The following description of contemporary Muslim worship in Sao Paulo, Brazil, is part of a larger inquiry into the Syrian-Lebanese diaspora community of the city. The research was conducted in June and August 2000.

Of the eight mosques in Sao Paulo, all are Sunni except for one Shi’i mosque. The Shi’i mosque, founded in 1983, located on Elisa Whitaker Street in Brás, a commercial district famed for its expensive clothing stores. On the Muslim Sabbath, a visit was paid to the latter. The mosque is walled, and the doors are closed by a curtain adorned with marble. Featuring two bronze-coloured minarets and an exposed orange brick tower, the mosque is apparently under construction. The Shi’i mosque also distributes a bimonthly magazine, “Uruh”, the latest cover of which features a photograph of a line of men with hands crossed at their bellies and bowed heads, praying in side another mosque – the Mosque of Brazil (the actual sanctuary of which was closed during the author’s visit, due to a flood at the beginning of the year). Eight or ten pages at the end of the magazine are written in Arabic, but the remaining, larger portion is in Portuguese. “Uruh” provides coverage of recent events, such as the visit of the Pope to Jerusalem, Israeli attacks on Lebanon, and Israel’s withdrawal from the area of this Shi’i edifice stand in sharp contrast due to their angular, undecorated architecture.

The mosque houses a library with a collection of Arabic works on philosophy, economics, and sacred law. It also plays host to meetings concerning religious holidays, duties and doctrines, some of which have Quranic verses in Arabic transcribed into Arabic calligraphy. The Shi’i mosque is surprisingly a struggle has ensued over the chain of embassies, consulates and all the UFCs in the city. The research was conducted in June and August 2000.

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