred art’ that is used in moments of ritual. These woven prayer rugs include an interlacing of separate threads from alternating directions, known as warp and weft in the textile world. Which are bound together at contacted cross points creating a unified space of worship. Within practices of ritual prayer, the body performs similar movements of undulating motions which supplies localised contact from the body to these warp and weft points, creating a ‘circulation of exchange’ (Barthes 2001). Baldock (2004,p.35) references Shaykh Amad Al Alawi (1934) writing “everything is enveloped in the unity of knowledge; symbolised by the point”, in this way woven Islamic prayer rugs conform to Islamic ideology of doctrines of unity where a material space is created in a physical world allowing for further

transcendence and transgression towards a metaphysical space. The physical experience of the prayer mat comes from the sensory connection to prayer rug, whilst the metaphysical is the divine realm which lies beyond what we can understand when grounded. With notions of unity, sensory perception the Islamic prayer rug becomes a ritual way to experience reality metaphysically, where metaphysics is “to know the world in its totality, including everything that is not at once available to the naked eye.” Buchanan (2018). The prayer mat acts as material layer on top of the ground creating a clear and distinct intention where the warp and wefts, body and spirit come together in one space to witness a sacred journey in alignment with the habits of our daily lives. The key thinkers I have explored to illustrate these ideas are a range of historical Islamic scholars such as Al Ghazali (c.1058-c.1111) and Ibn al Haytham (c.956-c.1040). As well as a range of contemporary thinkers such as Foucault (1999), Hemmings (2012), Ingold(2015) and Jung(2014). Furthermore, where possible I have embedded in religious scriptures from The Qur'an to define the religious context further.

For Muslims, practising the religion of Islam, significant importance is given to ritual obligations. Prayer or *Salah*¹ in Arabic is the second most import ritual to intentionally perform. Acting with *Niyyah*²(Arabic) or intention, should be set at the beginning of religious ritual activity. Rippin (2005,p.104) explains that within Islamic values *Niyyah* holds itself as a powerful principle, this is because such ‘intention’ regarding prayer is to perform a necessary duty according to the will of Al-ah.³ Ritual and numeric pattern are present in the teachings of Islam. To practice the religion of Islam to the full extent, many Muslims aim to fulfil the ritual obligations of the five pillars; Declaration of faith, prayer, fasting, giving to charity, and

¹Arabic term Salah meaning supplication, it is used to refer to the five obligatory prayers. Praying is the second Pillar in Islam.

² Arabic word for intention. In Islamic ideology, it regards the feeling in one's heart to perform religious duties with respect to the will of Al-ah.

³ Regarding respect for religious writing conventions, I shall write the Islamic name for God with a dash.

pilgrimage. The focus of this essay will be to explore the ritual of prayer and the use of a woven prayer rug. There are five daily prayers to perform throughout various times of the day. These daily prayers are named in Arabic and are as follows: *Fajr* (prayer at daybreak), *Zuhr* (prayer at noon), *Asr* (prayer at mid-afternoon), *Maghrib* (prayer at sunset) and *Ishaa* (evening prayers). These prayers are performed ritualistically with certain steps to follow to achieve a sense of purification and intention. Such ritual is often seen as an outward sign which defines the presence of religious belief. However, the 5 moments of prayer and the 5 pillars of Islam are made manifest in certain religious objects. Indeed, Rippin (2005,p.103) claims that such “ritual activities as well as associated paraphernalia become [,] for the believers of the religion themselves [,] methods of expression”. Though there are a range of objects, the focus here is on textiles woven prayer rugs. During daily prayers, Muslims may use textile woven prayer rugs to not only express religious identity but as an important intentional paraphernalia of Islamic ritual. For practicing Muslims, the first pillar of ‘declaration of faith’ is to recite the *Shahadah* before each five ritual prayers. In English translation the Shahadah is as follows, with the Arabic followed in courtesy provided by Quran Talks Blog (2022)

“I bear witness that there is no God worthy of worship except Al-ah. Ashhadu lā ilāha illā l-lah “

Niyyah (or intention) can come from using the prayer mat as the means of material witness in moments of dutiful prayer by allowing the Muslim to practice the declaration in a defined physical and metaphysical space. The ‘witnessing’ of the repetitive pattern rituals begins to show in the use of the mat. For example, how it is worn down and becomes faded in certain areas showing how a ‘material language’ emerges from our ‘embedded behaviours’ (Hemmings 2012,p.46). Though not a strictly necessary object to have when praying, using a prayer mat allows the individual believer to have a

guaranteed clean ground in which to perform Sajdah.⁴ Sajdah is an Arabic word which denotes how the Muslim should be conducting and performing their duty of prostration to the *Almighty* (Quran Reading,2015). Using the prayer rug as a separation from the body to the ground shows the Niyah of praying in a respectful way, as the believer cannot always ensure that the ground in which they pray is free from impurities. In Islam impurities on the ground can affect the intention of performing prayer to the will of the Al-ah. Prayer rugs are not specifically required in acts of prayer, in the Hadiths⁵ specifically, Sahih Bukari Hadith 367, Chapter 8. It is stated the prophet and messenger of Islam's religious guidelines was witnessed praying on a khumra when performing his daily prayers. A khumra was explained to be a small mat made from woven palm leaves which was acceptable for the face and hands to touch whilst performing prayers. This observation as well as informed practices of purification and intention may have led to the creation of the standard woven prayer mats that are an emblem of religious belief for Muslims today.

Prayer rugs have the essence of being the religious signifier. Trifonas (2001,p.57) notes on how "Barthes produces a textual 'circulation and exchange' of signifiers connected to the body". Where there is an exchange between a signifier and a person, which introduces the emergence of a visible language to be understood. I want to show a religious version of integrated circuit exchange through prayer rugs, which are unique symbolic signifiers. They have an interconnected visible language system of warp and wefts. In which a visual language of motifs that symbolise profound concepts are understood through specific engagement with a person's body and spirit. With the prayer rug as the signifier, the signified is the Islamic embodiment of the

⁴ Sajdah is an Arabic term meaning prostration.

⁵ Hadiths, pronounced *Ha Deeth*, are a recorded collection of the teachings, narratives, and habits of the Islamic Prophet Muhammed (pbuh) during his life. Hadiths are comprised of two elements; an account of the narrative and a list of names which validate the account. The stories of the Hadith are there as a source of guidance to conduct oneself in the way the prophet has and in understanding the Islamic belief.

path of prayer which a religious believer takes responsibility to perform. Laying out a prayer rug is intentional experience; it sets the atmosphere needed for a sacred religious space to be clearly defined. There is a notion of commitment of the Muslim to define the space according to religious ritualistic needs. Through the intention of using the prayer rug the room in which prayer is conducted clearly creates a space where acts of ritual devotion are highly distinct from the habitual daily acts of life which may also take place in the room. Prayer thus becomes a flexible portable spiritual experience for the religious believer, due to the ease of the transportability of the woven rug which is light and small in nature. This means that a religious believer is not restricted to specific places of worship as they can use the integrated system of warp and weft rugs as a portable sacred substratum to undergo a metaphysical experience whereby the user transcends the physical known world.

Woven prayer rugs are created from four important fibres of the Islamic lands (Bloom & Blair,1997,p.86). These integral fibres are wool, cotton, silk, and linen which are threaded together in order to create a stable yet soft whole cloth, thus becoming a reliable yet functional religious art form. Islamic prayer rugs are often filled with elaborate surface pattern designs due to the nature of warp and weft, which reveal and conceal threads to create these patterns of floral decoration, with meaningful motifs all bordered into sections of symbolic shapes. According to Elias (2012,p.139), woven prayer rugs provide an experience that is simultaneously aesthetic and religious, providing an art that has the integrity of a religious signifier. This is because Islamic prayer rugs are infused with religious messages derived from repeating motif symbols, which “forward messages to the correct recipients through the correct media” Sazak (2022,p.74). In this way the symbol motifs become a tactile religious media in Islamic prayer rugs. As intentionally designed path of warp and weft systems communicating a specific symbolic religious

aesthetic language to the recipient believer. Examples of this visual communication can be shown in *figure 1*.

Figure 1: The Met, *Ballard Ottoman prayer Carpet with Triple Arch Design* Dated 1575-1590 Turkey. [Silk, Wool, Cotton.] New York



Figure 1 is an example of a traditional stylized prayer rug dated around ca. 1575. The material composition of this rug is created of a warp and weft system of silk with asymmetrically knotted wool and cotton pile. This rug can be identified as an Islamic prayer rug by the “niche-shaped central motif which is an appropriate shape for a prayer rug” (Stewart, 2017). In figure 1, this shape can be identified within a bordered space where there are three stylized forms of a triple arch motif which reaches tall across the surface of the prayer rug. These semi-circular tipped arch design motifs, depicted within the threads of the prayer rugs, are known as a *mihrab*. These are an appropriate media as they are used to symbolise the architectural detail of the prayer niche found in Mosques. As Jacobi states, “symbols present an objective, visible meaning behind which an invisible profounder meaning is hidden” (1971, p. 77). The visible media symbol of the mihrab niche is there to represent the direction also known as the *qibla* which guides the prayer to be performed towards the location of Mecca. The profounder meaning behind directing the prayer towards this position, is to reinforce the important nature of *niyyah*, or ‘intention’ in prayer. Thus, having this motif woven into the prayer rug reinforces this ideology. The niche design offers not only functional notion of direction, but also symbolic meaning having been fused into the very fibres of the rug. Being 2D, in physical space, the mihrab niche becomes distanced like a threshold portal into the metaphysical prayer realm from the physical material threaded world. Bloom & Blair (1997, p. 365) when describing an inscription, note the translation of the poet Hafiz’s couplet:

*I have no refuge in the world other than thy threshold.
My head has no resting place other than this gate.*

In relation to the nature of arch mihrab motif there is the signified notion the refuge one takes on the prayer rug and resting the forehead onto the mat during intentional prostration. Jung & Adler (2014,p.207) state that “such symbols always indicate an activation of the unconscious”. In this way, the symbol of the niche motif thus engages with and invites the unconscious part of our being, drawing this hidden nature of the spirit into itself, becoming the threshold doorway between the physical and spiritual world.

Womack (2005,p.1) writes “symbols are images that have multiple levels of meaning they stand for concepts that are too complicated to be stated in words.” Thus, in figure 1, intentional symbolic design that is incorporated into the prayer rug as an image language to convey and communicate a complicated divine concept is shown. For example, there is a hanging lamp motif which is stylized to be approached in the centre of the prayer rug, hanging from the tip of the niche. Referring to the couplet written by Hafiz, the gate implies the access way into understanding the multiple levels of signified meaning of the symbolic motifs. We can understand what the hanging lamp symbolises and communicates to the Muslim praying by knowing the multiple qualities of the guiding light of God *Al Nur* in Arabic.

God is the Light of the heavens and earth. His Light is like this: there is a niche, and in it a lamp, the lamp inside a glass, a glass like a glittering star, fuelled from a blessed olive tree from neither east nor west, whose oil almost gives light even when no fire touches it –light upon light- God guides whoever He will to His light.

(The Qur'an,2004, 24: 35-36)

As Denny (2014,p.45) writes, “in Islam there can be no visual depiction of the divine; invisible, transcendent, all-powerful Al-ah can be neither seen, nor even, imagined by human beings.” As can be read from the above Qur’anic passage, Islamic scriptures can only provide a detailed visual metaphor in order to address the qualities of Al-ah. Words directly cannot specifically state the nature of the divine as humans can't fully grasp the metaphysical form of the divine. Metaphor and visual imagery thus mediate a message to be understood through prayer meditations using the warp and weft motif. Where the hanging lamp symbol communicates and symbolises the infinite guiding light concept of a divine dignity in a defined tangible yet bordered physical space. The viewer in daily prayer can have an emotional response invoked through illuminated thought processes to an understandable form of symbol. The visual metaphor of the hanging lamp motif being derived directly from the scripture aims to represent in woven media the multiple layers of the qualities of the divine which are esoteric in nature and hard to understand. The light guides the Muslim believer who dives and warps through the niche, creating the feel of a spiritual essence which connects the prayer from one dimension of the 2D threads into a metaphysical prayer paradise.

Figure 2: The Met, Fragment of a 16th-century Ushak Saff carpet showing individual prayer compartments [Silk, Wool, Cotton]



Figure two depicts a fragment of a 16th century prayer rug. This type of Islamic prayer rug was one of the earliest stylized concept prayer rugs in Islamic art. As can be seen, there are distinct rows of niches and hanging lamp symbols. This stylization of repeating the warp and weft motif functions for a shared space of worship, where the rug can be laid out in alignment of ordered rows towards the qibla of Mecca. The design is abundant with rich floral imagery encased within the borders of the niche. In this design the lower part of the niche may represent the earthly realm where the believer is situated, whilst the tip of the niche reaches towards a heavenly metaphysical space where the hanging *Al Nur* light drops down to guide prayer from above. The rich floral imagery and concept of the design relates

to the passage of the Qur'an which reveals the splendour of the paradisiacal afterlife.

Some faces on that Day will be radiant with bliss, in a lofty garden with a flowing spring, cushions in rows and carpets spread. Do the disbelievers not see how the heavens are lifted, how the mountains are raised high, how the earth is spread out?

(The Qur'an, 2004, 88: 8-20)

The '*lofty garden*' can be seen in the carpet design where the flowers are reaching and growing towards the light *Al Nur*, blossoming and coming from a grounded place to reach a new metaphysical realm. The flow of the flowers arching and spreading within the niche represents this *bliss* and radiance of reaching this new metaphysical space protected within the niche and parented by the light of the hanging lamp. Furthermore, the prayer rug in figure two is not one individual space. It is a larger prayer rug ordered into rows and spread out for all to share in experience of prayer. The Islamic prayer rug in this way becomes the shared earth spread beneath multiple believing bodies for prayer. The heavens are lifted through the tall stretches of the columns next to the niche whilst the niche itself, becomes the mountain where the tip pierces the metaphysical light space. This passage in relation to the physical act of worship and the warp and weft symbolism in the prayer rug demonstrates how a metaphysical space of the afterlife can be practiced and experienced in the earthly world daily.

The prayer rug symbolism becomes engaged with daily through the defined set out prayers (*Fajr, Zuhr, Asr, Maghrib and Isha*). It is not only a visual symbol to view and receive an emotional response from. Performing acts of prayer also further needs the sensory

technique of earthly touch in order to grasp the concept of a spiritual and metaphysical space which the warp and weft signify. With prostration there is daily contact with prayer rugs as a whole cloth and not just a contemplated surface pattern image media.

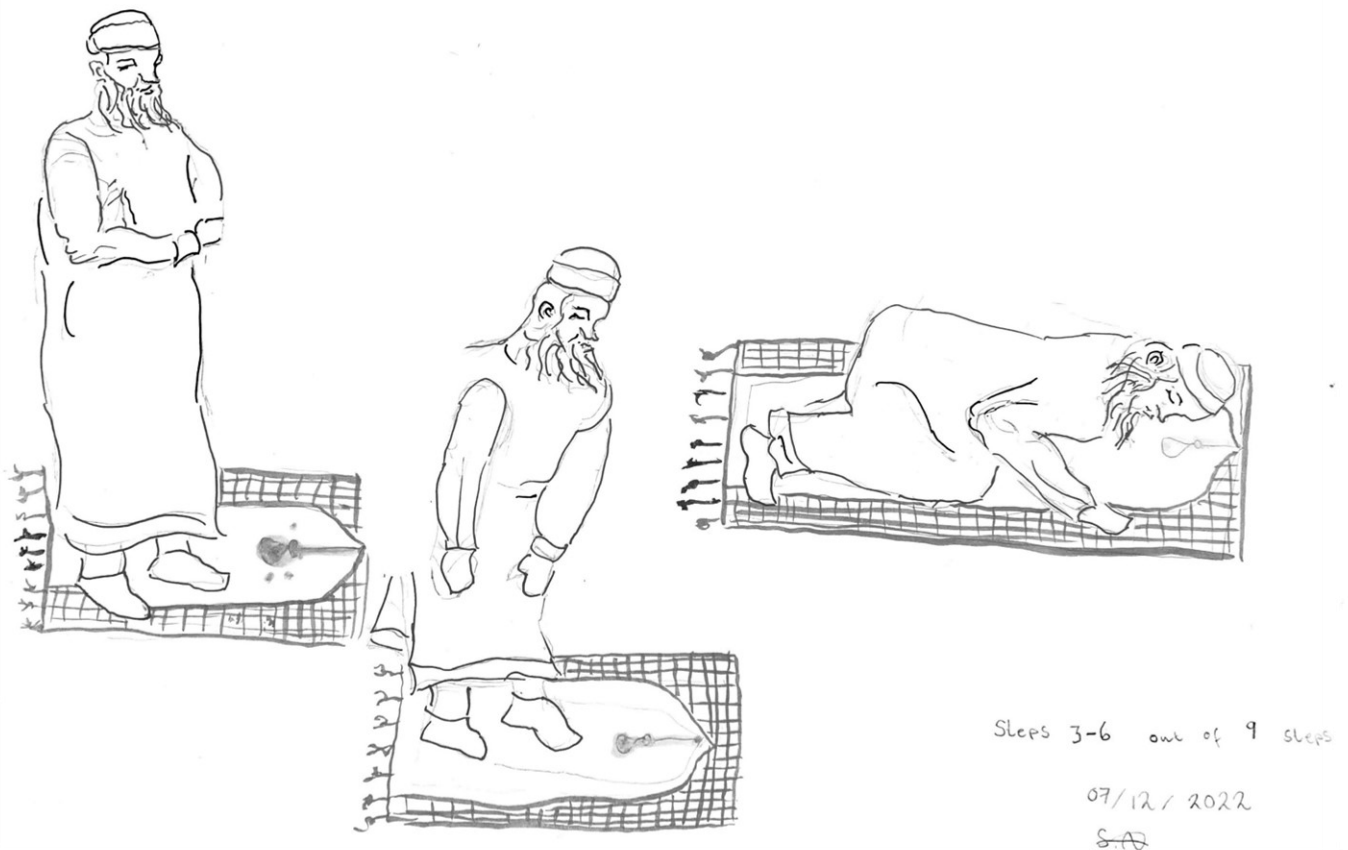
Hemmings (2012,p.45) when discussing daily contact with material describes how “textiles play in mediating between the body and the environment. The way that textile as a membrane provides on the one hand a real tangible point of contact and material boundary and on the other hand a more ambiguous metaphoric boundary between self and not self”. Prayer rugs are used as a habitual object to mediate a communication from the threshold and boundaries of the physical world towards the metaphysical divine space by the sensory methods of touch. They are spread on the floor as its own sacred substratum where the significance of a flat dimensional material made up of a woven contract of threads are there to create a space of witness for intentional prayer by using specifically dedicated movements of touch. Malik (2000,p.32) explains further the notions of hidayat, an Arabic term meaning guidance. He describes, “the believers use their senses as servants”. In this way sensory perception using the full body and touch are integral to Islamic prayer, with rituals specifically built around purifying the physical parts of the body which correspond to the symbolic sense through cleansing with water. Elias (2012, p.164-165) notes the writings of Al Ghazali (c.1058-c.1111)

“Awareness of a thing can be through the senses. Of senses there are five, each of which has its own delight. The sixth sense is the thing in the heart that is called the light Nur. It too has the perception which are beloved of it”

What Al Ghazali means is that we are given our senses to serve and guide us through the world, each sense is suggested to be naturally

inclined to understand its *delight*. The *delight* in this case is the prayer rug and the symbolic references to the divine which is portrayed through the warp and weft designs. Using esoteric sensory perception, the awareness we gain is our relationship to the divine *Nur* as a nonphysical entity to be communicated with in times of worship on a tactile rug. The relationship between our bodily senses and the prayer mat allows for an intentional spiritual experience of connection to the creator. There needs to be an experience of bonding between the physical atoms of our body and the metaphysical spiritual realms of the creator. Guiding our purified senses in prayer and in relation to the prayer mat demonstrates that we are sensory beings needing to reach out and experience the material world. Islamic metaphysics allows for this connection into the sensory world through the intentional acts of touching a prayer rug without being lost amongst the senses. There is a humbling process of tactility where in which form on a prayer rug becomes an important way to pursue guiding the senses into a metaphysical experience in a material world.

Figure 3: Altaf (2022) Forms of prayer, [pen drawing] UK



In *figure 3* there is a depiction of some of the ways in which the forms of the sensory body engage with localised contact with the prayer rugs during prayer. There is connection of palms, feet, and forehead to the woven material in order to worship and communicate with the creator. These are soft, delicate, vulnerable parts of the human body which correspond to the senses of touch. The forehead and chest are seen as being closest to the niche and hanging lamp symbol reflecting and engaging with the Nur of the divine and our own inner Nur which al Ghazali speaks of. Tactile engagement of the prayer rug through specific postured and

localised touches as seen in figure three shows how in prayer the individual stands, then gently dives into the niche, engaging themselves with a conscious sacred material space through a ritualistic set of threaded behaviours. The physical body is equal to the importance of the metaphysical body as can be seen when using a prayer rug as the user is both close to and at body's length away from the rug, depending on what part of the prayer stage they are performing. Distance and form in ritual prayer becomes a vital circulation of exchange in understanding the qualities of divine beauty. Elias (2012, p.156-157) notes Ibn al Haytham's (c.956-c.1040) writings on the qualities of beauty.

“Distance too may produce beauty. Forms possess certain refinements such as ordering of parts which account for the beauty of form, many of these features may not appear to the eye from moderate distances, but when brought closer to it they become visible, and the beauty of the form becomes manifest. Thus, increasing or diminishing the distance may cause beauty to appear, and therefore, distance itself produces beauty. Position produces beauty, and many things that look beautiful do so only because of order and position”

In this way the motions of swift dedicated movements in prayer that are either close in sensory contact or distanced from the prayer rug reveal the beautiful divine nature of the specifically ordered warp and weft within the prayer rug. Sensory engagements alongside features of form and position create a whole sense of connection to the divine when they are observed and integrated as layers of a multiplicity circulation of exchange between the senses and sensed delight. Ritual textile engagement becomes a means of contact between a material boundary and a wider esoteric boundary between what we perceive as self and not self, Hemmings (2012,

p.45). There is an aesthetic of harmony by ritualistically using somatic perception of the warp and weft rugs as the 'self' vulnerable parts body folds and delicately engages with the 'not self' fibres of the textile Islamic prayer rug. A multiplicity of layers of the membranes of the skin, the warp and weft of the rug are enshrouded within a circulation of divine Nur which harmonises all, creating a circulation of exchange with the outward perception towards the metaphysical divine realms and the cognitive soul. Thus, the soul feels satisfaction in the compositions of prayer and distance to the prayer rug as it finds delight merging and diving amongst this tactile divine beauty. As a gap is bridged between the physical outward world which is blended in one place with the metaphysical elements of divine beauty.

Through the tactility of material Muslims undergo a metaphysical experience within a physical world. The warp and wefts which become ordered and composed in one place to compose the final rug, make a similar journey of the undulating prayer movements. The straight lines of thread dive up and down in habitual ritual movements creating a woven membrane for which to conduct prayers. Elias (2012,p.167) notes "Al Ghazali locates emotional perception and inner perception as the means to get beyond outward forms." In this way the devotee of prayer contemplates on the symbolisms of the Islamic prayer rug, which is ordered of parallel lines, reflecting on the parallel of the talents of the Islamic prayer rug weaver and ending with focus on the divine talent which fabricated the known universe. The devotional language of; movement, composition, form of the body and of the very threads of the Islamic prayer rug become a symbol of cosmic divine unity. Whereby an embedded practice of Islamic spiritual and spatial realities of revolutions of ritual touch, form and pattern become a tactile embodiment of the limited and unlimited natures of the self and not

self. Allowing the discovery of the full truth of physical and metaphysical reality. To create an Islamic prayer rug, threads are directed to be crossed and undulated one over the other, bound together at a point, forming a circuit that is expanded through the localised fragile yet firm touches from the vulnerable points of body. There is a multiplicity of limited layered individual lines of threads which become contained in a bordered tactile space. Ingold (2015,p. 3) 'There is an entwining of lines they must bind in some such way that the tension that would tear them apart actually holds them' in this way the separate components of threads are brought closely and tightly together in on physical place holding a unity by a symbolic point of contact. Rippin (2005,p.147) notes his ideas on the concepts of Ibn Arabi "for Ibn Arabi the concept of the barazk the barrier and bridge between material existence and the divine world is a metaphor to bridge the gap in the realms of existence. Provides the unity of being but preserves the conceptual tension between immanence and transcendence of God". There is the physical tension between the warp and wefts which hold a limited space in our physical world, whilst the divine has qualities of being dimensionless and unlimited. Joining two separate elements to create a unified and whole prayer rug allows for the devotee to bridge the gap of the physical boundaries and the metaphysical by entering a threshold space as encased by the niche. Through this sensory prayer we begin to recognise the transcendence of God as not being limited. Malik (2000, p.74) notes one of the 99 names for Al-ah in Islamic belief "Muheet is the one who surrounds everything all created things are limited". *Muheet*, the one who encompasses denotes how as a final and whole divinity Al-ah is all surrounding, there is no limitation in the divine qualities and capabilities of this entity. However, human beings are limited in many ways, the Islamic ritual practices of prayer and the prayer rug points to our limited nature too. The lines of thread used to make a prayer rug are limited into a set defined patterned space to the threshold of the niche design. The borders of a

prayer mat invoke a limited boundary framing the realms of space and setting the discourse of interaction with the hard ground and spiritual placements of the body. These limited lines become a point of contact between the individual nature of lines of threads linking with the external physical body through choreographed pressure points to transgress the metaphysical limits of the grounded world. A totality of layers is created, the layers of thread to create a whole cloth, the layering of hands and forehead physical placement, the layers of human spirit and the accompanying layer of the divine Al Nur capabilities invoke this space of transgression. Foucault (1999,p.60) “transgression is an action which involves the limit, that narrow zone of a line where it displays the flash of its passage, perhaps also its entire trajectory, even its origin. It is likely that transgression has its entire space in the line it crosses”. Through the placements of body parts such as hands over the prayer rug the palm shifts and moves across the physical lines of the warp and weft, which have also transgressed across each other, transgressing a physical limited space. Crossing the lines of the weave warp and weft as a spiritual threshold where transgression becomes a metaphorical journey of the spirit. Foucault (1999,p.61) transgression contains nothing negative, but affirms limited being, affirms the limitlessness into which leaps as it opens the zone to existence for the first time’. Through the daily ritual prayers, there is a sense of the limitations we experience the limitations that are understood in terms of time and place. With set times of daily prayers, the Muslim understands that they are called upon each day and recognise the limitations of time they have in the earthly world whilst using the Islamic prayer rug art to perform a transgressing from a physical realm into the prayer zone of the unlimited *Muheet*. There are several conditions to be met for prayers such as direction which are suggested by the prayer rug symbolism as outlined previously. *Muheet* as the divine is *all-encompassing* they are not bound to these conditions of direction towards a qibla as the quality is recognised to be everywhere all at

once. Spiritual transgression is not negative it represents the limits we will meet as physical entities. Foucault (1999,p.62) when writing on transgression notes how “it was originally linked to the divine, from this limit marked by the sacred it opens a space where the divine functions”. Acts of prayer and using the warps and weft to enhance notions of divine essence and presence becomes a way for a limited human being to cross and safely transgress these limitations towards the metaphysical in a way that opens through the prayer rug’s niche and guided by *Al Nur* a sacred space of contact to the divine realms.

To finish a woven prayer rug the threads of the weave are often tied together, “the choreography of looping is of particular interest because of the way in which a circular gesture gathers in and retrieves the material simultaneously creating an opening through which it can be further propelled” Ingold(2015,p.19). As the line of warp and weft becomes circular in nature a loop formation appears from the unlimited path of the line. Thus, the unlimited journey is tied from motion in a similar fashion of the niche portal where the techniques of warp and weft cross through oneself through a portal where there is still potential to journey further. The connection with the physical body and the spirit mimics this journey too, as being tied to the physical realms can be transgressed in the limited half space where the diving Muslim must engage with the divine through the bonding of opposing lines to transcend into the metaphysical divine realm.

Overall, the Islamic prayer rug demonstrates how, in Islamic ideology ritual allows for the emergence of a dedicated art form which is functional, symbolic, and unified. Allowing for an embedded practice of sensory spirituality to meaningfully serve the user in connecting with a divine metaphysical space which is not available in physically reality. There doesn’t seem to be a coincidence that the very

techniques to dive and cross the warp and weft threads of the woven prayer rug become linked in motion and movement to the body's dedicated postures. The performance of ritual prayer and associated paraphernalia have an underlying and specific purpose of spiritual transgression from one realm to the other, a space of material witness to faith, which is reaffirmed constantly through daily engagement. By consistently using tactile perception of senses in a define limited space, there is potential for a journey to discover the delights of the divine realms. Where through utilising the body's given senses and undulating postures can transgress physical world. Discovering how what we experience is not a full representation of reality, with a realm of blooming, all-encompassing Nur to pray towards.

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Design Dated 1575-1590 Turkey. [Silk, Wool, Cotton.] New York

(viewed: 06/11/2022) Available at: [Carpet with Triple-Arch](#)

[Design | The Metropolitan Museum of Art \(metmuseum.org\)](#)

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Figure 2: Fragment of a 16th-century Ushak Saff carpet showing individual prayer compartments [Silk, Wool, Cotton] page 86 in *How to read Islamic carpets*. Denny, W (2014). Metropolitan museum of art, New York, Yale University Press

Figure 3: Altaf (2022) Forms of prayer, [pen drawing] UK

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