The Graves of Berlin

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ABSTRACT

For immigrants the answer to where a dead body belongs is far from obvious. On any given day, thousands of migrant corpses are shipped around the world to be laid to rest in ancestral soils. Others are buried locally in cemeteries that have been established to accommodate ethnic and religious minorities. While death is a universally shared human experience, the ways in which the dead are memorialized varies greatly. This paper investigates representations of national identity and citizenship on the tombstones of immigrant graves in Germany. It highlights the central role that burial grounds play in the construction of diasporic memory and subjectivity through a comparative study of three Islamic cemeteries in Berlin: Friedhof Columbiadamm, Landschaftsfriedhof Gatow, and the Türk Şehitlik Mezarlığı. I argue that expressions of posthumous nationalism reflect efforts to confer fixity on identities that are more fluid or ambivalent in life. Displays of belonging through language, images, and grave design offer a symbolically powerful way for immigrants to assert membership in political communities. By examining the range of semiotic strategies at work in the 'nationalization' of the dead, this paper demonstrates how processes of identity formation extend beyond the limits of biological life.

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"And what the dead had no speech for, when living, / They can tell you, being dead: the communication / Of the dead is tongued with fire beyond the language of the living."

--T.S. Eliot, *Little Gidding*

Introduction

Strolling down the Appian Way on her way to Ancient Rome, a traveler would encounter its citizens long before reaching the city itself. Roman law required that the dead be buried outside human settlements and entering the city entailed passing through a community of the dead. The paths leading to the city's gates were lined with sepulchers, mausolea, and other repositories of dead bodies that were intended to be seen and read, not only by the decedent's friends and family, but by travelers and strangers alike.[1] Tombs called out to passersby, asking them to pause, reflect, and remember:

> *Stop, stranger, and look at this little mound of earth on the left, where the bones of a good person are enclosed, one compassionate, devoted, of modest means. Please, traveler, do not mistreat this monument. Gaius Atilius Ehodus, a freedman of Serranus [and] a dealer in pearls from the Sacred Way, is buried in this monument. Traveler, farewell.*[2]
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> *You are human, stop and contemplate my tomb, young man, in order to know what you will be. I did no wrong. I performed many duties. Live well, for soon this will come to you.*

As Colin Dicky has observed, "these tombs greeted everyone seeking to get to the city-- long before reaching the metropolis, one first had to pass through the necropolis, gathered around the edge of the city like a photographic negative of Rome itself."[3]

Today our cemeteries are mostly out of sight, relegated to the outskirts of towns and cities

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1 Maureen Carrol. *Spirits of the Dead: Roman Funerary Commemoration in Western Europe*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006.

2 Robert Kaster. *The Apian Way: Ghost Road, Queen of Roads.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012. Pg. 52

3 George Dicky. "Necropolis." *Lapham's Quarterly*. Vol. 3, No. 4 (Fall 2010).

in areas that receive little impromptu foot traffic.[4] The metaphor of the photographic negative provides a fruitful way to conceptualize their social function. Cemeteries provide an inverted image of society. They reflect the changing conditions of the living and the shifting meanings and discourses around life and death.[5] As "shadow" sites that are simultaneously a part of and apart from the city itself, cemeteries underpin the city's psychic structure and preserve elements of its history.[6] They are much more than pieces of land set aside for the disposal of the dead, although by definition they do contain a multitude of human remains. Cemeteries are, in effect, "open cultural texts" that offer a visual and material archive of individual and collective identity.[7] They are full of objects that are loaded with meaning. Tombstones, monuments, and memorials serve as tributes to the dead but also often honor the living. In studying such objects, we can learn much about the values, worldviews, hopes, fears, and aspirations of different groups in society.

This paper analyzes representations of national identity and citizenship on the tombstones of immigrant graves in Germany. It focuses on three cemeteries in Berlin, *Friedhof Columbiadamm, Landschaftsfriedhof Gatow*, and the *Türk Şehitlik Mezarlığı* where the majority of the city's recent ethnic and religious minorities are buried. These cemeteries are dynamic spaces of memorialization where many different cultures are on display. They are a testament to the city's diversity and to the lived experience of its immigrant population. By examining the

4 There are of course many famous cemeteries, like Père Lachaise in Paris, Highgate Cemetery in London, or the Arlington National Cemetery in Washington D.C. that have have become touristic destinations in their own right, effectively functioning as sites of secular pilgrimage.

5 Avrill Maddrell and James Sidaway (eds). *Deathscapes: Spaces for Death, Dying, Mourning and Remembrance*. Farnham, England: Ashgate Press, 2010.

6 Barbara Mann. "Modernism and the Zionist Uncanny: Reading the Old Cemetery in Tel Aviv." *Representations*, No. 69 (Winter 2000): 63 – 95.

7 Richard Meyer, ed. *Ethnicity and the American City*. Bowling Green, Ohio: Bowling Green State University Press, 1993. Pg. 3

material culture of the cemetery landscape, particularly at the site of the grave, this paper highlights the central role that burial grounds play in the construction of diasporic memory and subjectivity. As repositories of cultural identity, immigrant cemeteries are places where the dialectic of assimilation and cultural retention is given material expression. Questions about the meaning of home and homeland are played out on the gravestones of the dead, many of which bare linguistic, visual, symbolic, and architectural signs of national belonging, ethnicity, and religious community. Such displays reflect efforts to confer fixity and stability to identities that are more fluid or ambivalent in life. Yet like the persons they stand in for, symbolic representations of identity on gravestones are rarely static. They often contain multiple and sometimes contradictory messages and meanings.

Death in the Diaspora

What happens to immigrants after they die? In his unflinching account of the experience of migrant workers in Europe in the 1960s and 1970s John Berger observes how as anonymous and replaceable units of labor, immigrants possess a mythical and immortal quality: "so far as the economy of the metropolitan country is concerned, migrant workers are immortal: immortal because they are continually interchangeable. They are not born: they are not brought up: they do not age: they do not get tired: they do not die."[8] Of course migrants, like all living beings, do

8 John Berger. *A Seventh Man*. New York: Verso Books, 2010 [1975]. Pg. 64. NB: Between 1955 – 1973 roughly 2.5 million foreign laborers emigrated to Germany from Southern Europe as part of the *Gastarbeiter* ("Guest Worker") program, an official government recruitment initiative to overcome shortages in the domestic labor market. As its name implies, the program was envisioned as a temporary, stop-gap solution and workers were expected to return to their country of origin after a few years. Many chose to stay and settle permanently, making use of family reunification policies to bring their spouses and children to live with them. Workers from Turkey comprised the largest proportion of the foreign born labor force and now constitute a sizable community in Germany, numbering around 4 million. Turks are at the center of heated debates over national identity and political integration and tend to be seen as representative of all Muslims and immigrants in the country. As one of

eventually die and the ways that individuals and families experience and respond to death "out of place" reveals much about the contradictory demands that structure transnational migratory life. The main dilemma faced by immigrants is whether to inter locally or in the country of origin. In an era of global mobility, it is not just the living who are on the move. The transportation of human remains across international borders has become a veritable industry. On any given day, thousands of immigrant corpses are shipped around the world to be laid to rest in ancestral soils.[9]

Although my focus in this paper is on burials that take place in Germany, it is important to point out that such cases are in the minority. According to the undertakers whom I spoke with during the course of my fieldwork in Berlin, approximately 60 to 70 percent of migrants that die in Germany are repatriated for burial. This process is overseen by a number of funeral and burial assistance funds that have been established to provide logistical support in the event of death. Although they do not require repatriation, the majority of fund members are buried outside of Germany. The largest of these funds, with approximately 300,000 members across Europe is administered by the *Diyanet İşleri Türk İslam Birliği* (The Turkish-Islamic Union for Religious Affairs). Of the 3185 fund members who died in 2014, only 123 (4%) were buried in Germany. The remaining 3062 (96%) were transported to Turkey for burial.

Part of the problem has to do with the dearth of burial grounds that accommodate religious minorities. There are roughly 32,000 cemeteries in Germany. 250, or less than one percent of them have sections reserved for Muslim graves.[10] All of Germany's cemeteries are

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the largest and more established ethnic minorities in Germany, their social position can be described, in a twist on Bourdieu's felicitous phrase, as "the dominating of the dominated."

9 Adrian Felix. "Posthumous Transnationalism: Postmortem Repatriation from the United States to Mexico." *Latin American Research Review* 46 (3): 157 – 179; Katy Gardner. "Death of a Migrant: Transnational Death Rituals and Gender Among British Sylhetis." *Global* Networks 2(3): 191-204; Lakhbir K. Jassar. "Necromobilities: The Multi-sited Geographies of Death and Disposal in a Mobile World." *Mobilities* (2014).

10 "Muslimische Bestattungskultur und Grabfelder in Deutschland" (Muslim Funeral Culture and Graveyards in

state owned and managed at the municipal level. The laws governing burial are promulgated at the state (not federal) level, which means that there are numerous discrepancies concerning the practical and legal feasibility of performing Islamic funerary rituals.[11]

Nonetheless, the number of immigrants who are buried in Germany is on the rise. Similar patterns have been observed in other parts of Europe, particularly England and France, where the decision to be buried locally has been read as a positive sign of political integration. According to one observer, “the decision of migrants to bury their kin in the new country of residence, rather than to repatriate the dead, can be interpreted as an initial step in grounding a new situated identity and in establishing a new 'home' for the deceased, the living and their future descendants.”[12] With regards to the burial practices of British Muslims, Ansari argues that “as Muslim communities have become more established and more sizable, there seems to be a shift taking place in British Muslim perceptions of where 'home' is... the British element of their identity is, in contrast to their migrant elders, forming a much more important part of who and what they are, of their identities... and this is reflected in an increase in the number of families, compared with the past, who are now choosing to bury their kin in Britain.”[13]

Yet as we shall see below, even in situations where immigrants are buried in the country of settlement, notions of home remain ambiguous. The graves of Berlin reflect a number of

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Germany) <www.initiative-kabir.de> Accessed April 9, 2015.

11 According to Islamic tradition, a burial must take place as soon as possible after the death has occurred. German law stipulates a mandatory 48 hour waiting period between death in burial. Muslims are to be wrapped in a shroud and buried without a coffin in a grave that is aligned towards Mecca in areas where only other Muslims are buried. In many parts of Germany burial without a coffin is illegal. In states where shroud burial has been legalized, individual cemeteries must grant exceptions to coffinless burials on religious grounds. The vast majority of Germany's cemeteries do not have dedicated sections for Muslim graves, so members of different faith are often buried together. Graves are leased for a period of twenty years and be extended for an additional twenty years, after which they are recycled. This practice conflicts with Islamic beliefs about the dead resting in perpetuity.

12 Doris Francis, et al. *The Secret Cemetery*. Oxford: Berg Press, 2005. Pg. 21

13 Humayun Ansari. “'Burying the Dead': Making Muslim Space in Britain.” *Historical Research*. Vol. 80, no. 2010 (November 2007): 545 – 566.

overlapping tensions about self, place, family, loss, and belonging. They raise questions without clear answers. As a narrative object, each tombstone tells a different story by selectively incorporating elements of a person's life history. These narratives produce a semblance of subjecthood by conferring a sense of fixity to the dead person whom they refer to. Whether or not they succeed in this task is a matter of interpretation, but like all symbols, tombstones possess a surplus of meaning that can exceed the original intentions of their creators.

The Graves of Berlin

"Hans is in one plot, and Hasan is buried right next door" says Bülent, half-jokingly, describing the religious and ethnically mixed topography of the *Columbiadamm* cemetery. It is a bright summer morning and the dirt paths leading to different sections of the graveyard are still muddy from the rain that soaked the city the night before. Bülent is an undertaker. He used to work in a shampoo factory, but for the last 18 years he has been burying bodies, mostly immigrants. He came to Berlin from Turkey as a child and owns one of the few Islamic funeral homes in the city. "We have a grave problem" he says (no pun intended), "there aren't enough Muslim burial grounds in Berlin."

Sure enough, walking through the cemetery, it is clear that most of the plots are occupied. There is one area, abutting the wall at the edge of the cemetery where recent burials have taken place. The mounds of earth upon the graves have not yet settled. From a distance, they look like sand dunes. Burial space has become a premium at *Columbiadamm*, which is one of the two cemeteries in Berlin that has spaces reserved for Muslim graves. Located in between Neukölln and Kreuzberg, neighborhoods that have historically been home to the city's immigrant

population and have undergone rapid gentrification over the past two decades, the *Columbiadamm* cemetery has a peculiar history.

In 1798, Ali Aziz Efendi, a high ranking Ottoman diplomat sent to Prussia by Sultan Selim III died unexpectedly while in Berlin. Getting his body back to Istanbul would have taken months so he was buried in Berlin on a small parcel of land donated by King Friedrich Wilhelm III. Six years later another Ottoman diplomat in Prussia died and was buried in the same location. In the ensuing years a number of Ottoman military and political dignitaries came to be buried alongside Ali Aziz Efendi and in 1867 a monument commissioned by Sultan Abdülaziz and designed by German architect Gustav Voigtel was erected to commemorate the Ottoman dead (figure 1).

Figure 1: Ottoman Monument in the Turkish Cemetery

During the First World War a number of wounded Turkish soldiers were brought to Berlin for medical treatment. Those who perished were interred alongside the Ottoman dignitaries and the burial ground came to be known as “Türk Şehitlik” (The Turkish Cemetery).[14] There are approximately 300 people buried on this site which since 1983 has been housed in the courtyard of the largest mosque in Berlin. The land itself is owned by the Turkish government and is not subject to German burial laws. It is sovereign territory that is a part of the *Columbiadamm* cemetery, but not governed by it. In effect, it is a cemetery within a cemetery (figure 2).

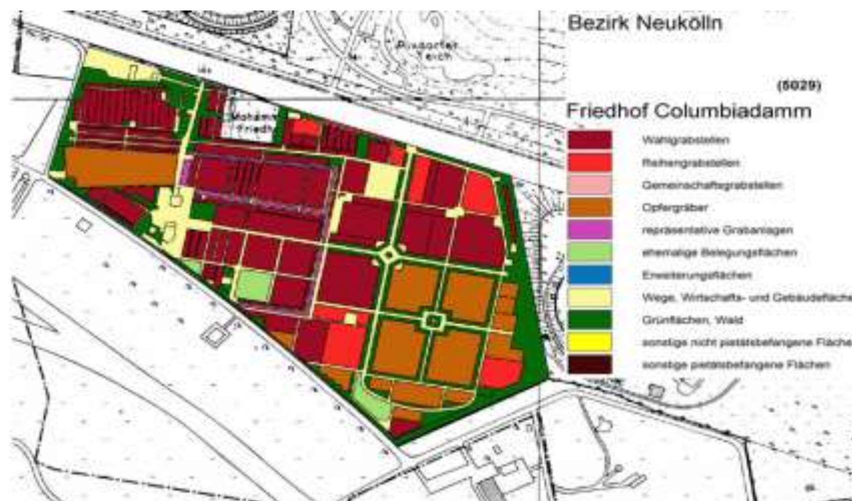

Figure 2: Map of Friedhof Columbiadamm. (The Turkish Cemetery is marked in White)

The last burial in the Turkish Cemetery took place in 1989, after which Muslims were buried in lots behind the mosque in the *Columbiadamm* cemetery. A third cemetery where ethnic and religious minorities are buried is located on the Western outskirts of Berlin in the neighborhood of Gatow-Spandau. Built in 1982, *Landschaftsfriedhof Gatow* is an 18 acre cemetery that contains separate sections for Christians, Muslims, and anonymous burials. The Islamic section

14 In Turkish “Şehit” literally means “martyr” and is typically reserved for military casualties. “Şehitlik” can also mean cemetery.

of the cemetery was established in 1988. Its entrance is marked by a multilingual sign that has text in German, Turkish, and Arabic, reflecting the multinational heritage of the dead buried within it (Figure 3).

Figure 3: Entrance to the Muslim Section of Landschaftsfriedhof Gatow

Taking these three cemeteries together, we can track historical changes in grave design and iconography and identify recurrent themes and patterns that appear on the tombstones of immigrant graves in Berlin. What emerges from this analysis is that displays of national identity persist over time and are found on the graves of the young and old alike. This is most evident in the use of flags, but is also be seen in the choice of language, epitaph, and symbolic imagery. The use of visual cues, such as images of the deceased, seem to be a more recent phenomenon, reflecting broader shifts in practices of memorialization. Finally, the use of Islamic architectural elements, such as minarets, represent a novel and recent innovation in the diasporic context that is related to efforts to carve out new spaces for the expression of Islamic identities in the public sphere.

Flags and Necropatriotism

The flag is the most emblematic symbol of the nation. Every state has one, and every aspiring state will invent one. It is a "ritual instrument of group cohesion" that gives meaning and depth to national groupings.[15] People take flags seriously and treat them with care. They are objects of reverence that possess pseudo-spiritual qualities. They evoke a wide array of reactions and emotions, ranging from pride to disgust. This is because the flag has an impossible task that requires quite a bit of sorcery-- to make coherent what is ultimately schizophrenic. That is, to erase social, racial, and class divisions and to unify the many under one banner. Flags are ahistorical because they expunge history-- or at the very least, smooth over the nasty and inconvenient parts of it.

That flags exist in cemeteries seems unsurprising given that the nation is an alter that demands the blood sacrifice of its citizens.[16] Yet we typically associate flags with the graves of soldiers, both named an anonymous. Tombs of unknown soldiers are a well-known example. Most countries have them. In the tomb, presumably lies a soldier killed in action. We will never know who he or she is and that is where the magic happens. The dead body could belong to anyone. Nameless, it stands in for the nation as a whole. This act of metonymy is enabled through the flag, which unites the anonymous soldier with the nation, linking individual sacrifice with collective identity.

Compared to private citizens, soldiers have a different relationship to the state. In effect, the state *owns* the soldier's body. It is an appendage of the state apparatus. A flag is always draped over a soldier's coffin and will typically be placed near his or her grave. There is little

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15 Caroline Marvin. *Blood Sacrifice and the Nation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999. Pg 2.
16 *ibid*

choice in the matter. The flag at the site of the soldier's grave is less an emblem of nationalism as it is a reminder of the state's sovereignty-- its power over life and death.

Wandering amongst the graves of Berlin, one encounters numerous flags. Rarely are they German. What compels immigrants to affix national flags on their tombstones? Let's call it an act of *necropatriotism*. Although we can never know whether the individual in question harbored deep nationalist sentiments, national branding on the tombstone endows them with a patriotic aura. In death, they are loyal sons and daughters of the nation. The flag is one way to fix the dead body as a national subject (Figures 4 and 5).

Figure 4: Grave of Zaynab 'Inayat Siraj

Figure 5: Grave of Neriman Yilmaz

The gravestones above can be found in the *Türk Şehitlik*. One bears the flag of Afghanistan, the other the flag of Turkey. In one tomb lies a forty seven year old woman and in the other, a five day old baby girl. The inscriptions indicate that they died in 1959 and 1970 respectively. The dates and the country of origin on the Afghani woman's grave are written in

English but the rest of the text is in Dari. It offers the following information[17]:

He remains [aka God]
Zaynab 'Inayat Siraj
Kabul 19 Rajab 1330
Berlin 3 Rajab 1378
The head of the Afghanistan Women's Association
"Step with understanding over our grave
Lest you break a heart beneath your step"

The inscription on the baby's grave is entirely in Turkish and reads as follows:

Daughter of Ömer
Neriman Yilmaz
Born 14.9.1970 Berlin
Died 19.9.1970
A prayer for her soul

Two different flags, two different stories. Zaynab's tombstone complicates the connection between flag and nation, between the necro and the patriotic. In fact, it contains a multitude of referents that more accurately reflect her cosmopolitanism. We learn that she held an important position as the head of the Afghanistan Women's Association. The deployment of the flag in this case might be read as a means to honor her civil service. We also see two ways of accounting for time: the Hijri and the Gregorian. The choice of English to mark the dates of her birth and death and to indicate her country of origin suggests that the intended audience is an international one. Visitors who lack the linguistic capacity to understand Dari could easily overlook the significance of this grave, focusing instead on overt symbols of nationality. Though the flag marks the deceased as Afghan, the biographical information offers a more nuanced vision of her identity.

The use of a flag on a baby's grave says more about the living than the dead. The notion

17 Thanks to Negar Razavi and Ali Karjoo-Ravary for their help in translating this inscription.

of a nationalistic baby seems untenable, but the decision to mark Neriman's tombstone with a symbol of the Turkish nation could be read as an effort to construct an identity where personhood is tenuous. Neriman lived only five days. Nonetheless she was named and her name is inscribed on her tombstone. This could be taken as evidence of her personhood. On the other hand, it is through the ascription of person-like qualities, particularly nationality and kinship, that Neriman's personhood and identity is brought into being. The flag marks her as Turkish. The genealogy indicates that her father is Ömer, presumably a Turkish man. Through the act of naming and inscription, the deceased child is constructed as a person with particular attributes and characteristics-- first and foremost, her nationality and citizenship. The identity of the parents is elucidated through their genealogical relationship with the child. We are only privy to the patrilineal line (daughter of Ömer), and learn little about Neriman's mother. Nonetheless, the use of the flag confers a sense of Turkishness to the entire family-- mother, father, and daughter alike.

Language

The graves of Berlin contain messages that are delivered in many different national tongues. Sometimes multiple languages are found on a single stone. Who are these graves speaking to? Like the flag, language is a symbol of community. It is a central element in the construction of cultural and national identity. Members of a linguistic community are mutually comprehensible to one another. They share a code that is unintelligible to others.

The choice of language on a tombstone is a boundary mechanism. It ascribes a particular linguistic identity on the deceased and delimits the community of mourners. As Ho observes,

"writing is a visual signifier; itself silent, it can provoke meaningful speech. Present on the surface of the tombstone at one end of a chain of signification, it enables the dead and the silent person within the grave to be launched into discourse."[18] For this conversation to make sense however, the dead and the living must understand one another. A tombstone loses some meaning when its inscription is inscrutable.

Older graves tend to be monolingual (Figure 6). Sometimes they offer biographical information about the deceased, including the place of birth and death. They are usually simpler in design when compared with more recent tombstones. One never sees an image in the likeness of the deceased, although other visual cues, such as national flags and religious symbols are prevalent.

Figure 6: Grave of Ümran Özhan

18 Engseng Ho. *The Graves of Tarim: Genealogy and Mobility Across the Indian Ocean*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006. Pg. 25.

The grave of Ümran Özhan contains several elements of an immigrant identity, including a flag, an inscription in a non-German language (in this case, Turkish), information about her place of origin, and her family genealogy. It reads as follows:

From Turkey's
Kayseri Province
Daughter of Recep
Birthed by Hikmet
Ümran Özhan
A prayer for her soul
Place of Birth: Kayseri 1938
Place of Death: Berlin 1977

In contrast, the graves of more recently deceased immigrants, such as those of the second and third generation are more likely to incorporate a mixture of languages, including German. While these tombstones carry symbols of ethnic or national affiliation they also display certain feature of hybridization and assimilation to German culture. Migrant graves are increasingly incorporating certain features of German memorialization practices, including inscriptions in German, photographs of the deceased, the use of local expressions such as “forever in our hearts,” images of flowers, statuettes of angels, material objects corresponding to the individual's hobbies, and tombstones in the shape of hearts, open books, or abstract styles. When religious language is incorporated into the inscription, it is usually not in German. The grave of Can Kayam is emblematic in this regard (Figure 7).

Figure 7: Grave of Can Kayam

You had
to leave us so early,
but in our hearts you will
live on always.
A prayer for your soul

This tombstone contains text in both German and Turkish, includes a photographic image of the deceased alongside a pair of boxing gloves, employs a local turn of phrase and an abstract design. The deceased is a young man, aged 16, with a Turkish name. Hıs age indicates that he is likely a member of the third generation of Turkish migrants and the hybrid inscription reflects his syncretic identity. Kayam's grave is a sign of the future. As immigrant communities become more rooted in German soil, their tombstones will reflect the truth of their presence in Germany. While markers of national, ethnic, and religious affiliations might persist, I suspect that the graves of coming generations will look more like Kayam's, blending elements of personal history and cultural heritage.

The Islamic Landscape

Tombstones can incorporate elements of religious identity in a variety of ways, including the use of scriptural texts, religious iconography, or through the design of the stone itself. A Muslim grave is usually simple and austere. It is common to use a small white stone, sometimes rectangular in shape, sometimes in a horse-shoe shape with a rounded arch (Figure 6). Something has changed in the diasporic context. New forms of Islamic architecture have emerged. Walking amongst the graves of Berlin one sees something unusual: tombstones with minarets (Figures 8 and 9). In some cases, these graves resemble mini mosques with domes (Figure 8).

Figure 8: Grave of Mohammad Ghuman Sadiq

Figure 9: Grave of Muammer Kahrimanovic

This innovation in tombstone design has to be understood against the backdrop of broader debates over the visibility of religious identities in the public sphere. In recent years, Germany has seen several high profile court cases over issues such as the right for female Muslim teachers to wear a headscarf in public schools and whether or not courses on Islam should be offered within the existing framework of public religious education. There have also been numerous

local level conflicts over the construction of mosques and the broadcasting of the call to prayer. In Berlin there are around 300 mosques but one has to look hard to find them. Most are hidden from sight, and were established as makeshift prayer rooms in apartment buildings. Mosques that are more visible have seen some trouble in recent years. In the summer of 2014, a project to construct a minaret alongside the Mevlana mosque in Kreuzberg was halted after the mosque was firebombed. In short, the visibility of Islamic religious symbols in public spaces has provoked a great deal of controversy.

The use of Islamic architectural elements on the tombstones of dead Muslims might be understood as a response to the difficulties faced by living. In effect, these tombs help to "Islamicize" German space and reflect efforts by Muslim immigrants to express their religious identities in the public sphere. Graves, which are sites of collective memory, communal continuity, and personal pilgrimage, are being refashioned to carve out new spaces for Islam in Germany. The incorporation of religious architecture and design in the public space of the cemetery represents a first step towards the normalization of Islamic symbols in the German landscape. While minarets might appear out of place in the cemetery or the city, their proliferation might neutralize their effect and make them as invisible and unremarked upon as the crosses and church towers that are an integral part of Berlin's urban fabric.

Conclusion

Cemeteries are places where a variety of identities are on display. They are open air archives that offer insight into the social and political dynamics of the cities they are built in. As I have attempted to demonstrate, cemeteries are also places where difficult existential questions

about the meaning of self, community, home, and homeland are worked out and given material expression. For immigrants, burial in the country of settlement is one way to prove that they have arrived. Yet as markers of national affiliation demonstrate, the dead are not wholly convinced about their place in the world. Although tombstones attempt to confer fixity, they are often unstable, reflecting the dilemmas faced by the grave's occupant during their lifetime.

It is difficult to know the authorial intent behind the inscription on a tombstone. This is one of the great challenges posed by the graves of Berlin. How can we impute meaning without biographical knowledge? Is the grave an authorless text? Barthes' concept of the death of the author takes on a double and literal meaning in this context. Nonetheless, if one looks hard enough, patterns, stories, and voices begin to emerge. Just because the dead are silent does not mean that they cannot speak.

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