

CONTEMPORARY MADRASA MOBILITY, FRAGMENTARY LITERARY GEOGRAPHY

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Abstract. This paper explores the role of the Malaysian madrasa as a fertile example incorporating both a physical site and a conceptual locus where, seen in one way, regional migration narratives intersect with literary geography. Positioned within Southeast Asia's historic maritime networks, Malaysian Islamic madrasahs have long functioned as central points for transnational Muslim scholars, student mobility, and diaspora communities across Southeast Asia, specifically the Malay world. By examining literary representations and to a certain extent the madrasa's inhabitants and visitors' oral stories surrounding a madrasa, this paper elaborates how madrasa could reconsider spatial identity and collective memory as pertinent to building a memory of madrasa as a possible site where literary geography narratives and mobility intersects. It demonstrates how peaceful social and cultural Muslim centers could generate a sacred geography production that transcends postcolonial state borders, transforming local educational spaces into dynamic hubs of transregional culture. By focusing on said madrasa, the paper argues that integrating literary geography with migration narratives reframes the Malaysian madrasa not merely as a traditional institution of faith, but as a liminal space where spatial mobility and identities belonging continuously negotiate and redefine one another.

Keywords: *literary geography, madrasahs, memory, mobilities, narratives*

Introduction

Mobility has long occupied a central position in the making of human histories, identities, and landscapes. From religious pilgrimages and intellectual journeys to forced migrations and everyday movements across social spaces, mobility represents more than physical displacement from one location to another (Sidaway, 2022). It constitutes a process through which individuals negotiate belonging, reconstruct memories, encounter differences, and produce meanings attached to places. Yet, dominant understandings of mobility have frequently privileged urban trajectories, transnational movements, economic migration, and cosmopolitan experiences, thereby rendering less visible the slower, quieter, and more intimate forms of mobility that unfold within rural and peripheral environments (Ryan, 2018). As James Sidaway (2022) argues, mobility and their narratives might better emphasize "further reflection that indicates potential for a broadened field". By focusing on mobilities at faith-based centres in rural, countryside areas, the mobilities of marginalized communities within religious, educational, and semi-rural spaces which are lagged behind, can be scrutinized. This omission is significant because such spaces are not merely static locations of residence or worship; rather, they are lived environments where individuals continually negotiate their relationships with self, community, nature, and spirituality.

This article proposes rethinking madrasa through the lens of mobility narratives, arguing that the madrasa should not be understood merely as a bounded religious institution but as a landscape of movement, encounter, memory, and emotional

attachment. Madrassas are generally defined as traditionally recognised as spaces of worship and Islamic learning, sustained by donor generosity (Idrus et al., 2025a). Narratives on mobilities can be referred to as narratives concerning a “flexible view of the boundaries of the Malay world, a region characterised by great mobility and transnational interaction on multiple scales” (Mandal, 2017). Drawing from literary geography approaches, the madrasa emerges as a spatial formation where human experiences intersect with environmental conditions, social histories, and personal journeys. The exploration of these spaces, particularly madrassas, through literary geography may reveal how mobility is not always characterized by geographical distance; rather, mobility can also involve emotional transitions, spiritual transformations, and psychological journeys occurring within a single landscape. Like Marina Marengo (2018) argues, “the progressive transition” which resembles these forms of mobility can be scrutinized across faith-based places such as madrassas.

This article aims to describe these premises. It first begins by a review of literature which presents critical viewpoints about literary geography across faith based spaces such as madrassas. Of central importance are the critical insights which may allow the stretch of lacuna encouraging the emergent concerns as stipulated in this journal article. Second, it presents the conceptual approach of literary geography by specifically recontextualizing Gisele Sapiro’s (2014) literary ideal-types centralizing on “aesthetical,” “moral,” “critical,” and “political.” These types are introduced hitherto and their relationship with the current investigation will be presented. Finally, analytical discussions by taking madrasa narratives as examples for the aforementioned debates on madrasa, literary geography, and mobilities will be provided. By focusing on madrasa narratives using a theoretical approach by literary geography, this article might shed light on the inextricable connections between “human geography as well as literary studies” (Hones, 2022).

Results and Discussion

The following section collects studies concerning madrassas and how their dwellers may rely on these places. First, recent studies on de-urbanised madrasa and madrasa environments demonstrate that these spaces challenge conventional assumptions that religious institutions situated outside urban centres are isolated, rigid, or disconnected from broader social realities. Instead, they reveal madrasa landscapes as dynamic sites where vulnerable communities, learners, caregivers, converts, elderly residents, and displaced individuals construct new meanings of home and belonging (Idrus et al., 2025b). However, the necessity of rethinking madrasa emerges partly from persistent public and scholarly representations that have often reduced Islamic educational spaces to narrow and problematic categories (Ministry of Higher Education, 2017). Conventional depictions frequently frame madrasa institutions through assumptions of isolation, conservatism, or social detachment (Idrus et al., 2024). For instance, Abd Ghani and Hashim (2018) as well as Ahmad Othman and Anas (2020) revealed that factored into these issues were the managerial issues concerning the lack of access to learning materials, unsanitary, poor electrical and electronic facilities requiring major overhaul, and meager financial facilities furnished to Tahfiz centers. While raising consciousness about madrassas and their conditionings, these studies might have ignored the landscape that they provide to encourage spiritual and peaceful transitions, whether literally or figuratively speaking.

Second, geography-related investigations of Malaysian rural madrasa communities reveal a markedly different reality. The study of de-urbanised madrasa demonstrates that these spaces are sustained through complex relationships between religious learning, ecological surroundings, agricultural practices, communal labour, and social support networks. Rather than functioning as enclosed spaces separated from society, these institutions become places of collective engagement where inhabitants develop meaningful attachments through everyday interactions with landscapes (Idrus et al., 2025b). The madrasa, the authors continue, is therefore not simply a physical structure but a lived environment shaped by memories, emotions, sensory encounters, and movements of its inhabitants. As they succinctly argue, “place-based, narrative rich writing transforms the Islamic learning center from an object of external critique into a subjectively meaningful landscape where marginalized women like her actively construct their own spatial and spiritual empowerment”. These and other earlier investigations into de-urbanised madrasa might reveal that personal experiences of residents illustrate emotional responses ranging from fear and uncertainty to comfort, safety, and well-being, producing diverse cognitive and symbolic understandings of place. However, these discussions have lagged behind the narratives of mobilities and how these transitions depict the overall understandings of madrasa as contemporary thoughts. This article, therefore, makes this attempt to engage these questions.

How do contemporary readings on madrassas generate insights concerning spatial identities and collective memory? This article attempts to examine how the madrasa may reconceptualize its spatial identity and collective memory by positioning it as a site where literary-geographical narratives and patterns of mobility converge, might contribute to the construction of madrasa memory. Such an understanding requires moving beyond conventional geographical interpretations of space. Instead of perceiving place as a passive container where human activities occur, literary geography allows scholars to examine how environments actively influence human consciousness, behaviour, and identity formation. Like Dasca (2018) argues, by engaging madrasa narratives at non-central areas might furnish one with a “collective memory, giving it voice and form, and the historical events that have made it a transit point subject to alternating waves of emigration”.

Sapiro’s four literary ideal-types

Gisèle Sapiro (2014) formulation of literary ideal-types offers a productive framework for understanding the multiple functions that literature performs within society. Rather than treating literary texts as autonomous aesthetic objects or reducing them to ideological instruments, Sapiro identifies four ideal-types, the “aesthetic,” “moral,” “critical,” and “political,” that describe distinct yet overlapping modes through which literature generates meaning and social engagement. These categories are not rigid classifications but heuristic devices that enable scholars to examine the diverse intentions, values, and effects of literary production (Alexander and Cooper, 2024). Their flexibility makes them particularly useful for interdisciplinary studies that seek to understand how narratives negotiate space, memory, identity, and power. The “aesthetic” ideal-type foregrounds literature’s artistic qualities, emphasizing formal innovation, style, symbolism, narrative structure, and the imaginative capacity of literary texts. Its principal strength lies in preserving literature’s artistic autonomy and recognizing that meaning is often generated through literary form rather than merely through content (Ryan, 2018). Such an approach allows scholars to appreciate how

descriptions of landscapes, architecture, movement, and spatial imagination contribute to readers' experiences beyond explicit ideological messages. However, the aesthetic approach may also become a limitation when excessive attention to formal qualities obscures the broader historical, cultural, or political conditions that shape literary production. Detached from its social context, literature risks appearing as an isolated artistic artifact rather than a cultural practice embedded within lived realities.

The “moral” ideal-type considers literature as an ethical endeavor that cultivates empathy, reflection, and moral imagination. Literature, from this perspective, invites readers to evaluate human actions, responsibilities, and relationships while fostering greater understanding across diverse communities (Link, 2016). One of its greatest strengths is its ability to illuminate how narratives transmit values and negotiate questions of belonging, justice, compassion, and memory. Nevertheless, the moral approach may unintentionally encourage normative readings that privilege particular ethical positions while overlooking ambiguity or contradiction within literary texts (Löffler, 2017). Complex narratives frequently resist singular moral interpretations, making an exclusively ethical framework potentially reductive. The “critical” ideal-type positions literature as a mode of questioning dominant assumptions, exposing inequalities, and challenging established systems of knowledge and authority. This approach is particularly valuable because it encourages readers to interrogate hegemonic representations, marginalized voices, and institutional structures that shape social realities (Tso, 2020). It aligns closely with contemporary literary theories concerned with decolonization, postcoloniality, cultural memory, and spatial justice, and like this article attempts to draw, the incorporation of narratives mobilities of madrasa dwellers’ “present and past aligned to ensure historical continuity”. Yet, the critical perspective also carries limitations. An overemphasis on critique may reduce literary works to ideological documents, neglecting their affective, aesthetic, and imaginative dimensions (Cooper, 2020). But critics aver that persistent suspicion toward texts may overshadow the possibility that literature can also preserve, reconcile, or imagine alternative forms of community rather than merely resisting existing ones.

Finally, the “political” ideal-type understands literature as an active participant in public life through its engagement with power, governance, citizenship, and collective action. Literature does not merely reflect political realities but contributes to shaping public discourse, social movements, and competing visions of society (Idrus et al., 2020). Its strength lies in demonstrating how narratives intervene in debates surrounding identity, nationhood, religion, education, and social transformation. Like Raihanah and Idrus (2024) argue, these narratives “offer insights on transcending borders and reshaping cultural histories”. Criticisms, as in other concepts, abound. Political readings may sometimes overstate authorial intention or reduce literary complexity to political messaging, thereby overlooking the multiplicity of meanings that literary texts simultaneously sustain.

Despite these individual limitations, Sapiro’s (2014) four ideal-types are most productive when employed collectively rather than independently. The boundaries between the aesthetic, moral, critical, and political dimensions frequently overlap, allowing literature to perform several functions simultaneously (Holloway, 2021). Such a complementarity is especially relevant for examining madrasa narratives and mobilities, where educational institutions are not merely physical settings but dynamic spaces of memory, movement, cultural production, and identity formation, “forge a connection between the external influences of the ‘rural setting’ and the internal vitality

drawn from the ‘peaceful’ and ‘serene’ environment” (Idrus et al., 2025a). Madrasa narratives often combine aesthetic representations of place, ethical negotiations of communal life, critical engagements with dominant perceptions of Islamic education, and political reflections on citizenship, religion, and spatial belonging. In the following pages, this study attempts to adopt Sapiro’s four-tiered framework as an integrated analytical lens to examine the literary geographies of madrasa narratives and mobilities. The use of the four ideal-types stops at their literal definitions. In other words, the points at which the use of these types are limited remain at their basic definitions defined by Sapiro (2014) as opposed to their wide-ranging nuances. Rather than privileging a single interpretive perspective, the framework facilitates a multidimensional reading that captures how madrasa spaces are aesthetically imagined, morally inhabited, critically contested, and politically negotiated. Such an integrated approach enables a richer understanding of the intersections between mobility, place, and collective memory (Idrus et al., 2020) while recognizing the madrasa as a literary and spatial site where multiple forms of engagement coexist and continually reshape one another.

Narratives of the self and literary geography

This section attempts to highlight how madrassas can be sites where mobilities can be traced in literary geography vibrancy by taking narratives as examples. The following narratives are sourced from a decentralized, de-urbanized madrasa, whose name shall be pseudonymized as madrasa Rahmah to protect participants’ privacy, an institution dedicated to lifelong learning and Islamic education. It serves both younger and older learners who attend either voluntarily or with parental consent. Most participants come from economically disadvantaged or socially vulnerable backgrounds, including survivors of domestic violence, divorced women experiencing financial hardship, older adults with limited support, and children who have lost one or both parents. The said madrasa offers a broad curriculum that extends beyond Quranic instruction to include liberal arts education and income-generating activities such as fruit cultivation and food catering. These opportunities make the institution especially attractive to senior adults by combining religious learning with practical skill development and community participation. The madrasa also functions as a welfare institution, providing accommodation and care for impoverished older adults and orphaned children. Its operations are sustained primarily through public donations and monthly financial assistance from district and state governments.

Occupying approximately 0.4–0.5 hectares, the madrasa consists of buildings constructed from both brick and traditional materials, including wooden panels and nipa roofs. Although most spaces receive ample natural light during the day, some areas remain dim because limited financial resources have somewhat delayed maintenance and infrastructure improvements. The campus includes two courtyards: one enclosed space with a high ceiling that is primarily used for prayers and religious instruction, and a larger open courtyard dedicated to lifelong learning activities, communal gatherings, and food preparation. Congregational prayers and religious lectures are run twice weekly, while on other days participants typically engage in smaller learning groups. Men and women generally occupy separate spaces, and older residents receive care from designated guardians under the supervision of the madrasa’s principal. The madrasa community includes individuals from diverse life experiences. One resident is a former Buddhist who worked as an engineer for more than two decades before

converting to Islam. Despite encountering familial and social challenges following his conversion, he relinquished his professional career and personal assets to reside permanently at the madrasa.

Commingling of narratives

Following discussions with the madrasa leader, the research team was granted three days of access to the site. The researchers were accompanied by a research assistant who had an established relationship with the madrasa community and served as a liaison throughout the study. The first day was devoted to familiarization, allowing the researchers to build rapport with the residents and become acquainted with the madrasa environment through informal interactions. The remaining two days focused on collecting and following up on participants' personal narratives. During the first day, informal conversations were used to establish trust and foster positive relationships with the madrasa community. Acting as an intermediary between the researchers and madrasa leader, the research assistant clearly communicated the study's objectives, particularly its emphasis on the exploration of madrasa in spawning mobility-related issues and the collection of personal narratives, minimizing the potential for misunderstanding. On the second day, the researchers collected personal narratives from the participating residents regarding their lived experiences within the madrasa. Before data collection began, the research assistant explained the study's objectives and procedures, including informed consent, voluntary participation, and confidentiality. Participants were then introduced to the concept of personal narratives as the guiding framework for the study and were encouraged to engage with their surroundings through attentive observation and openness to place-based experiences. To preserve the exploratory nature of literary geogeographical inquiry, participants were not given predetermined routes or instructed to visit specific locations.

To facilitate the documentation of their personal narratives, each madrasa resident received an A4 notebook along with a set of prompts designed to guide observation and reflection: observe, notice, collect, analyze, reflect, and move. Participants were instructed to explore the madrasa at their own pace while recording their experiences, impressions, and discoveries. Before the activity began, the researchers explained the narrative writing process, answered participants' questions, and obtained written informed consent in accordance with McNamara (2009) ethical guidelines for collecting personal narratives. Participants then dispersed throughout the madrasa to begin their individual explorations. After approximately one hour of wandering, participants were given an additional 10 minutes to complete their written reflections. They were encouraged to describe their experiences, explain how the madrasa landscape evoked personal memories, and reflect on how the environment shaped their sensory perceptions, including what they saw, heard, touched, and felt. On the third day of data collection, the research assistant conducted follow-up clarifications with participants to ensure that their intended meanings were accurately represented in their narratives. The study concluded with the researchers expressing their appreciation to both the madrasa leader and the participants. The madrasa leader was also informed that the research team might contact the community again should further clarification be required during the narrative analysis. The researchers conducted multiple close readings of the eligible narratives, following McNamara (2009) recommendations for narrative analysis. Each narrative was subsequently reconstructed using the analytical framework developed by Ollerenshaw and Creswell (2002), which identifies five core narrative elements: setting

(S), characters (C), actions (A), problems (P), and resolutions (R). Finally, Sapiro's four ideal-types are employed and recontextualized to analyze these narratives. By re-reading the narratives this way, this framework enables the depictions of overlapping meanings of mobilities embedded within participants' accounts.

Contemporaneous madrasa's mobilities and literary geography

The first narrative is presented by Zee who is a 31-year old female whose presence at said madrasa is marked by her reconciliation with her financial turmoil. She writes:

“There are rambutan and jackfruit trees thriving alongside an array of cultivated crops, their abundance framed by expansive fields of cabbage and chilies that bear witness to the land's enduring agricultural vitality. Within this richly textured environment, the madrasa emerged as more than a place of learning; it now became a sanctuary where my friends and I steadfastly pursued our shared aspiration for divine guidance.”

This excerpt reveals what Zee thinks in the context of the place, where Zee incorporates the place's depictions by emphasizing its sensory and spiritual affordances. On one level, the vegetation and its sustenance to agricultural fertility serve as relaxing landscapes that cleanse anxieties and foster faith, demonstrating women's transitions from their perilous background to inhabiting religious sites of belonging (Idrus et al., 2025a). That is, her macabre financial issue is completely mobilized to a place emphasizing greater good conduct not just for herself, but also for other women who might experience similar mental ordeal. On another level though, through the shifts from madrasa merely being a communal place (“sanctuary”) to becoming their rituals (“divine guidance”), Zee seems to assert that in order to survive, one must, collectively, encourage one another to submit to one's faith as a place that can house a lot of dwellers. From Sapiro's (2014) “moral” ideal-type, Zee's writing seems to suggest that mobilities across madrasa mirrors “work “together for the common good” (Traer, 2020). On a broader level, read through Sapiro (2014) “moral” literary ideal-type, this excerpt positions the madrasa as an ethical and affective landscape where mobility is not merely a physical movement across space but a moral journey toward spiritual cultivation and communal responsibility. The imagery of thriving crops, fruit-bearing trees, and agricultural abundance constructs the madrasa environment as a living geography shaped by care, discipline, and collective stewardship. The movement of madrasa dwellers like Zee into this space represents a form of moral mobility, illustrating individuals' transitioning from ordinary spatial experiences into a sacred realm of learning, reflection, and self-transformation. The landscape therefore becomes both a physical setting and a moral archive, preserving the spiritual aspirations embedded within madrasa life. As Madhu Krishnan and Penny Cartwright (2024) contend, the excerpt mirrors the notion that “all people must make the spaces and places that they claim, but they do so via practices of varying moral legitimacy”. Zeela writes the following stories concerning the structure of madrasa. Zeela, a 42 year-old single divorced woman who hails from south of Mindanao settles in madrasa first as revelation seeker and second, most recently a kitchen assistant:

“The area surrounding the porch dome seems to preserve the living memory of the madrasa community, silently recounting stories of perseverance, discipline,

resilience, and wisdom nurtured through both Islamic scholarship and the cultivation of ethical character.”

Sapiro (2014) ideal-type of “aesthetics” emphasizes literature’s relative autonomy from immediate moral, political, or social functions, foregrounding instead the ways in which literary works construct meaning through form, perception, imagination, and the cultivation of sensory and affective experiences. When “aesthetics” is applied to the aforementioned excerpt, an aesthetic reading of the madrasa landscape reveals how the porch dome and its surrounding spaces operate not merely as physical structures but as literary and symbolic formations that preserve, communicate, and animate collective memory. The landscape becomes an aesthetic text through which histories of endurance, discipline, and spiritual cultivation are inscribed and continuously reimaged (Minkinen, 2022). Seen in one way, it transforms space into a repository of narratives, where architecture, environment, and human presence converge to produce a textured geography of belonging. Through an “aesthetic” lens, the madrasa is not represented solely as an institution of religious hub, but instead as an experiential landscape shaped by emotions, memories, and sensory encounters. Like Marc Brosseau (2024) says, the move from south of Mindanao to said madrasa mirrors Zeela’s transitioning and “searching for the meaning, value, and experience of place” (Brosseau, 2024). The porch dome becomes a poetic device that gathers traces of communal life, allowing past and present mobilities to intersect. The movements as exemplified in “madrasa communities” which most likely comprises students, teachers, worshippers, and visitors generate an ongoing narrative rhythm, where physical mobility shifts to emotional and spiritual journeys. Like Giada Peterle (2024) succinctly summarizes, this congregation of madrasa dwellers which moves beyond communality seems to “stimulate mobilities beyond the frame as much as their capacity to represent mobile subjects, practices, landscapes, and places” within the same madrasa enclave. Seen this excerpt differently (“stories of perseverance, discipline, resilience, and wisdom”), the madrasa’s mobilities, therefore, are not limited to acts of geographical movement but one that encompasses the recirculation of values, memories, knowledge, and embodied practices. The community’s movements within and around the madrasa landscape contribute to what Sapiro identifies as the aesthetic construction of meaning, where beauty and symbolic representation emerge through lived experiences (Sapiro, 2014). The next writing expounds upon Maya’s take on the links between madrasa space and the transition from centralizing “soil” to ‘intimacy.’ Maya, a 32 year-old divorced woman with no children has the following to say:

“The Imaam, above all, embodies this profound attachment to both place and purpose. He exemplifies a steadfast devotion to the madrasa’s soil, cultivating an intimate spiritual and emotional bond with the land entrusted to the community’s care. His quiet example inspires both the young and the old to participate in nurturing and safeguarding their environment, reinforcing enduring values of stewardship, gratitude, and communal belonging across generations.”

Gisèle Sapiro (2014) “political” ideal-type of literary engagement foregrounds the ways in which this narrative demonstrates the broader struggles concerning values, social organization, and collective consciousness. Viewed through Sapiro (2014) “political” approach, the representation of the Imaam’s relationship with the madrasa

landscape extends beyond an individual expression of spiritual devotion; it becomes a political articulation of belonging, responsibility, and communal mobilization. On one level, the Imaam's attachment to the "madrasa's soil" symbolizes a form of place-based agency in which the land's depiction is transformed, from merely a physical setting to a social and ethical space shaped by collective memory, religious practice, and intergenerational commitment. On another level, however, the political dimension emerges through the mobilities generated within and around the madrasa community. Rather than understanding mobility solely as physical movement, the excerpt reveals mobility as the circulation of values, practices, and affective commitments across generations. The excerpt, thus, illustrates a form of mobilization of the community by transforming environmental stewardship into a shared moral practice, encouraging both the young and the elderly to participate actively in sustaining the madrasa landscape. As Jonathan Westaway (2024) points out, the excerpt demonstrates "practising forms of agriculture and settlement that enabled mobility and rapid social change" interpolated with Sapiro's political perspective on how the madrasa now becomes a literary space where ecological care and religious ethics intersect with communal empowerment. The final writing could be analysed using Sapiro's (2014) "critical" literary ideal-type. The excerpt, furnished to us by a 48 year-old Safiya, inquires on dominant assumptions about what it means growing up and old in a madrasal. Safiya writes:

"The flourishing orchards, productive fields, and carefully tended spaces testify to a shared understanding that environmental care cannot be separated from spiritual commitment, divinity and faithfulness permeate the tending of this madrasa"

Sapiro (2014) "critical" ideal-type as expressed in Safiya narratives interrogates existing social arrangements, exposes underlying power relations, and offers alternative ways of understanding collective life. Specifically, the excerpt, "the flourishing orchards, productive fields, and carefully tended spaces testify to a shared understanding that environmental care cannot be separated from spiritual commitment, divinity and faithfulness permeate the tending of this madrasa," can therefore be read as a critical narrative of mobility that challenges dominant assumptions about religious spaces, rural landscapes, and human and environment relations. In other words, Safiya seems to consent to stabilizing this critical orientation by moving beyond viewing the madrasa as a static religious institution and instead examines how its spatial practices, ecological relationships, and communal movements produce alternative forms of knowledge and belonging. Through Sapiro critical lens, the madrasa landscape becomes a site where everyday acts of cultivation function as subtle forms of resistance against modern narratives that often separate spirituality from environmental consciousness. The movement of people, practices, memories, and values across this landscape reveals a form of ecological mobility grounded in Islamic ethics and communal responsibility. Such mobilities disrupt the perception of rural religious institutions as isolated or peripheral spaces by demonstrating their active participation in shaping sustainable relationships between humans, nature, and the Divine. As Julie Sanders (2024) pertinently puts it, such mobility observed at said madrasa "plays with the cognitive, social, and physical challenges of being placed and feeling lost. Big questions about metropolitan expansion, aliens and strangers, social mobility, and everyday perambulation and practice" are all critically examined.

Conclusion

So what do the narratives as expressed across madrasa Rahmah accentuate discussions on mobilities? The following can be surmised. First, from “moral” literary ideal-type in Sapiro’s moral framework, these narratives become a vehicle for articulating values and guiding human conduct; similarly, the madrasa narrative frames mobility as an ethical practice oriented toward divine guidance, communal belonging, and the cultivation of virtues. Second, from “political” ideal-type, the Imaam’s actions challenge representations of religious institutions as isolated or static spaces by portraying the madrasa as an active site of social engagement and environmental consciousness. Through this literary construction, mobility becomes a political force: it carries traditions, sustains communal bonds, and negotiates the relationship between faith, place, and collective responsibility. The narratives presented in this article, therefore, illustrate how madrasa narratives can function politically by imagining alternative forms of social organization which can be rooted in care, stewardship, and shared belonging. Third, from the perspectives of “aesthetics,” these texts of the self-demonstrate how literary geography captures the emotional and imaginative dimensions of place, highlighting in one way, various facets of mobilities. Seen in one way, said madrasa becomes a moving landscape, one that travels through memories, stories, and spiritual attachments where aesthetic representation enables the community to preserve its identity while continuously negotiating its relationship with space, tradition, and faith. In this sense, the “aesthetic” ideal-type may illuminate how madrasa landscapes function as living archives of collective experience, where mobility and memory are inseparably woven into the production of meaning. Finally, in the context of “critical” ideal-type, these stories highlight how madrasa mobilities are not limited to physical movement but encompass affective, spiritual, and ethical trajectories. The community’s engagement with the land generates a shared consciousness in which environmental stewardship becomes a form of devotion. From a critical perspective, these practices question secularized understandings of environmentalism by presenting an alternative epistemology where ecological preservation emerges through religious commitment. The madrasa thus becomes a critical geographical space that produces its own narratives of sustainability, care, and collective responsibility. In this sense, madrasa mobilities reveal how movement through landscapes, whether moving through labor, learning, worship, or communal interaction, they all might create alternative possibilities and, to a certain extent, identities, for imagining harmonious relations between faith, place, and ecological futures.

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Conflict of interest

The authors confirm that there is no conflict of interest involve with any parties in this research study.

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