From Sacred Sanctuary to Intelligent System: A Religious-Studies Reflection on the Transformation of Temple Space under Artificial Intelligence

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Abstract

The increasing integration of artificial intelligence into religious institutions has generated extensive discussion concerning ethics, authority, and belief. However, comparatively little attention has been paid to the transformation of religious space itself. This article examines the intelligent transformation of temple space through the analytical lens of the sacred–profane distinction, arguing that the introduction of artificial intelligence represents not merely a technical modernization but a structural reconfiguration of religious spatiality. Drawing on classical theories of religion, particularly the works of Durkheim and Eliade, as well as contemporary discussions in the sociology of religion and philosophy of technology, the paper conceptualizes temples as symbolic, institutional, and experiential spaces constituted through boundaries, rituals, and normative orders. It then analyzes how algorithmic systems—such as surveillance technologies, data-driven management, and automated governance—reshape temple space by introducing system rationality oriented toward efficiency, visibility, and control. The study argues that this systematization tends to blur the distinction between sacred and profane, transform religious authority, and reconfigure the conditions of religious experience. Rather than rejecting technological mediation outright, the paper calls for a critical religious-studies perspective that recognizes both the adaptive possibilities and the risks of total system integration. It concludes that the future of temples as sacred spaces depends on their capacity to preserve symbolic density, ritual autonomy, and experiential transcendence within increasingly intelligent environments.

Keywords: Artificial Intelligence; Temple Space; Sacred–Profane Distinction; Religious Institutions; System Rationality; Religion and Technology

1. Introduction

In recent years, artificial intelligence and related digital technologies have increasingly entered religious spaces across different cultural contexts. In Buddhist temples, Christian churches, and other institutional religious sites, technologies such as facial-recognition security, automated donation systems, smart surveillance, digital ritual scheduling, algorithmic visitor management, and AI-based religious services have become progressively normalized. These developments are often justified in terms of efficiency, safety, transparency, and modernization. Yet from the perspective of religious studies, they raise a more fundamental question: what happens to religious space when it is reorganized according to system rationality?

Temples are not merely functional buildings. They are symbolic spaces, ritual centers, and institutional embodiments of the sacred. Classical theories of religion have long emphasized that religious space is structured through a distinction between the sacred and the profane (Durkheim, 1995; Eliade, 1957). The temple, as a sacred space, marks a qualitative rupture within ordinary social space. It is a place where different norms apply, different temporalities operate, and different forms of authority are recognized. Entering a temple traditionally entails a shift in posture, behavior, and meaning-orientation.

The integration of artificial intelligence into temple management challenges this structure in subtle but profound ways. Intelligent systems do not merely assist religious activities; they introduce a different mode of rationality—one oriented toward optimization, prediction, surveillance, and system integration. This raises the central question of this paper: does the intelligent transformation of temples represent a neutral modernization of religious space, or does it fundamentally reconfigure the sacred–profane distinction on which such spaces depend?

Existing scholarship on religion and technology has focused primarily on ethical debates (e.g., AI morality), theological questions (e.g., machine agency), or digital religion (e.g., online rituals). Comparatively little attention has been paid to religious space as space, especially under conditions of algorithmic governance. This paper seeks to fill that gap by offering a theoretical reflection on temple space as it moves "from sanctuary to system." Methodologically, this study adopts a theoretical and interpretive approach grounded in classical and contemporary religious studies. It does not present ethnographic data but instead examines structural transformations through conceptual analysis. The argument proceeds through six chapters, tracing the transformation of temple space from sacred enclosure to system-managed environment and reflecting on its implications for religious meaning, authority, and experience.

2. Sacred and Profane: Classical Theories of Religious Space

2.1. Durkheim and the Social Construction of Sacred Space

Émile Durkheim's foundational insight in The Elementary Forms of Religious Life is that religion organizes reality through a fundamental distinction between the sacred and the profane (Durkheim, 1995). Sacred things are those set apart, protected by prohibitions, and invested with collective significance, while profane things belong to the domain of ordinary, utilitarian, and

everyday life. Crucially, this distinction is not merely a matter of belief or doctrine; it is enacted through practices, norms, and spatial arrangements. Religion, for Durkheim, is above all a social fact, and sacred space is one of its most visible materializations. From this perspective, the temple functions as a socially constructed boundary that stabilizes the sacred–profane distinction in spatial form. The demarcation between inside and outside, center and periphery, pure and impure is not accidental but normatively regulated. Behavioral rules—such as requirements of silence, specific dress codes, bodily gestures, ritual purification, and regulated movement—are enforced through spatial design. These rules do not merely express reverence; they actively produce the experience of the sacred by suspending ordinary social habits. Entering a temple thus involves crossing into a space governed by a different normative order.

For Durkheim, the significance of sacred space lies in its social function. Sacred places embody collective representations and sustain social cohesion by materializing shared values. The temple is not sacred because of inherent metaphysical qualities, but because a community collectively recognizes and maintains it as such. Sacredness, therefore, depends on continuous social reinforcement through ritual practice and normative regulation. If these mechanisms weaken or are displaced, the sacred character of space is at risk.

The introduction of intelligent systems complicates this Durkheimian function in subtle but important ways. Surveillance cameras, biometric access controls, automated crowd management, and algorithmic monitoring introduce forms of regulation typically associated with profane institutions such as airports, corporate buildings, or shopping centers. These technologies operate according to principles of efficiency, risk prevention, and visibility rather than collective symbolic meaning. When such systems become normalized within temples, regulation no longer derives primarily from religious norms but from technical governance. This shift risks transforming sacred regulation into a subset of secular administration. The authority governing behavior increasingly appears impersonal and system-driven rather than communal and symbolic. As a result, the temple's capacity to function as a distinct social space—one that suspends ordinary forms of control in favor of religious normativity—is weakened. From a Durkheimian perspective, this represents a potential erosion of the social mechanisms that sustain sacredness itself.

2.2. Eliade and the Phenomenology of the Sacred Place

While Durkheim emphasizes the social construction of sacred space, Mircea Eliade approaches religious space from a phenomenological perspective that foregrounds lived experience and symbolic orientation. For Eliade, sacred space emerges through hierophany—the manifestation of the sacred that interrupts the homogeneity of profane space (Eliade, 1957). In a world that is otherwise spatially continuous and functionally neutral, the appearance of the sacred introduces a qualitative rupture. A sacred place is not simply one location among others; it is a center that orients the world. Within this framework, the temple functions as a "center of the world" (axis mundi). It anchors cosmic order, providing orientation not only in physical space but also in existential meaning. Architectural layout, ritual movement, spatial hierarchies, and symbolic objects are not primarily functional; they are cosmological. Through repetitive ritual practices, sacred space continuously re-enacts the structure of the cosmos and situates human existence

within it. The meaning of the temple lies in its capacity to disclose a different order of reality—one that transcends ordinary utility and calculation.

From Eliade's perspective, sacred space resists instrumental rationality. Its value does not lie in efficiency, optimization, or management but in symbolic orientation and repetition. Sacred time and sacred space are cyclical, not linear; they prioritize renewal over progress and meaning over function. Any transformation of temple space must therefore be evaluated in terms of its impact on symbolic orientation rather than operational performance. Intelligent systems, however, reorganize space according to fundamentally different logics. Algorithmic technologies prioritize traffic flow optimization, risk management, data collection, and system integration. Space is treated as an operational resource to be monitored and controlled. Within such frameworks, there is no privileged center—only nodes within a network. Visibility replaces mystery, and predictability replaces symbolic depth. This introduces a structural tension between symbolic centrality and systemic integration. When temples are increasingly governed by intelligent systems, their spatial logic risks being redefined in non-symbolic terms. The temple becomes less a cosmic center and more a managed facility. From an Eliadean standpoint, this transformation threatens the phenomenological conditions under which sacred space can be experienced as sacred. The sacred does not disappear, but it becomes harder to encounter as a rupture within ordinary reality.

2.3. Sacred Space as Boundary, Threshold, and Liminal Zone

Despite their methodological differences, both Durkheim and Eliade converge on a crucial insight: sacred space functions as a boundary. It separates the sacred from the profane, but it also mediates between them. The temple is neither entirely detached from everyday life nor fully absorbed into it. It operates as a threshold—a liminal zone in which ordinary categories are suspended and reconfigured. Victor Turner's theory of liminality further develops this insight by emphasizing the experiential dimension of thresholds (Turner, 1969; Asad, 1993). Liminal spaces are transitional zones in which individuals temporarily step outside ordinary social structures and undergo symbolic transformation. In religious contexts, crossing into sacred space entails a change in status, perception, and comportment. The threshold itself—gates, doorways, courtyards, ritual preparations—is often heavily ritualized to mark this transition. These spatial transitions are essential for ritual efficacy. They prepare participants to encounter the sacred by gradually distancing them from profane concerns. The threshold is not merely a point of entry; it is a process of reorientation. Religious experience depends on such staged transitions, which cultivate attentiveness, humility, and receptivity.

When temples are redesigned as intelligent systems, thresholds are increasingly replaced by automated checkpoints. Entry may be regulated by sensors, QR codes, facial recognition, or ticketing systems rather than ritual gestures or symbolic preparation. While such mechanisms improve efficiency and security, they fundamentally alter the meaning of transition. The act of entering the temple becomes administratively processed rather than ritually enacted. This transformation has significant implications for religious experience. Automated access treats entry as a logistical problem rather than a symbolic passage. The liminal quality of the threshold is reduced, and the experiential shift from profane to sacred is weakened. From a theoretical

perspective, this suggests that intelligent systems do not merely coexist with sacred space but actively reshape the conditions under which sacredness can be experienced.

Taken together, Durkheim's social theory, Eliade's phenomenology, and Turner's concept of liminality provide a powerful framework for understanding why the intelligent transformation of temple space is not a neutral process. Sacred space depends on social recognition, symbolic orientation, and ritualized thresholds. When these elements are reconfigured by system rationality, the very structure of the sacred–profane distinction is placed under pressure. This theoretical insight sets the stage for subsequent chapters, which examine how institutional logic, algorithmic governance, and lived religious experience are transformed as temples move from sanctuary to system.

3. The Temple as Institution and Symbolic Space

While established the temple as a sacred space constituted through social boundaries, symbolic orientation, and ritual thresholds, a further analytical step is necessary. Temples are not only spaces of religious experience; they are also institutional actors embedded in broader social, economic, and political contexts. At the same time, their institutional functions are inseparable from dense symbolic structures that exceed purely administrative logic. This chapter argues that the temple must be understood as a hybrid formation: simultaneously an institution that organizes resources and authority, and a symbolic space that produces and sustains religious meaning. This dual character is crucial for understanding why the introduction of artificial intelligence generates deep structural tensions rather than merely technical adjustments.

3.1. The Temple as a Religious Institution: Organization, Authority, and Continuity

From a sociological perspective, temples function as religious institutions that ensure continuity over time. They manage personnel, property, finances, ritual schedules, education, and relations with the surrounding society. Max Weber's analysis of religious institutions emphasizes that routinization and organization are unavoidable if religious movements are to endure beyond charismatic origins (Weber, 1978). Temples embody this process of institutional stabilization. Institutionalization, however, does not imply secularization. In religious contexts, organizational structures are legitimized not merely through efficiency but through reference to tradition, sacred authority, and ritual competence. Clerical hierarchies, monastic rules, and ritual offices derive their legitimacy from their role in preserving correct practice and transmission. Authority is thus both organizational and symbolic. This dual legitimacy distinguishes religious institutions from purely bureaucratic organizations. Decisions within temples are not evaluated solely in terms of outcomes but in terms of their conformity to religious norms. Institutional rationality is therefore internally constrained by symbolic obligations. The temple as an institution operates within a normative horizon defined by the sacred. The introduction of AI-driven management systems challenges this balance. Algorithmic tools evaluate success through metrics—attendance numbers, donation flows, risk reduction, efficiency gains. These criteria introduce an external standard of legitimacy that may not align with religious norms. Over time, institutional decision-making risks being subtly reoriented away from symbolic fidelity toward system performance.

3.2. Symbolic Space and the Production of Religious Meaning

Beyond institutional organization, temples function as symbolic spaces in which meaning is produced and reproduced. Religious symbols are not merely decorative; they structure perception, memory, and action. Architecture, spatial hierarchy, iconography, soundscapes, and bodily movement all contribute to a symbolic environment that shapes religious subjectivity. Clifford Geertz famously described religion as a system of symbols that establishes powerful, pervasive, and long-lasting moods and motivations by formulating conceptions of a general order of existence (Geertz, 1973). The temple materializes such a symbolic system spatially. Its layout guides movement, directs attention, and communicates values without explicit instruction. Symbolic space operates through condensation and overdetermination. A single altar, statue, or ritual path may carry multiple layers of meaning accumulated over centuries. These meanings are not always consciously articulated; they are learned through repeated exposure and participation. The temple thus functions as a pedagogy of meaning that precedes reflection. AI-mediated systems, however, tend to translate symbolic environments into functional categories. Spaces become "zones," rituals become "events," and symbolic density is rendered as data points. While such translation may facilitate management, it risks flattening symbolic meaning by subordinating it to operational logic. The symbolic surplus that sustains religious depth is not easily compatible with system optimization.

3.3. Authority, Legitimacy, and the Spatialization of Power

Authority within temples is spatially enacted. Access to certain areas may be restricted; ritual roles may be differentiated spatially; movement may be hierarchically ordered. These spatial arrangements do not merely reflect power; they constitute it. Michel Foucault's insights into the spatialization of power help illuminate how authority operates through architecture and regulation (Foucault, 1977). In religious contexts, however, spatial authority is not primarily disciplinary but symbolic. Restrictions signify holiness rather than surveillance. Control is justified by reference to purity, reverence, or ritual order. Authority is thus experienced as meaningful rather than coercive. The introduction of intelligent systems alters this experiential quality. Surveillance cameras, access controls, and automated monitoring introduce a mode of power that is continuous, invisible, and data-driven. Even when implemented for benign reasons, such systems shift the felt source of authority from religious office to technical infrastructure. This transformation has significant implications. Authority becomes less personal and less contestable. Decisions appear as outputs of systems rather than judgments grounded in tradition. From the perspective of religious studies, this represents a reconfiguration of how legitimacy is spatially produced and recognized within temple life.

3.4. Institutional Rationality and Symbolic Fragility in Intelligent Environments

The coexistence of institutional rationality and symbolic meaning within temples has always been fragile. Modernization has repeatedly pressured religious institutions to justify themselves in secular terms. Artificial intelligence intensifies this pressure by offering powerful tools for governance that operate according to system rationality. Niklas Luhmann's theory of social systems highlights that modern institutions tend to operate according to functionally differentiated

logics (Luhmann, 2012). When religious institutions adopt system technologies, they risk internalizing logics foreign to their symbolic mission. What begins as support infrastructure can gradually redefine institutional priorities. This does not imply that temples should reject all technology. Rather, it underscores the need for reflexivity. Temples are institutions precisely because they preserve symbolic meaning against purely instrumental rationality. If intelligent systems are allowed to reorganize temple space without symbolic constraints, the institutional core of religion may be hollowed out from within.

This chapter has argued that the temple's dual character as institution and symbolic space makes it particularly sensitive to technological intervention. Artificial intelligence does not merely affect how temples are managed; it reshapes how authority is legitimized, how meaning is produced, and how space functions symbolically. Recognizing this dual structure is essential for understanding why the intelligent transformation of temples constitutes a profound religious issue rather than a neutral administrative reform.

4. Artificial Intelligence and the Systematization of Temple Space

If Chapters 2 and 3 established the temple as a sacred boundary and a symbolic institution, the present chapter addresses how artificial intelligence introduces a qualitatively different mode of spatial organization. AI does not merely add new tools to temple administration; it brings with it a form of rationality that tends to reorganize space as a system. This process may be described as the systematization of temple space: the gradual transformation of a sanctuary oriented toward symbolic meaning into an environment governed by operational logic, data flows, and algorithmic control.

4.1. System Rationality and Algorithmic Governance

Artificial intelligence operates through what systems theory describes as system rationality: the coordination of heterogeneous functions toward goals such as optimization, predictability, and stability (Luhmann, 2012). Rather than responding to meaning or normativity, systems respond to inputs and outputs, deviations and corrections. When AI is introduced into religious contexts, this rationality does not remain neutral; it actively reframes how space is perceived and governed. Applied to temples, system rationality tends to reconceptualize religious space as a set of interrelated processes to be managed. Visitor movement becomes a logistical problem, ritual scheduling becomes a coordination task, and religious gatherings are evaluated in terms of capacity, efficiency, and risk. From the standpoint of algorithmic governance, the temple is no longer primarily a sanctuary set apart from ordinary rationalities, but a complex environment requiring continuous regulation. This shift has important theoretical implications. Sacred space, as described in classical religious studies, is defined by qualitative difference rather than functional integration. It resists total transparency and instrumental control. System rationality, by contrast, aims precisely at eliminating opacity and unpredictability. As AI systems increasingly mediate decision-making within temples—determining access, allocating resources, and regulating behavior—the logic of sanctuary is gradually replaced by the logic of management.

Moreover, algorithmic governance tends to be self-reinforcing. Once introduced, systems generate data that justify further system expansion. For example, data collected for crowd management may later be used for behavioral analysis or financial optimization. This dynamic risks transforming temples into nodes within broader socio-technical systems, subject to the same rationalities as commercial or governmental spaces. The boundary between sacred and secular governance thus becomes increasingly porous.

4.2. Surveillance, Datafication, and the Sacred

One of the most visible manifestations of system rationality in temple space is the expansion of surveillance technologies. Cameras, sensors, facial recognition systems, and behavioral tracking tools are often justified on grounds of safety, theft prevention, or crowd control. From a technical standpoint, such measures appear reasonable. From a religious-studies perspective, however, they introduce a profound transformation in how sacred space is experienced. Surveillance renders behavior continuously visible and measurable. In doing so, it introduces a logic of suspicion into spaces traditionally governed by trust, reverence, and moral self-regulation. Religious spaces have historically relied on internalized norms rather than external monitoring. Devotion, repentance, and ethical reflection presuppose a degree of interiority—an awareness of being accountable before the sacred rather than before an observing system. Datafication further intensifies this shift. When movement, attendance, and ritual participation are translated into data, religious practice becomes legible to algorithmic evaluation. Patterns are identified, deviations flagged, and behaviors optimized. While such processes may improve organizational efficiency, they also redefine what counts as relevant religious activity. That which cannot be measured risks becoming invisible or marginalized.

This transformation affects the symbolic structure of sacred space. In a surveilled environment, the sense of withdrawal from ordinary social scrutiny is weakened. The temple increasingly resembles other monitored public spaces, undermining its experiential distinctiveness. From a Durkheimian perspective, this weakens the social mechanisms that sustain sacredness; from a phenomenological perspective, it alters the lived experience of transcendence. Importantly, surveillance does not simply add an external layer of control; it reshapes subjectivity. Visitors may become more self-conscious, less inclined toward spontaneous or vulnerable religious expression. The sacred space becomes a site of performance under observation rather than a refuge from visibility. This shift illustrates how system rationality penetrates not only spatial organization but also religious experience itself.

4.3. Automation and the Reconfiguration of Ritual Space

Beyond governance and surveillance, artificial intelligence increasingly automates aspects of ritual life. Scheduling systems determine ritual timing, automated kiosks facilitate offerings, digital interfaces guide devotional practices, and AI-generated content assists in religious instruction. These innovations are often framed as supportive tools that enhance accessibility and participation. Yet automation introduces a subtle but significant reconfiguration of ritual space. Rituals, as religious studies have emphasized, are not merely sequences of actions; they are formative practices that rely on repetition, bodily engagement, and symbolic excess. Their

efficacy depends not on efficiency but on the cultivation of attentiveness, patience, and transformation over time.

Automated systems, however, operate according to procedural logic. They emphasize standardization, speed, and predictability. When rituals are increasingly mediated by automated systems, there is a risk that they become procedural tasks to be completed rather than transformative encounters. The logic of "correct execution" begins to replace the logic of meaningful participation. This shift is particularly evident when access to ritual space is regulated by systems rather than by symbolic preparation. Automated entry systems, timed slots, and digital instructions structure participation in ways that resemble service delivery rather than sacred encounter. While such measures may increase throughput, they alter the experiential texture of ritual engagement.

Moreover, automation tends to externalize ritual authority. Decisions about timing, sequence, and access are increasingly embedded in systems rather than embodied in religious specialists. Authority becomes technical rather than interpretive. From the perspective of religious studies, this represents a displacement of ritual knowledge from lived tradition to algorithmic procedure. Taken together, these developments suggest that artificial intelligence does not merely coexist with ritual space; it actively reshapes it. Ritual becomes more manageable but potentially less transformative. The temple, in turn, risks becoming a site of religious service provision rather than a space of symbolic and existential reorientation.

5. Sacred Experience under Intelligent Conditions

If the previous chapter analyzed how artificial intelligence systematizes temple space at the level of governance, surveillance, and ritual organization, the present chapter turns to the experiential consequences of this transformation. Religious studies has long emphasized that religion cannot be reduced to institutions or doctrines alone; it is fundamentally concerned with lived experience—how individuals encounter the sacred, interpret transcendence, and orient their lives accordingly. This chapter argues that intelligent systems reshape not only the external structure of temple space but also the internal conditions under which sacred experience becomes possible.

5.1. The Transformation of Religious Experience: From Withdrawal to Continuous Connectivity

Classical theories of religious experience emphasize withdrawal from ordinary modes of rationality and perception. Sacred space traditionally functions as a site of interruption—an environment in which everyday concerns, instrumental reasoning, and social roles are temporarily suspended. Entering a temple often involves slowing down, observing silence, and adopting postures of receptivity. Such practices cultivate an experiential distance from the profane world, making room for transcendence.

Intelligent systems fundamentally alter this condition by extending regimes of connectivity, responsiveness, and monitoring into sacred space. Digital interfaces, real-time displays,

automated announcements, and continuous data flows reduce experiential discontinuity. The temple becomes less a space of withdrawal and more an extension of the connected world. Even when technologies are unobtrusive, their presence contributes to an ambient awareness of systems operating in the background (Zuboff, 2019).

This shift has significant experiential implications. Religious experience becomes embedded in a context of continuous mediation rather than rupture. The sacred is encountered not through interruption but through managed access. While this may increase accessibility, it risks undermining the experiential depth traditionally associated with sacred space. Transcendence, instead of appearing as a qualitative break, is reinterpreted as an optimized experience within a system. From a phenomenological perspective, this transformation weakens the contrast necessary for religious experience to emerge as distinctive. If the temple no longer feels qualitatively different from other system-managed environments, the experiential markers of sacredness—stillness, awe, reverence—become harder to sustain.

5.2. Presence, Mediation, and the Reconfiguration of the Sacred Encounter

Religious experience is often described in terms of presence: the sense of being addressed by, or standing before, a transcendent reality. This presence is not reducible to belief; it is an experiential orientation cultivated through ritual, symbol, and space. Importantly, religious presence has traditionally been mediated through material forms—architecture, icons, sounds—but these mediations function symbolically rather than instrumentally. Artificial intelligence introduces a new kind of mediation: algorithmic mediation. Unlike traditional religious media, which point beyond themselves, algorithmic systems tend to foreground their own operational logic. Screens, sensors, and automated processes draw attention to management rather than mystery. The mediation of the sacred thus risks being displaced by the mediation of systems.

This displacement has subtle effects on how presence is experienced. Instead of feeling addressed by the sacred, participants may become more aware of being processed by systems. The experiential axis shifts from vertical transcendence to horizontal regulation. Even when religious symbols remain unchanged, the background infrastructure alters how they are encountered.

Moreover, algorithmic mediation introduces predictability into experiences that have traditionally valued openness and indeterminacy. Religious encounters often involve uncertainty, ambiguity, and waiting. Intelligent systems, by contrast, aim to minimize unpredictability. This tension raises the question of whether sacred presence can still be experienced as gift rather than outcome when mediated by systems optimized for control.

5.3. Agency, Responsibility, and the Reshaping of Religious Subjectivity

A further dimension of religious experience concerns agency and responsibility. Religious traditions typically emphasize personal engagement—acts of devotion, repentance, ethical decision-making—that presuppose active participation. Sacred space supports this agency by framing individuals as responsible subjects before the sacred. Intelligent systems subtly reshape this subjectivity. Automated guidance, procedural instructions, and system-regulated participation reduce the need for interpretive judgment. Religious actors increasingly follow prompts rather

than discern meaning. While such systems may lower barriers to participation, they also risk diminishing the sense of personal responsibility central to many religious traditions. This transformation affects how individuals relate to religious authority. Authority becomes embedded in systems rather than embodied in interpreters or traditions. The locus of decision-making shifts from reflective agency to procedural compliance. Over time, religious subjectivity may be reconfigured from a responsive, discerning self to a system-compliant user.

From the perspective of religious studies, this shift raises normative concerns. Religious experience is not merely about comfort or accessibility; it involves ethical and existential accountability. If intelligent systems absorb too much agency, the formative dimension of religious experience—its capacity to shape moral character and self-understanding—may be weakened. Taken together, these experiential transformations suggest that intelligent systems do more than modernize religious practice. They reconfigure the phenomenological conditions under which sacred experience occurs. The temple remains a religious site, but the mode of experiencing the sacred shifts—from withdrawal to connectivity, from symbolic mediation to system mediation, and from active agency to procedural participation.

6. Conclusion

This study has argued that the increasing integration of artificial intelligence into temple spaces should not be understood merely as a process of technological modernization, but as a structural transformation that reconfigures the very conditions under which religious space, authority, and experience are constituted. By tracing the classical sacred–profane distinction and examining the temple as both institution and symbolic space, the paper has shown that artificial intelligence introduces a form of system rationality oriented toward optimization, visibility, and control that stands in tension with the symbolic, ritual, and experiential logics of sacred space. Intelligent systems do not simply assist religious practice; they reshape spatial boundaries, redefine authority, and alter the phenomenological texture of religious experience by extending regimes of connectivity and procedural governance into environments traditionally marked by withdrawal, liminality, and transcendence. While such transformations do not eliminate the sacred, they risk rendering it increasingly compatible with secular systems of management, thereby weakening the experiential and symbolic rupture upon which religious meaning depends. The future of temples in an age of intelligent systems, therefore, does not hinge on the acceptance or rejection of technology as such, but on the capacity of religious communities to critically negotiate the limits of system integration, preserving spaces of symbolic density, ritual autonomy, and existential openness within increasingly algorithmic environments.

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