University of Groningen

Introduction

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Published in:
Narrating the Pilgrimage to Mecca

DOI:
10.1163/9789004513174_002

IMPORTANT NOTE: You are advised to consult the publisher's version (publisher's PDF) if you wish to cite from it. Please check the document version below.

Document Version
Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

Publication date:
2023

Link to publication in University of Groningen/UMCG research database

Citation for published version (APA):
Buitelaar, M. (2023). Introduction: Narrativizing a Sensational Journey: Pilgrimage. In M. Buitelaar, & R. Van Leeuwen (Eds.), *Narrating the Pilgrimage to Mecca: Historical and Contemporary Accounts* (pp. 1-42). (Leiden Studies in Islam & Society; Vol. 16). Brill. https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004513174_002

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INTRODUCTION

Narrativizing a Sensational Journey: Pilgrimage to Mecca

Marjo Buitelaar

1 Reading Pilgrimage Accounts. A Preview

> I made my Umra 7 years ago and to this day the memories send shivers down my spine. It was magical; more magical than Disneyland!! Words alone can't explain the uplifting and exhilarating feeling rippling through myself! My favourite part was when we set foot inside the Haram [sacred Meccan space, MB] and my siblings and I were going to lay eyes on the Ka'ba [the cuboid building in the courtyard of the Grand Mosque in Mecca, MB] for the first time. We kept our eyes on the ground and only when we reached the courtyard did we look up. Wow. Gobsmacked. Amazing. I could only hear the birds singing and the general hum of people praying; I'd zoned out and no word in the entire dictionary will come close to describing how I felt. Pure, pure serenity ☺ The overall experience is very humbling. As I'm writing this, I'm smiling.

This is how a British Muslim summarized her experience of the *ʿumra*, the voluntary pilgrimage to Mecca. She did so on a website where pilgrims were invited to share their experiences for the exhibition 'Hajj: Journey to the heart of Islam' at the British Museum in 2012.[1] The quote is a particularly rich example that introduces the central theme of this book, which is how pilgrims to Mecca narrativize the pilgrimage—in other words, how they present their pilgrimage experiences in the form of a narrative.[2] Firstly, the comparison of Mecca with Disneyland in the quote is intriguing. It touches on the debate about the nature and scope of today's commodification of the hajj. Some Muslims might consider it sacrilege to openly compare the holy city of Mecca to a West-

1 The related page on the museum website, http://www.britishmuseum.org/whats_on/exhibitions/Hajj/Hajj_stories.aspx, which I accessed to download pilgrims' stories on 22 April 2013, is unfortunately no longer available.

2 To emphasize the patterning that occurs in pilgrimage storytelling, I use the verb 'narrativize' here rather than 'narrate', which I reserve for the act of telling a story.

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ern commercial theme park. Others might say that commercialization—or 'McDonaldization', as the globalization of western commercial enterprises is often referred to (cf. Ritzer 1993)—is precisely what is jeopardizing the religious atmosphere in Mecca today, and is an issue that should be addressed. The Moroccan anthropologist Abdellah Hammoudi (2006) and Indian-American journalist Asra Nomani (2006), for example, are highly critical in their hajj memoires of the commercialization and consumerism that they observed in Mecca. However, several participants in my own research, particularly younger pilgrims, said that they had been happy to discover McDonald's and Kentucky Fried Chicken in Mecca. They felt that getting a taste of home while not having to worry whether the meat was halal and of good quality meant having the best of both worlds. It confirmed to them that one can be Muslim and modern at the same time. Indeed, the modernization projects implemented by the Saudi government to attract and accommodate an ever-increasing number of pilgrims and—equally importantly—to streamline pilgrims' movements in accordance with a strict Wahhābī interpretation of Islam is a hotly debated issue and a recurring theme in the accounts of contemporary pilgrims (cf. Larsson and Sorgenfrei 2021, 14–15; McLoughlin 2015, 55). These debates shed light on the ways in which globalization, mobility, and feelings of home and belonging are intertwined and reproduced in complex ways in both pilgrims' everyday activities and religious engagement.[3]

The description of the journey to Mecca as 'uplifting' suggests that the woman quoted did not intend the analogy with Disneyland as a criticism of Saudi's hajj management. Unfortunately, she does not elaborate on what triggered this comparison for her. An obvious parallel between Mecca and Disneyland is that stories that visitors have grown up with come to life in both places; one can literally come into contact with the characters of these stories or, as in the case of Mecca, with places where they have visited or lived. In terms of religion, it is not difficult to understand why Mecca was the 'more magical' place of the two for the woman quoted. Certainly, visiting Disneyland has been convincingly analysed as a kind of pilgrimage (Knight 2014, 24–43), and like (other) pilgrimage sites, represents specific conceptions about living a 'good life' (cf. King 1981). The primary motivation of most visitors to Disneyland, however, pertains less to specific ideals than the wish to enjoy themselves. Mecca, on the other hand, is for Muslims the most powerful, sacred symbol of purity, perfection and an exemplary Muslim way of life. Fulfilling the religious

3 Compare Germann Molz (2005), who discusses the meaning of McDonald's as a 'guilty pleasure' for round-the-world travellers.

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obligation to perform the pilgrimage to Mecca is something that many Muslims yearn to do, a desire that is fuelled by the travel accounts of those who have made the journey. Like the British woman in the quote, most pilgrims describe stepping in the footsteps of key role models in Islamic historiography—such as the Prophets Muhammad, Ibrāhīm, Ismāʿīl and Ismāʿīl's mother Hājar—as an intense, emotional and 'uplifting' experience.[4]

Being 'gobsmacked' by experiences like seeing the Kaʿba with her own eyes is probably why this British pilgrim described her journey to Mecca as more magical than visiting Disneyland. Note how, in line with the informal term 'gobsmacked' to describe her feelings of being overwhelmed, she states that 'not a word in the entire dictionary' comes close to expressing how she felt. Nonetheless, when trying to convey her feelings, she describes her sensory experiences: memories of her first view of the Kaʿba, the hum of praying fellow pilgrims and the sound of birdsong still 'send shivers' down her spine, even though seven years have passed since she visited Mecca.

Interrelated with the theme of narrativization, a second key focus in this volume concerns how the performance of pilgrimage speaks to pilgrims through the senses and touches them emotionally. In this sense, the book ties in with a research project coordinated by Christian Lange, which studies how the senses have been conceptualized, and calibrated, in a variety of Muslim environments between 600 to 1900 CE.[5] In line with Lange's approach, we understand the sensory perceptions of pilgrims as not only a physical but also a cultural act: how they experience and understand sight, sound, smell, taste and touch during the pilgrimage journey varies for pilgrims from different historical, geographical, social and intellectual contexts.[6]

At the same time, however, stating—as the British pilgrim above does—that words cannot convey the pilgrimage experience is a common trope in accounts of the journey to Mecca written in very different historical and cultural contexts. Elaborate descriptions of sensory experiences belong in similar fashion to the tradition of storytelling about the journey, regardless of whether it concerns the hajj, the obligatory pilgrimage that all able Muslims should perform at least once in their lives, or the *ʿumra*, the voluntary and less elaborate pilgrimage to Mecca that can be undertaken at any time of the year outside the hajj season.[7] Variations on stories about starting to tremble, feeling one's scalp

4 Ibrāhīm, Ismāʿīl and Hājar are the Muslim Islamic versions of Abraham, Ishmael and Hagar in the Bible.

5 cf. Lange 2022a; 2022b; https://sensis.sites.uu.nl/.

6 https://sensis.sites.uu.nl/.

7 It should be noted that the rites that make up the *ʿumra* are also included in the hajj ritual.

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tingle and one's eyes fill with tears when sighting the Kaʿba feature widely in both the historical and contemporary accounts of the pilgrimage to Mecca that are discussed in the following chapters.

Expressing the extraordinary experience of the journey to Mecca by comparing it to a visit to Disneyland is—as yet—rather unique and points to how the British woman's pilgrimage experience is embedded in her wider daily lifeworld. It would not surprise me, however, to learn that other pilgrims who have visited Disneyland draw similar parallels. In variation to comparing Mecca to Disneyland, two Dutch pilgrims who shared their pilgrimage stories with me referred to De Efteling, a Dutch theme park where one can physically enter the world of well-known fairy tales like Cinderella and Sleeping Beauty.[8] By using informal expressions like being 'gobsmacked' and 'zoned out', the woman quoted brings Mecca and Disneyland into the same lexical landscape, even though she gives priority to Mecca. The use of modern vocabulary illustrates that the narrator's everyday life is simultaneously informed by different cultural discourses. Although she does not state her age, the words she uses and the fact that she went to Mecca in the company of siblings suggest that she may still be young. It is not unlikely that her travelling with siblings may also relate to her gender. Whereas young male Muslims often go on *ʿumra* with male friends, unmarried women of the same age group generally perform the voluntary pilgrimage in the company of their father or a male sibling (cf. Saghi 2010). This is because Saudi pilgrimage regulations stipulate that female pilgrims under the age of 45 need to be accompanied by a *maḥram*, a male guardian, either in the person of their husband, or a male blood relative with whom marriage is prohibited (cf. Thimm 2021).[9] Furthermore, the quoted woman has apparently visited both Disneyland and Mecca, which points to a habit of travelling that bespeaks a consumerist lifestyle. This is confirmed by the fact that she performed the voluntary *ʿumra* rather than the mandatory hajj, which also suggests that she expected to have sufficient financial means to return to Mecca in the future to fulfil the religious obligation of hajj performance. The various factors contributing to the opportunities available to this female British Muslim to visit Mecca illustrate another analytical theme that runs through the various chapters of this volume: how age, gender, class, ethnicity and cultural

8 See https://www.efteling.com/nl/park/attracties/sprookjesbos/sprookjes, accessed 23 July 2021.

9 At the time of writing, it was not yet clear how the 2020 lifting of the prohibition in Saudi law on women travelling alone would translate into pilgrimage visas being issued for female pilgrims from outside Saudi Arabia after the Covid-19 pandemic.

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embeddedness intersect to inform pilgrims' practices and experiences against the background of their everyday lives.

The woman's word choice and her comparison of Mecca and Disneyland also point to the importance of considering the specific audiences that are addressed in pilgrimage accounts. When uploading her narrative on the British Museum website during the 2012 hajj exhibition, the woman was apparently motivated to share her experiences with an anonymous and diverse general public. Except for mentioning the Kaʿba and the Ḥaram, as the sacred area of Mecca's Grand Mosque is called,[10] she avoids using words that have a specifically religious connotation. By expressing herself in mostly informal language instead, she casts her story in terms that both Muslim and non-Muslim visitors of the British Museum's website are familiar with. Comparing Mecca to Disneyland may have served a similar purpose of speaking to a wider audience. She takes as a point of departure a shared cultural practice, such as a visit to Disneyland, to convey to non-Muslims some of the meanings that a specifically Islamic practice has for her, thus claiming sameness and specificity at the same time.

These analytical comments on the opening quote give a foretaste of the issues addressed in this volume. The book sketches a detailed and diverse picture of how, in their stories, pilgrims draw on multiple cultural discourses and practices that shape their daily lifeworlds. Each chapter sheds light on the ways that being situated in a specific cultural context and moment in history informs the meanings that pilgrims attribute to their pilgrimage experiences. All chapters address the narrativization of the pilgrimage to Mecca as what the anthropologist Birgit Meyer has called a 'sensational form', that is, a ritual which speaks to the senses and emotionally moves people (Meyer 2016; 2012; 2011). Some, particularly the chapters that discuss historical pilgrimage accounts, do so by focusing more on how the storied experiences relate to the specific historical and cultural context of narrators and their intended audiences, while others place greater emphasis on scrutinizing the sensual and emotional trajectory of the pilgrimage.

The book contains both single-authored and jointly written chapters by the five members of the research project 'Modern Articulations of the Pilgrimage to Mecca' that will be introduced in the next section.[11] It also presents chapters

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10 Sacred space in Mecca, the cradle of Islam, and Medina, the city where the Prophet Muhammad is buried, are often referred to together as the Ḥaramayn, the two sacred sites.

11 The research project was funded by the Dutch Research Council (NWO) (Research grant: 360-25-150). For a regularly updated overview of the project's entire output, see https://www.nwo.nl/en/projects/360-25-150.

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written by participants of the 'Narrating the hajj' conference, which was organized at the University of Groningen in December 2019 to conclude the research phase of data production. These additional contributions have allowed us to expand on the historical and cultural contexts under scrutiny, and to include discussions of travelogues and stories in languages other than the Arabic or Dutch accounts that were studied in the research project.

The historical travelogues discussed in the book are all written by hajj pilgrims who travelled mainly over land and sea. For their own safety, most pilgrims from outside the Arabian Peninsula would join one of the annual hajj caravans for at least part of their journey until the 1920s. It is only with the introduction of air travel that the voluntary *ʿumra* pilgrimage has gained popularity among Muslims from outside the Arabian Peninsula. Pilgrims who can afford to make multiple journeys to Mecca may opt for the voluntary pilgrimage to gain a foretaste of the more important hajj variant, while others go on *ʿumra* to relive their hajj experience in a quieter season. The voluntary pilgrimage is also an attractive alternative for Muslims who are worried that the quota system may prohibit them from performing the hajj before they die, or who cannot afford a much more expensive hajj package tour. While we do consider how pilgrims' different motives for performing the mandatory or voluntary pilgrimage are reflected in their stories about their pilgrimage experiences, we do not systematically distinguish between hajj and *ʿumra* accounts in the book. One reason for this is that while the two forms differ in that only the hajj performance counts as fulfilling one's religious duty, conducting the rites of the *ʿumra* is also included in the hajj ritual, meaning that the experiences of hajj and *ʿumra* pilgrims overlap to some extent.[12] For most hajj and *ʿumra* pilgrims, seeing the Kaʿba with their own eyes and visiting the tomb of the Prophet Muhammad in Medina are the most emotional episodes of their journey and therefore predominate in their stories. 'Standing' at Mount ʿArafa is often, but not always, an additional highlight in the accounts of hajj pilgrims. The second reason why the distinction between hajj and *ʿumra* accounts is not systematically made in

12 Both *ʿumra* and hajj pilgrims enter the state of *iḥrām* (consecration), pronounce the *talbiya* invocation until they reach Mecca, perform the *ṭawāf* (the sevenfold circumambulation of the Kaʿba), drink water from the Zamzam Well and perform the *saʿy*, the 'running' between the hillocks of al-Ṣafā and al-Marwa. *ʿumra* pilgrims then cut their hair to mark the conclusion of the voluntary pilgrimage, while hajj pilgrims then move on to the tent camp in Minā. From there, they carry out the *wuqūf* ('standing' at the Mount ʿArafa to beg God forgiveness for one's sins), spend the night in the open air in Muzdalifa and collect pebbles in preparation of the *ramy* rite (pelting three pillars that represent the Devil), after which they end their *iḥrām*, make a sacrificial offer and cut their hair to mark the conclusion of the hajj.

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the book is that many contemporary pilgrims whose stories are analysed have made multiple pilgrimages, and they discuss both the hajj and the *ʿumra* in their stories.

The book is divided into two parts. The first discusses historical textual accounts and the second consists of social scientific discussions of oral pilgrimage stories collected through ethnographic fieldwork and interviews with contemporary pilgrims. While the authors of the historical chapters take readers on the pilgrimage journey of one or several individual pilgrims whose written hajj accounts they discuss, the chapters on the pilgrimage experiences of contemporary pilgrims explore how specific dimensions of narrating the hajj in today's world feature in a larger body of interviews and informal conversations. The two parts are bridged by a chapter that combines the two approaches by focusing on the oral pilgrimage accounts of two young adult Dutch pilgrims who participated in the research project 'Modern articulations of pilgrimage to Mecca'. The next section presents the research project on which this volume is based. Subsequent sections will reflect on the narrativization of the pilgrimage to Mecca as a sensational form and discuss how this central theme is highlighted in the specific case studies discussed in this volume.

2 Modern Articulations of the Pilgrimage to Mecca

The question of how, in today's era of intensified globalization, Muslims' pilgrimage experiences are simultaneously informed by various cultural discourses is what prompted the two editors of this volume to design the research project on modern articulations of the pilgrimage to Mecca. Worldwide, an increasing number of Muslims educated in Western-style school systems have assimilated modern liberal values such as punctuality, bio-medical conceptions of hygiene, and self-enhancement (cf. Newcomb 2017; Hafez 2011; Deeb 2006; Starrett 1998). A much larger class of Muslims has been introduced to cosmopolitan lifestyles through the consumption of global media (cf. Graiouid 2011, 117–147; Sabry 2010).[13] As a result, new forms of religiosity have emerged in which implicit ideologies of individualism and self-realization through modern consumerism are rerouted towards religious consumption patterns (cf. Hoesterey 2016; Shirazi 2016; Deeb and Harb 2013; Schielke 2012; Pink 2009).

13 For a very informative documentary about the impact of soap operas on Muslim audiences, cf. 'Kismet: How soap operas changed the world', https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NX8Un4nneXg, accessed 29 July 2021.

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These developments have had an enormous impact on the pilgrimage to Mecca, which has been an impressive, distinctively Muslim form of global interaction from Islam's early history onwards (cf. Tagliacozzo and Toorawa 2016; al-Quāitī 2007; Peters 1994; Strattkötter 1991; Faroqhi 1990). Since the mid-nineteenth century, the pilgrimage has undergone two periods of unprecedented growth. The first relates to colonial infrastructure projects, such as the introduction of long-distance railways, oceangoing steamers and the opening of the Suez Canal in 1896. These made it possible for tens of thousands of Muslims from regions far beyond the Middle East to flock to Mecca and perform the annual pilgrimage (Kane 2015; Gelvin and Green 2014; Tagliacozzo 2013). The second spurt in hajj growth occurred following the introduction of civilian air travel in the 1960s (cf. Bianchi 2004). In the years just before the COVID-19 pandemic struck in 2020, two to three million pilgrims, 1.8 to 2 million of whom came from outside Saudi Arabia, performed the hajj each year, and of the 19 million annual *ʿumra* pilgrims, over seven million came from abroad.[14]

The explosive growth in the pilgrimage to Mecca has produced new categories of pilgrims and led to the routinization and commodification of pilgrimage (cf. Bianchi 2013; McLoughlin 2009a). In this respect, contemporary pilgrimage to Mecca reflects a broader trend of increased religious and heritage tourism (cf. Stausberg 2011; Timothy and Olsen 2006). Where the hajj differs from most other forms of pilgrimage or religious tourism is its compulsory nature for all Muslims who can afford the journey without risking an adverse impact on their own lives or those of their dependants. For most of Islam's history, this meant in effect that only a small number of privileged, mostly male, Muslims were able to fulfil their religious duty. Improved means of transportation and the global rise of new middle classes have now brought the pilgrimage to Mecca within reach of many more and different categories of people. In particular, the number of women who perform the pilgrimage has grown spectacularly, reaching nearly 48% of the total number of pilgrims in 2019.[15]

To assess how these new forms of mobility have affected Muslims' conceptions of the desirability or necessity of performing the pilgrimage, it is import-

14 https://saudigazette.com.sa/article/592545, accessed 28 July 2021. Hajj attendance was severely restricted in 2020 and 2021 due to COVID-19: in 2020, only 6,000 Muslims of different nationalities residing in Saudi Arabia were allowed to participate, while in 2021 60,000 fully vaccinated Saudi residents were granted permission to perform the pilgrimage, cf. https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/10/4/pilgrims-return-to-mecca-as-saudi-eases-virus-restrictions, and https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/7/17/pilgrims-arrive-in-mecca-for-second-hajj-during-ongoing-pandemic, both accessed 30 July 2021.

15 https://www.statista.com/statistics/617824/saudi-arabia-foreign-hajj-pilgrims-by-gender/, accessed 7 September 2021.

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ant to realize that 'mobility' is not merely a descriptive term. It also has a prescriptive dimension that either explicitly or implicitly conveys normative views on who is expected to be mobile, and in what ways and for what purposes. The rapidly increasing scope and density of flows of people, ideas and goods in today's globalized world influence people's desires to move as well as actual mobility practices. They also inform their conceptions and ideologies about the purposes and effects of mobility. Pertinent to understanding the pilgrimage to Mecca is the fact that a 'limit-form' representation of space and time, which became dominant with modernity in terms of bounded entities that one leaves behind as one moves from one place or phase to the next, is currently shifting towards a more 'flow-form' conception of movement, in which temporal and spatial boundaries are viewed as fluid and porous. Mobility no longer necessarily entails a clear-cut rupture or transition from one stage or territory to another but is often represented as a continual and gradual change, a moving back and forth between here and there, and between past, present, and future (Buitelaar, Stephan-Emmrich and Thimm 2021, 7; Mincke 2016, 16). In terms of life-course expectations, rather than conceiving of one's life as going through a limited number of transitions between fairly stable time-space constellations, 'being on the move' seems to have become a mode of living, particularly among younger generations.

Such lifestyle developments have significant implications for people's travel practices, including the pilgrimage to Mecca. Until a few decades ago, hajj performance was very much part of a 'limit-form' conception of mobility that poses clear spatial and temporal boundaries. Most Muslims tended to conceive of hajj performance as a once-in-a-lifetime event and a major rite of passage that marks a radical change in one's status and lifestyle. Those who could afford to make the journey did so mostly at an advanced age, postponing the 'ultimate' religious duty in preparation for taking leave of one's earthly existence. In addition, it was generally felt, in terms of piety, that one should be 'ready' to go on hajj and that one would be 'called' to Mecca when God thought it appropriate (cf. McLoughlin 2015, 47). Today, an increasing number of pilgrims do not expect to visit Mecca just once but anticipate making multiple journeys (cf. Buitelaar 2020). Another trend is that the number of young and female pilgrims has increased significantly (cf. Karić 2018, 60; Bianchi 2013, 34–35).

How conceptions of the self are informed by the fluidity and porosity of temporal and spatial boundaries that characterize increased mobility is highlighted by the fact that it has become less common, particularly among younger Muslims, to be addressed by vernacular variants of the term al-Ḥājj (for males) or al-Ḥājja (for females), the honorific title for people who have performed hajj. One reason for this is that these titles carry connotations of old age. Another

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is that many pilgrims no longer consider it possible or necessary to radically break with one's past after having been cleansed of all sins through hajj performance. They believe that one should strive to lead an ethical lifestyle both before and after hajj performance, and that nobody is perfect; lapses are likely to occur and can be repaired by going on hajj once more (Buitelaar 2018, 35).

These new trends in hajj practices are not self-evident to all believers. The apparent ease with which some perform hajj or *ʿumra* as if attending a seasonal festival is often criticized, for example by older Muslims who associate pilgrimage with exceptionality and taking leave of worldly affairs in preparation for 'meeting one's Creator' (McLoughlin 2009a, 138). Also, the common view that 'being called' to Mecca is 'in God's hands' may feed ambivalent feelings among people who observe more affluent Muslims making the coveted pilgrimage for what they suspect is a superficial longing for a touch of the sacred (cf. Al-Ajarma 2020; Haq and Jackson 2009).

Modern hajj practices, then, do not go uncontested. Such contestations often take the form of moral claims about 'pure religion' versus 'profanation of the sacred', whereby the latter is sometimes associated with 'Westernization'. The 9/11 attacks and subsequent events marked a new phase of popular discourse that suggests a supposed opposition between 'Islam' and 'Western civilization'. 'Muslims' are now pitted against 'Westerners' even more strongly than before. As a result, Muslim religiosity ties in ever more closely with identity politics. For many Muslims, particularly those living the West, this increases the significance of Mecca in their emotional geographies of belonging (cf. Kapinga 2021, 63).

The developments described above have affected the 'habitus' of contemporary Muslims: the embodied dispositions that form a matrix for perceptions, appreciations and actions (Bourdieu 1977). These dispositions shape people's 'sensibilities': the moral and aesthetic dimensions of their experiences and emotional lives (ibid.). Ideals of Muslim personhood and the *umma*, the global Muslim community, exist side by side with other 'grand schemes': powerful yet never fully attainable ideals that operate as models for a good life (Schielke 2015, 13). Therefore, in addition to pursuits that are based on a particular conception of the moral order in Islam, the imagination of Muslims is also inspired by other grand schemes that inform their daily lives on the basis of their specific location in various social constellations and power structures. They may be motivated, for example, by ideals about individual self-realization, romantic love, making money, or specific consumption patterns (cf. Schielke 2020; Gregg 2013; Bowen, Green and James 2008). Each of these ideals comes with its own normative discourse or, to borrow Samuli Schielke's terminology, with its own 'moral register' to frame or assess a situation. Each moral register has a spe-

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cific style of argumentation and emotional tone. Moral reasoning is therefore an embodied practice that is highly performative, situational, and relational (Schielke 2015, 54; Zigon 2009).

The aim of the research project 'Modern articulations of the pilgrimage to Mecca' was to analyse how the multifaceted needs and desires that result from being informed by various discourses and how meanings and motivations related to different moral registers simultaneously feature in pilgrims' personal hajj accounts. To study the ways in which 'modern sensibilities' affect the choices and practices of contemporary pilgrims (cf. Mahmood 2009, 836), three sub-projects documented articulations of Meccan pilgrimage in the aforementioned two periods of far-reaching transformation: 1. Mecca travelogues at the time of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Islamic reform; 2. The meanings of the hajj in everyday life in Morocco; 3. Mecca and translocal senses of belonging among Dutch Muslims of Moroccan or Turkish descent.

The first sub-project, carried out by Ammeke Kateman and Richard van Leeuwen, studied Arabic travelogues written between 1850 and 1945. The specific focus was the impact of two important developments during that time on the pilgrimage to Mecca. One was the global public debate in which new intellectual networks emerged with novel views of religion and society and their interrelationship (cf. Jung 2011). This was especially important for the growth of Islamic reformism, which articulated modern views of Islam that were influenced by European concepts of religion, and focused on normative texts rather than on ritual practice. The formation of these networks was fostered by the spread of new media and the intensification of intercultural communication (cf. Bayly 2004; Hourani 1970). The second development was the impact of European colonial power on the hajj from the 1850s onwards, which enhanced travel facilities for Muslims and affected the logistics and organization of the pilgrimage as new regulations, means of transport and forms of supervision were established (cf. Green 2015; Slight 2014; Tagliacozzo 2014). Mecca's role as a centre of transnational networks was strengthened in this period, while Ottoman control of the Hijaz and the pilgrimage routes weakened (al-Quāitī 2007; Strattkötter 1991; Faroqhi 1990). The foundation of the Saudi kingdom resulted in new normative standards and organizational policies regarding the hajj (Chiffoleau 2013). Although pilgrimage remained the quintessential form of travel for most Muslims, it became linked to new lifestyles and perceptions of religion and society (cf. Gellens 1990; El Moudden 1990; also see Van Leeuwen's chapter 'Hajj narratives as a discursive tradition' in this volume).

The aim of the historical sub-project was to sketch the contours of the modernization process shaping present-day hajj practices as studied in the other two sub-projects. For one of these sub-projects, Kholoud Al-Ajarma conduc-

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ted ethnographic research to study the socio-cultural embeddedness of the hajj in contemporary Moroccan society. She explored how the status of pilgrims and the meanings that people attribute to pilgrimage are negotiated in micro-practices. To this end, she conducted 18 months of multi-sited participant observation in Morocco to investigate in what ways Mecca and the hajj feature in the daily routines and social interactions of her interlocutors. In addition, she documented how the hajj operates in Morocco's national politics and how Saudi hajj management affects Moroccan pilgrims' experiences (cf. Al-Ajarma 2020).

For the third sub-project, Khadija Kadrouch-Outmany and the author of this chapter studied how the pilgrimage experiences of Dutch Muslims with Moroccan and Turkish backgrounds relate to their everyday life in the Netherlands. The focal points of analysis in this study concerned the significance of Mecca in pilgrims' translocal senses of belonging, and continuity and change in the practices and accounts of pilgrims of different generations. Especially for younger Dutch Muslims with migration backgrounds, feelings of belonging to the various communities with which they identify tend to be complex and ambivalent. Visiting the country of origin to stay in touch with one's 'roots' and relatives can be satisfying and frustrating at the same time, when experiences of exclusion as 'the Muslim other' in the Netherlands are replaced by feeling excluded as 'the rich European' in Morocco (cf. Stock 2017). In this context, envisaging Mecca as an imaginary spiritual homeland where being Muslim is the only identity that counts can have a strong appeal and an empowering effect on the descendants of Muslim migrants (cf. Buitelaar 2018; Toguslu 2017, 23; Werbner 2004, 455). To study how an imagined Mecca relates to one's experience of actually visiting the sacred city, Kadrouch-Outmany joined a group of pilgrims from the Netherlands for the hajj of 2016. Comparing their *in situ* 'embodied talk' (Bamberg 2011, 18) with the stories of pilgrims in retrospective interviews with Buitelaar allowed the researchers to study how personal narratives about the pilgrimage to Mecca 'mature' over time.

Until recently, little attention was paid to pilgrimage to Mecca in both Islamic studies and in the anthropology of pilgrimage. In the past few years, however, several interesting volumes have been published.[16] The present vol-

16 For an overview of historical publications, see Van Leeuwen's chapter 'Hajj narratives as a discursive tradition' in this volume. For an overview of anthropological publications on the pilgrimage to Mecca, see Buitelaar 2015. Since 2015, the following collective volumes with historical and/or anthropological contributions about Muslim pilgrimage have appeared: Buitelaar, Stephan-Emmrich and Thimm (2021); Rahimi and Eshaghi (2019); Flaskerud and Natvig (2018); Arjana (2017); and Ryad (2017).

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ume stands out in two respects. Firstly, it focuses exclusively on personal accounts of the pilgrimage. Secondly, it combines both written and oral, and both historical and contemporary travel accounts. Moreover, all contributions study the connection between pilgrims' narratives about their experiences on the journey to Mecca and their everyday lives by applying the following two analytical lenses: narrativization of the pilgrimage and the hajj as a 'sensational form'.

3 Narrating the Pilgrimage to Mecca

Narratives do not simply give words to experiences, but experiences themselves are shaped by words, more specifically by the meanings they have acquired in the vocabularies of the discursive traditions available to narrators when interpreting their experiences (cf. Coleman and Elsner 2003, 8). With regard to hajj narratives, this means that such accounts are informed by the prevailing views on the pilgrimage to Mecca as expressed in stories about pilgrimage circulating within the specific Muslim community to which the narrator belongs.

As Van Leeuwen discusses more elaborately in chapter one, many episodes in the pilgrimage accounts discussed in this volume resonate with storylines from collectively shared stories about the hajj (cf. Chenganakkattil 2017). Descriptions of storms during a perilous sea journey, for example, feature in the historical hajj accounts discussed by Piotr Bachtin, Van Leeuwen, and Miguel Vázquez. Variations on 'yearning to quench the pain' caused by a 'burning desire' to see the Prophet Muhammad's grave, quoted by Kateman, occur in many travelogues discussed in the volume. Without exception, the enormous impact of sighting the Kaʿba for the first time occurs as a peak episode in both historical and contemporary travel accounts. Like variations on descriptions of feeling it 'pull like a magnet', which appear in the chapters by Yahya Nurgat and Buitelaar, the experience of being 'beyond words', which is mentioned in Al-Ajarma, and 'overwhelmed by emotion', as described in the chapters by Nadia Caidi and Van Leeuwen, are tropes that feature in numerous hajj accounts.

The hajj accounts discussed in this volume demonstrate that the heritage of hajj stories of those who have preceded them feeds the expectations of prospective pilgrims. These stories direct pilgrims' attention as they perform the pilgrimage and provide them with a vocabulary and already existing 'script' to interpret their own pilgrimage experiences. It is probably no coincidence that both the British author of the opening quote and a research participant in Caidi's contribution to this volume included observations about birds in their stories about the Kaʿba; the accounts of many of Buitelaar's interviewees

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similarly contain anecdotes about birds flying over the courtyard of the Grand Mosque in Mecca. Such parallels illustrate that storytelling is not a simple matter of creating personal meanings, but an intersubjective endeavour, involving a 'politics of experience' in which a multiplicity of private and public interests are at play (Jackson 2006, 11). Narrators and audiences are engaged in an ongoing negotiation of meanings. This is a first sense in which pilgrimage accounts are always co-authored and multi-voiced (cf. Zock 2013).

Particularly interesting in terms of the dialogical nature of storytelling are the contributions in this volume that discuss the pilgrimage accounts of Dutch and French Muslims with migration backgrounds. As well as being informed by the Islamic tradition as transmitted to them by their parents, the habitus and self-conceptions of Muslims who have grown up in Europe are also shaped by a modern liberal discourse and a culture of consumerism that dominate their daily lifeworlds. Their horizon is considerably wider than that of their parents, for whom visiting their country of origin and the pilgrimage to Mecca tend to be the only familiar travel options. As well as inheriting the habit of regular return visits to their family's country of origin, younger-generation Muslims have also had their personal longings shaped by growing up in a cultural context in which making a holiday trip to relax or explore hitherto unknown territory is almost considered a basic human need. As a consequence, they have expanded their views on desirable travel destinations. They also have high expectations regarding the efficiency and quality of transportation and accommodation. And, whereas their parents mostly have rural backgrounds and have enjoyed little or no formal education, most children of Muslim migrants have been raised in urban settings and educated in European educational systems.

As a result, like other modern-educated middle-class citizens both in Europe and elsewhere, they have incorporated particular norms about hygiene and punctuality, as well as liberal values such as individualism, gender equality, and self-enhancement. This comes to the fore in Buitelaar's chapter in the 'life lessons' that Asmae distilled from her pilgrimage experience about her rights as an individual to make her own choices. In the chapter by Buitelaar and Kadrouch-Outmany, the authors show that younger generations of pilgrims expect a high standard of travel accommodation and tend to be more vocal in their complaints about poor service than older pilgrims. Furthermore, the chapter by Jihan Safar and Leila Seurat demonstrates that the trend among Muslim couples in France to go to Mecca on their honeymoon is related to conceptions about romantic love and gender equality.

These case studies document how the descendants of migrants from North Africa and Turkey appropriate words, meanings, and storylines from conventional hajj accounts by intoning and placing them in relation to conceptual

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patterns and values they have incorporated from other discursive traditions, thus reshaping the meanings of these words and storylines as they use them in their own stories (cf. Shotter and Billig 1998, 24). This, then, is a second sense in which pilgrimage accounts are multi-voiced.

Based on the chapters in this volume that discuss the hajj accounts of young European pilgrims to Europe, I would argue that the descendants of Muslim migrants have become active co-authors of the prevailing 'grand narrative' of pilgrimage to Mecca in their Muslim community. More specifically, a comparison of the historical and contemporary hajj accounts sheds light on how these European Muslims contribute to the narrative's further development by inscribing their own understandings of the meanings of the pilgrimage into already existing representations such as presented by Van Leeuwen in chapter one. Since the hajj performance of young and female Muslims is a fairly recent development, this is both an act of 'emplacement', locating oneself in an existing 'grand narrative' about the hajj, and an act of 'emplotment', selecting events and putting them in a specific meaningful sequence (cf. Jackson 2006, 31). In this sense, Mecca can be seen as a 'palimpsest' in which individual pilgrims inscribe their own meanings on normative pilgrimage 'scripts'. Rather than adding completely new layers, however, this results in entangled meanings in which the past impinges on present meanings (cf. Kinnard 2014, 30; Smith 2008, 5).

The contributions to this volume also demonstrate that the freedom of narrators to improvise upon and add new dimensions to existing meanings is limited. Much as we can bend conventional meanings attributed to words in established views, if our stories are to be understood, they must be oriented towards the specific conceptual horizon of their recipients. In order to be recognized, the self-presentations of narrators depend on prevailing shared conceptions of, for example, a specific kind of personhood. In this sense, storytelling is always informed by the existential tension between 'being for oneself' and 'being for another' (Jackson 2006, 30). The freedom of narrators of pilgrimage accounts to shape their own stories is therefore far from absolute. It hinges on the specific constellation of power operations through which the articulation of certain imaginaries may be enabled or disabled (cf. Fricker 2007, 14; Ochs and Capps 1996, 32–35; Olson and Shopes 1991, 193). This is revealed in the chapter by Buitelaar and Kadrouch-Outmany in the differences between what could be said in public by whom during the hajj performance, and what topics were only shared in private conversations as pilgrims negotiated how to deal with setbacks. In the same chapter, the coercive impact that normative hajj storytelling can have on individual pilgrims is illustrated by a research participant's statement in a retrospective interview that she found the discourse

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of *ṣabr* (patience, endurance) 'suffocating' at times. The chapter also illustrates that as pilgrims tell and retell their experiences upon return, they are likely to edit their stories. Family and friends play an active role in the act of narration; their responses and questions help pilgrims to put their experience into a specific, shared context (Buitelaar 2020; also see McLouglin 2015, 54; Delaney 1990, 520).[17]

The social dimension of hajj storytelling is addressed specifically in Caidi's contribution, in which she documents how her interlocutors have archived their memories in the form of journals kept during the pilgrimage, photographs, and videoclips stored their phones, and, in the case of one pilgrim, paintings made after returning home. Caidi argues that these forms of curating memories serve three purposes. Firstly, they facilitate pilgrims' personal meaning-making process; as time goes by, cherishing their memories and keeping the experience alive help pilgrims to reflect on how they wish to anchor the transformative experience of the pilgrimage in their daily lives. In this sense, actively re-evoking hajj experiences by looking at mementos can be conceived of as an act of ethical self-formation (cf. Mahmood 2005). Caidi argues that pilgrims actively contribute to reinforcing a collective Muslim habitus by performing their position as Ḥājj or Ḥājja in their Muslim community. They do so by adopting an outwardly pious lifestyle and providing fellow Muslims with information about the steps and meaning of the hajj. In this sense, the active curating of memories is a ritual of community building as well as a means for pilgrims to acquire religious capital—the second and third purpose of curating memories that Caidi identifies. As illustrated by the anecdote that one of her interlocutors told her about the cousin who had reprimanded him for showing him a videotape he had made near the Kaʿba, pilgrims have to tread cautiously and reflect carefully on what to share with others; it can be a fine line between being appreciated for encouraging others to go on pilgrimage themselves and being accused of bragging about one's own accomplishments.

What events pilgrims select for their pilgrimage stories and how they narrativize them thus depends to a large extent on the intended audiences that they have in mind when putting their experiences into words. As Van Leeuwen argues in his contributions, it is the convention in hajj storytelling to represent the pilgrimage as the ultimate religious experience. To this end, narrators tend to present an idealized account of the hajj rites. To convince their

17 See also Frey (1998, 186), who noted a parallel tendency among pilgrims in her study of contemporary pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela.

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readers of the credibility and authenticity of their reports—and, I would add, to enhance the readers' identification with the protagonist—in chapter eight Van Leeuwen provides, alongside positive descriptions of religious activities, detailed examples of how narrators may add positively and negatively evaluated more personal anecdotes about the logistics of the journey, such as details about food, transport and accommodation.

In historical hajj accounts, sharing details about an arduous journey was also a way for narrators to demonstrate the extent to which they were willing to endure hardship to fulfil their religious duty to God. Today, the journey to Mecca is reduced to a few hours of comfortable air travel. In contemporary accounts, in addition to issues with Saudi hajj management, it is mostly the heat and basic facilities of the tent camp in Mina that feature as stressful experiences, although older generations of pilgrims tend to be more reluctant to share such stories than younger pilgrims.[18]

An extreme example of adapting the narration of one's hajj experiences to a specific audience is presented in Vázquez' chapter. The sixteenth-century anonymous Spanish author whose *coplas* or poem about the hajj Vázquez discusses, probably had good reason to memorialize the details of the pilgrimage in verse, and—except for the mention of a storm at sea—to present an idealized picture of the journey. All expressions of Islam were forbidden in Habsburg Spain at the time. Memorizing a poem was therefore safer than keeping a manuscript. Also, Vázquez argues that making a virtual pilgrimage by reciting the poem in a situation where the actual performance was beyond reach for Spanish Muslims was an act of defiance and a form of jihad.

In a similar vein, Neda Saghaee and Van Leeuwen argue in their chapter that while Sufi accounts of the pilgrimage to Mecca contain elaborate descriptions of participation in ecstatic rituals at the Sufi lodges visited on their way to Mecca, the audiences that the narrators addressed extend well beyond Sufi circles. They wrote their accounts with a didactic purpose of informing a wide audience of Muslims about the hajj and of feeding their readers' longing for the pilgrimage. The chapters about Spanish and Sufi pilgrims also illustrate how chronicling the pilgrimage can be a devotional act in itself. In this respect, narrating the hajj may go beyond linguistic representation and be part of the same religious experience it refers to.[19]

18 See Haq and Johnson (2009) and the chapter by Buitelaar and Kadrouch-Outmany in this volume.

19 See Popp-Baier (2021) and Bender (2007, 207) who describe similar merging of stories about devotional acts becoming a religious practice itself among Christian practictioners.

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In contrast, the female-authored hajj narratives from Qajar Iran discussed in Bachtin's chapter were written for a very specific audience. The extensive criticism in these narratives of the comportment of Sunni Muslims indicates that these journals were clearly aimed at an audience of Shiʿi Muslims. Moreover, the travelogues contain passages about topics that were considered intimate and therefore only suitable for sharing among women. Scathing passages about fellow Shiʿi male travellers in the caravan on the journey to Mecca point similarly to an intended exclusively female audience.

In his contribution, Thomas Ecker discusses the impact of different intended audiences on how hajj accounts are written by comparing two travelogues whose authors were both members of the household of the Qajar dynasty that ruled Iran in the 1860s and 1870s. One author, Yaʿqub Mirzā, wrote for a circle of friends, sharing private jokes with them in the text and sometimes directly addressing them. The other, Farhād Mirzā, had recently been dismissed from a political post when he embarked on the pilgrimage to Mecca. Trusting that he might secure another position upon his return, his travelogue was written with publication in mind and contains many political details that might be useful for the court.

Political considerations also played a major role in how the Tajik journalist Fazliddin Muhammadiev addressed his intended audience in the novel discussed in Vladimir Brobovnikow's chapter. Muhammadiev based his novel on the diary he kept during his pilgrimage to Mecca in 1963. Rigorously adapting pre-Soviet conventions of hajj storytelling, the novel contains all the tropes that featured in Soviet travelogues at the time. Brobovnikow argues that the main purpose of this genre was to provide Soviet readers with a glimpse of the outside world and to convince them of the USSR's heroic role in world affairs.

The Internet and smartphone have had an enormous impact on the publics to which pilgrimage accounts can be communicated (cf. Karić 2018). Elsewhere, Al-Ajarma and Buitelaar (2021) compare the hajj blogs of pilgrims from Morocco and the Netherlands. They demonstrate how pilgrims from Morocco tend to use hajj blogs as a platform to present a different picture of the management of hajj logistics than the rosy sketches presented by government-linked national media in Muslim-majority countries. In Dutch hajj blogs, however, pilgrims tend to sketch a more positive picture to counter the dominant negative conceptions about Islam in Dutch society and to reach out to non-Muslim audiences by relating the pilgrimage to themes and values that transcend religion. At a more general level, pilgrims' self-representations on public platforms, such as the 'hajj selfies' on Facebook that Caidi and her colleagues studied (Caidi, Beazley and Marquez 2018), provide insights into how documenting

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one's experiences has become an integral part of the pilgrimage experience for pilgrims of the smartphone generation.[20]

Another implication of pilgrims' habitual use of the smartphone for hajj storytelling concerns the affordance the device offers to pilgrims to stay in touch with their dear ones at home throughout the journey. Until recently, a recurring storyline in pilgrimage accounts was the anxiety and grief that departing pilgrims feel upon saying farewell to their loved ones, only to find that once in Mecca, they are so absorbed by the sacred atmosphere that they miraculously forget everything and concentrate only on their acts of devotion. In his contribution, Nurgat presents a particularly telling example of the trope of forgetting everything related to home in the travelogue of the Ottoman pilgrim Yūsuf Nābī (1642–1712). After first describing in a general sense how approaching Mecca causes pilgrims to forget their wealth and loved ones and realize the priority of attaining God's forgiveness, Nābī then goes on to narrate how the 'natural order of the mind was completely disrupted' upon his first sight of the Kaʿba, and that his senses scattered in all directions. Illustrating the extent to which the smartphone has become part of the habitus of younger Muslims, Buitelaar and Al-Ajarma quote in their chapter a young Dutch pilgrim who flipped this storyline around by explaining that it was precisely because her smartphone allowed her to remain in contact with her children that she could fully concentrate on her acts of worship rather than worry about home.

Both Caidi's chapter and that of Buitelaar and Al-Ajarma also touch upon the sensorial dimensions of pilgrims' use of modern technology. The impact of modern technology on the pilgrimage experience takes centre stage in Zahir Janmohamed's auto-ethnographic contribution. On the basis of interviews with Shiʿi pilgrims from the US and his own personal experiences, Janmohamed discusses how modern technology has made it easier for Shiʿi pilgrims to say or listen to specific Shiʿi supplication prayers whilst in Mecca. The first time that Janmohamed went on *ʿumra*, his prayer book with Shiʿi invocations was confiscated at Jedda airport. Nowadays, however, Shiʿi Muslims can avoid both Saudi censorship and the frowning looks of Sunni pilgrims by listening to their favourite Shiʿi supplication prayers on their headphones. Janmohamed reports that it had moved him deeply to be able to listen to the Shiʿi invocations that he had grown up with when facing the Kaʿba during his most recent pilgrimage. As a result, the hajj now felt more like his own.

The sense of belonging evoked by listening to familiar supplication prayers illustrates the centrality of aesthetic forms in the making of religious subjects

20 See also the chapter by Caidi and that by Buitelaar and Al-Ajarma in this volume.

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and communities. The next section will focus on what the hajj accounts discussed in this volume can tell us about how the pilgrimage to Mecca operates as an aesthetic form that speaks to pilgrims through their senses and moves them emotionally.

4 The Hajj as a Sensational Form

Like the British pilgrim in the opening quote, nearly all pilgrims report that words cannot (properly) convey the 'wow' that they experienced. When trying to articulate their feelings of awe, narrators of pilgrimage accounts tend to describe sensory experiences. In her chapter, Al-Ajarma documents the sensual lexicon of her interlocutors when they try to convey their ineffable experiences in terms of bodily responses. Ethnographic fieldwork enabled her to study the dialogical construction of hajj stories in a very direct way; she was witness to or a conversation partner in many oral exchanges between narrators of hajj stories and their audiences. Her observations reveal the performative quality of such exchanges: when narrators described how tears ran down their cheeks as they approached the Kaʿba, tears would flow again; when describing a paralyzing tingling in her legs as she stood in front of the Kaʿba, a female narrator first pinched her own leg and then that of the woman sitting next to her; when describing how her heart was burning with a desire to return to Mecca, another pilgrim beat her chest. Bodies convey feeling by immediate connection, one that enables what David Morgan (2010, 59) would call 'emotional contagion'. In other words, re-enacting how the emotional dimensions of their journey were mediated through bodily sensations allowed the narrators whom Al-Ajarma observed to relive their feelings, as well as to draw in their audiences and participate in the experience.

The preponderance of trembling bodies, palpitating hearts, and, most of all, tears flowing down cheeks reported in virtually all hajj accounts shows how the body actively shapes, colours, tunes, and performs pilgrims' religious orientation. Indeed, performing pilgrimage is a sensory experience *par excellence*; the whole body participates in its expression and production (cf. Jansen 2012, 6; Coleman and Eade 2004). As Vida Bajc argues, by speaking directly to the body, pilgrimage is 'a medium through which narrative imaginaries and places visited are conjoined to generate particular emotional awareness and evoke intensification of experience of being in that place' (Bajc 2007, 398).

To understand what engenders such an intense experience of the sacred, it is particularly helpful to adopt Meyer's approach to religion as a 'sensational form'

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when studying the pilgrimage to Mecca. Meyer argues that the sensation of 'awe' or immediacy of the sacred that religious practitioners may experience is not a prior quality of a sacred place or time, but a product of mediation (Meyer 2011, 23). Religious feelings are not just there, they are evoked by 'sensational forms':

> relatively fixed modes for invoking and organising access to the transcendental, offering structures of repetition to create and sustain links between believers in the context of particular religious regimes. These forms are transmitted and shared; they involve religious practitioners in particular practices of worship, and play a central role in modulating them as religious moral subjects and communities
>
> MEYER 2011, 30

Conceiving of the relationship between sensing subjects and their experiences of transcendency as mediated through sensational forms requires a focus on the material and sensory dimensions of religious mediation—that is, a focus on the aesthetics through which our sensory experience of the world and our knowledge of it is organized and 'tuned' in a way that yields a specific habitus (Meyer 2012, 165–167).

The pilgrimage to Mecca is a particularly powerful sensational form with a strong presence in the daily lifeworld of Muslims, regardless of whether they have performed the pilgrimage themselves. First of all, Mecca is an important point of bodily orientation in Muslims' lives; they are buried facing Mecca, and the *ṣalāt*, the five daily prayers, are likewise conducted facing Mecca. In societies with a Muslim-majority population, even those who do not practise the *ṣalāt* develop an awareness of their position in relation to Mecca as they go through their daily routines as a result of seeing Muslims pray, or being asked by someone who wishes to pray whether they happen to know the direction of Mecca.[21] In Moroccan-Arabic, Mecca as a point of orientation has even become

21 There are numerous aids to determine the direction of Mecca. In mosques, this is indicated by the *qibla*, the prayer-niche (see the photograph on page 117). In many hotel rooms in Muslim-majority countries, arrows on the ceiling or floor point to Mecca. In addition to information about the plane's height and speed, regardless of their destination, airlines like Royal Air Maroc include information about relative position to Mecca on the screens above passengers' seats. Travellers can also have recourse to a travel kit consisting of a compass and a table showing the number of degrees east or west of north that Mecca is situated from a particular region. Nowadays, these are mostly replaced by '*qibla* finder' apps that can be downloaded on a smartphone. For an account of the Kaʿba as the point of orientation in Islam's history, see O'Meara (2020).

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proverbial; a person who gets confused or disoriented might express this by stating: '*tlift al-qibla*', literally: I got the direction of Mecca wrong.[22]

Mecca is also present in everyday life in material form, for example in the shape of souvenirs that pilgrims take home (cf. Flaskerud 2018, 47–50). Objects that are used in everyday devotional acts, like the prayer mats and prayer beads mentioned by the Turkish-Dutch pilgrim Enes in Buitelaar's chapter, are favourite souvenirs that connect their users to Mecca, while dates and sacred water from the Zamzam Well literally allow a taste of the sacred and the incorporation of its *baraka* or blessings. Perfume oil, jewellery, headscarves and dresses are other popular souvenirs that mediate Mecca through close bodily contact. For aspiring pilgrims, these tangible objects provide an imagined link with the sacred destination and evoke a longing for it. For those who have been on pilgrimage, they serve as 'touchstones of memory' (Morgan and Pritchard 2005, 41), which contain traces of the power of the original experience, thus helping to re-evoke the sacred journey in the imagination (cf. Mesaritou 2012, 107).[23]

As well as being mediated through souvenirs, Mecca is also conspicuously present in Muslim daily life in the form of images of the Kaʿba on wall tapestries, paintings, and photographs that many Muslims use to decorate their houses, shops and offices (cf. page 284 in this volume).[24] Representations of the Kaʿba are often paired with those of the Grand Mosque in Medina, where the

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22 I'm grateful to Salma Bouchiba of the NIMAR (Dutch Institute in Morocco), who used this expression when we got lost in a lecture building at the University of Leiden at the time of writing this introductory chapter.

23 See also Coleman and Elsner (1995, 100), who describe the souvenirs that pilgrims take home as 'containers of the sacred', which serve to connect them to the site in the everyday context to which they have returned and to mark their identity as someone who has performed the pilgrimage. The authors argue that 'pilgrimage is as concerned with taking back some part of the charisma of a holy place as it is about actually going to the place.' While this probably holds true for most forms of voluntary pilgrimage, for hajj pilgrims taking part in a mandatory ritual, being able to fulfil their religious duty carries more weight. However, as the stories of the younger pilgrims interviewed by Buitelaar and Safar and Seurat illustrate, being able to tap into the power of the pilgrimage experience upon return to their daily lives is an important motivation for not postponing the hajj until they have reached old age, as previous generations tended to do.

24 See also McGregor (2010), who discusses material representations of the Kaʿba in nineteenth-century Egypt. Critiquing studies that approach the relationship between sacred sites and pilgrims' everyday lifeworlds in terms of a simple binary between centre and periphery, McGregor argues that the location of the Kaʿba and Mecca became 'scattered' by the distribution of pieces of *kiswa* cloth, the black, richly embroidered cover of the Kaʿba that is replaced annually, and of the *maḥmal*, the ceremonial palanquin that headed the pilgrim caravan from Egypt until the early twentieth century (McGregor 2010, 252).

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Prophet Muhammad is buried.[25] Together, these images remind Muslims of the highlights of the much-coveted journey to Mecca.[26] Mecca also features widely in folktales and popular songs,[27] as well as entering people's homes in televised form, for example in an episode of the popular MBC animated children's series *Taysh ʿAyāl*, where an entire family goes on *ʿumra*.[28] More importantly, a popular channel for ambient watching is Makkah Live, which broadcasts 24/7 from the Grand Mosques in Mecca and Medina.[29]

As Seán McLoughlin (2009b, 288) has argued, Mecca's ubiquitous visual presence in people's daily lifeworlds at once demythologizes and re-mythologizes the hajj. Based on the findings of the hajj research project that this book builds on, I would argue that this is particularly the case for its representations on social media and in television broadcasts. Such 'live' images demythologize the pilgrimage to Mecca in the sense of leaving little to the imagination as to what the place actually looks like. At the same time, they re-mythologize the sacred city by making an enormous appeal to those who are routinely confronted with these images; its visual omnipresence in everyday life reinforces the idea that visiting Mecca is what Muslims should most desire, thus contributing to normative conceptions of Muslim subjectivity.[30] The reconfirmation by returning pilgrims that the experience is 'beyond words' further enhances Mecca's magical qualities in the imagination.

The fascination with the image of the Kaʿba obviously relates to the building's central role in Islam's sacred history. Firstly, it represents God's house on

25 See Witkam 2007, who discusses the tradition of illustrating copies of *Dalāʾil al-khayrāt*, a famous book with prayers and invocations to honour the Prophet Muhammad written by the fifteenth-century Moroccan Sufi and scholar al-Jazūlī, with painted images of Mecca and Medina.

26 Strictly speaking, visiting the Prophet's grave is not part of the pilgrimage, but virtually all tour operators include a stop in Medina in their package tours. Besides images of the most sacred sites of the Ḥaramayn, representations of the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem, Islam's third most sacred city, also abound in Muslims' homes.

27 For songs and folktales in Morocco, see Al-Ajarma (2020). For the hajj in the Swedish-Muslim hip-hop scene, see Ackfeldt (2012). Rashid (2017) discusses the devotional songs of the US hip-hop group Native Deen, who sing about the desire to go on hajj in the song 'Labbayk'. Cf: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hnQZZFQ7ldk, accessed 9 July 2021.

28 See https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EYVq9KsWE-c, accessed 6 August 2021.

29 See https://makkahlive.net/, accessed 6 August 2021.

30 Compare my conversation with an elderly Moroccan-Dutch woman who was preparing for her seventh visit to Mecca. Sitting in her living room and watching the channel 'Makkah Live' with her, I asked her why she wished to go to Mecca again. Communicating the incomprehensibility, or at least the inappropriateness in her view, of suggesting that a Muslim might not desire to go there whenever the opportunity arose, she responded with the rhetorical counter question: 'Why ever not?!' (Buitelaar 2020, 4).

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earth. Secondly, shortly before he died, the Prophet Muhammad returned to Mecca in 632 CE, ten years after having left for Medina to escape persecution by its non-Muslim rulers, in order to perform his 'Farewell Pilgrimage' and restore the ritual to what Muslims consider its original Abrahamic form (cf. McMillan 2011, 19–20). The Prophet's triumphant return to Mecca marked the first step in Islam's worldwide expansion. Over time, the flow of pilgrims circumambulating the Kaʿba has come to symbolize the *umma*, the global Muslim community.

While the symbolic power of the Kaʿba in Muslim imagery largely explains why pilgrims are so often greatly moved when seeing the structure, I would argue that the enormous emotional impact that most pilgrims report when first seeing the Kaʿba is amplified by finally setting their eyes on a hitherto unattainable object whose image they have been familiar with from early childhood. The real-life encounter establishes what Britta Knudsen and Anne Marit Waade call 'performative authenticity': the thrill that travellers may experience as they authenticate the existence of a well-known place on the basis of a pre-existing sensuous and emotional relatedness to it (Knudsen and Waade 2010, 12–13). In this respect, the awe that seeing the Kaʿba evokes in pilgrims does not differ from the effect that particularly famous tourist destinations are known to have on visitors.[31] Indeed, travellers to such sites describe similar intense experiences of a 'loss of self', 'exhilaration', and 'transcendence' (cf. Whittaker 2012, 74–75).

Where seeing the Kaʿba with one's own eyes differs from, say, taking in the landscape at the Victoria Falls, is that these sites owe their authentication effects to different aesthetic forms (cf. Van den Port and Meyer 2018, 20). Pilgrims to Mecca are predisposed to interpreting the awe they experience when sighting the Kaʿba as a religious feeling. The ubiquitous visual presence of the Kaʿba in their everyday lives as a marker of a global Muslim identity, the stories about the significance of the various sites that make up the hajj in Islam's history, and the testimonies of pilgrims who preceded them, are all part of an Islamic aesthetics which maps the 'emotional itinerary' of the pilgrimage (Gade 2007, 38). In other words, pilgrims anticipate being moved to tears when they see the Kaʿba with their own eyes.

Indeed, pilgrims who do not live up to the expected emotions, for instance by not producing tears when seeing the Kaʿba, like Salma and Enes in the chapters by Al-Ajarma and Buitelaar respectively, tend to be surprised or disappointed, and some even worry that it might signal a lack of *ikhlāṣ*, or sincere devotion.

31 See Urry (2005, 78), who quotes Osborne (2000, 79) reporting hearing a visitor to the Victoria Falls state: 'Wow, that's so postcard'.

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This points to the moral weight that is attached to being moved to tears. More generally, stories about being moved to tears or about disappointment when tears do not materialize illustrate that the experience and display of emotions are culturally mediated; in different cultural contexts, some emotions are actively cultivated, while others are neglected or suppressed (cf. Abu-Lughod and Lutz 1990, 11).

In Islam's emotional discourse, weeping is a praiseworthy emotion. It is mentioned in the Qur'an in verse 5: 83, for example, as the appropriate response to listening to God's word: 'when they listen to what has been sent down to the Messenger, you will see their eyes overflowing with tears because they recognize the Truth [in it]' (Abdel Haleem 2004).[32] Also, the Prophet Muhammad is documented as having regularly wept, a practice that was emulated by a group of early Sufis who went by the name of 'the Weepers' (Gade 2007, 40). In this emotional discourse, weeping is not an expression of pain or personal suffering, but a sign of awareness of God and being overwhelmed by his greatness and one's love for him (Mahmood 2005, 130–131).[33] As Anna Gade warns us, we should be cautious about tracing the emotions of 'ordinary' Muslims back to emotion theory in authoritative textual sources (Gade 2007, 42). The recurrent references to weeping in the pilgrimage accounts discussed in this volume demonstrate, however, that the conception of weeping as a highly valued ethical disposition has a long tradition in hajj storytelling.

Particularly interesting in terms of how narrators of hajj accounts narrate the emotional itinerary of the hajj is the chapter by Kateman, who maps how travelogues written in the early decades of the twentieth century reflect the great changes occurring at the time. Kateman found that the narrators of these accounts used the same conventional descriptions of sensory experiences as their predecessors, such as the heart skipping a beat and shedding copious tears, to describe how the rites and sacred sites affect them. She observed much more variation in their descriptions of emotional responses to new phenomena such as trains and steamships, quarantine measures imposed by European colonial powers and new rules of conduct introduced by the Saudi regime to impose its strict Wahhābī interpretation of Islam. Kateman's analysis thus

32 Note how in this Qur'anic verse, weeping is also connected to recognizing authenticity.

33 Pain and sorrow are not absent, however, from pious weeping: the burning desire to be reunited with God and the pain of separation can also provoke tears. In his hajj memoir Hammoudi, for example, mentions an inconsolable fellow pilgrim who wept copiously about being parted from the Prophet as their bus was leaving Medina (Hammoudi 2006, 124–127). Also, in Shiʿa Islam, weeping is related to mourning over the martyrdom of Imām Ḥusayn, the grandson of the Prophet Muhammad who was murdered by the hand of the Umayyad caliph Yazīd (cf. Richard 1995, 32).

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demonstrates that additional emotional styles related to other cultural discourses were introduced in the hajj accounts alongside emotional styles that are anchored in the Islamic tradition.

Several contributors to this volume point out that the strong religious feelings that narrators of hajj accounts report do not necessarily express their actual feelings, but should be understood as conventional tropes that their readers expect them to describe. Indeed, like any kind of self-narrative, travel biographies should not be read for factual information but for what the narrators wish to convey about the experiences they describe and the meanings they attribute to those experiences.

At the same time, discourses create real effects in people. Pilgrims are affected by the emotions that are communicated through hajj-related souvenirs, images, and stories. This comes to the fore particularly well, for example, in Hammoudi's observation that the hajj journey he was about to embark on out of academic interest turned into a personal quest as well: 'I had not foreseen the feelings that now I could no longer elude, for the more imminent and real my departure became, the more it seemed to authorize, even free up, certain words' (Hammoudi 2006, 5). Discursively mediated cultural understandings of feelings become part of pilgrims' habitus and inform their embodied experiences. Moreover, ritual performance can be deliberately applied as a 'bodily technique' to induce certain feelings (cf. Mahmood 2005). In fact, hajj storytelling probably owes much of its emotional vocabulary to the kind of Sufi treatises and personal accounts about the pilgrimage that Saghaee and Van Leeuwen discuss in this volume. The authors demonstrate that for Sufis, the salience of the physical journey to Mecca pertains first and foremost to its capacity to cultivate inner feelings that should bring the pilgrim closer to God. Like the British woman in the opening quote, many hajj tour guides tend to make use of this technique of inducing feelings through bodily acts: to increase the emotional impact on their clients of sighting the Kaʿba for the first time, they advise pilgrims to keep their eyes cast down until they are standing directly in front of it.[34]

This should obviously not be taken to mean that all pilgrims necessarily go through the same emotions. One reason for this is that the Islamic tradition is

34 Stimulating the emotional impact of first sightings has also been described for non-Muslim pilgrimage practices. Kaell (2014, 81) and Bajc (2007, 402), for example, describe similar instances in which tour guides direct the gaze of Christian pilgrims to Jerusalem for optimal effect. Also see Bender (2007, 210–212; 2003) for a discussion of the significance of vision and seeing in everyday religious experiences of American volunteers who identify as spiritual.

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rich in emotional styles. While many pilgrims to Mecca hope to obtain blessings and be touched by the sacred in a direct, sensual way, those with more reformist inclinations may seek to strengthen their faith through detached contemplation (cf. Van Leeuwen 2015).[35] Still others, such as adherents to legalistic understandings of Islam, may be driven by an—at times even anguished—concern to carry out the rites correctly lest their performance be invalidated.[36] Furthermore, as the contributions by Bachtin, Ecker and Janmohamed to this volume illustrate, Shiʿi Muslims may not experience the same sense of belonging as Sunni pilgrims. For them, the hajj is connected to the martyrdom of the Prophet Muhammad's grandson, Imām Ḥusayn, at the hands of a Sunni Umayyad caliph who ruled Mecca at the time. They may therefore experience moments of intense grief or resentment (Fischer and Abedi 1990, 167). As Janmohamed's chapter illustrates, political tension, such as enmity between Saudi Arabia and the post-revolutionary Republic of Iran, may be reflected in hostile feelings between Sunni and Shiʿi Muslims from other countries. Indeed, like the narrators of the historical pilgrimage accounts discussed by Bachtin and Ecker, contemporary Norwegian Shiʿi pilgrims also report being afraid of Sunni harassment (Flaskerud 2018, 46).

The ways that pilgrims' sensibilities are shaped by class may also impact on their feelings. Both the historical and contemporary accounts discussed in this volume contain numerous examples of class-specific experiences. Nurgat, for example, mentions certain privileges that the pilgrims whose pilgrimage accounts he discusses enjoyed as members of the elite, such as entering the tomb of the Prophet Muhammad. The travel account of Farhād Mirzā discussed by Ecker similarly contains references to differential treatment, in his case being received by foreign state officials on his journey to Mecca. Other examples can be found in Kateman's chapter, where she describes how pilgrims' experiences in the quarantine camps were coloured by class, while in chapter eight Van Leeuwen refers to the poem of an ʿIbāḍī shaykh, who fiercely criticized the 'unhygienic behaviour' of pilgrims whom he classified as 'peasants'. Variation in emotional responses relating to the different sensibilities of

35 Compare Kaell (2014, 76–98) and Lock (2003), who describe, for different historical periods, similar variations in Christian pilgrims of different denominations who first set eyes on Jerusalem, some responding with outward emotional expressions, others stressing contemplative 'inner vision'.

36 See Hammoudi (2006, 47), who notes that some of his fellow pilgrims were anxious that they might make mistakes due to a lack of knowledge. See also Buitelaar (2020, 6), where younger pilgrims state that older pilgrims are preoccupied with 'ticking the boxes', whereas they themselves are more attuned to the spiritual experience.

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pilgrims from lower-class rural backgrounds and those with middle-class lifestyles also emerges in the chapter by Buitelaar and Kadrouch-Outmany in relation to the sojourn of contemporary Dutch pilgrims in the Mina tent camp. The chapter by Buitelaar and Al-Ajarma discusses class differences in smartphone use between Moroccan and Dutch-Moroccan pilgrims.[37] More generally, being able to afford a five-star hotel room in the Mecca clock tower with a view of the Kaʿba and within the precinct of the sacred space of the Grand Mosque itself (cf. the photograph on page 340), creates a very different pilgrimage experience than having to sleep in the streets or in the Grand Mosque and beg for food.[38]

Gender similarly informs pilgrims' experiences. Women and men may differ, for example, in their emotional response to the genderedness of the Islamic role models whose stories are re-enacted in the hajj rites.[39] Also, while the basic rules for the hajj rites are the same for all pilgrims, some details differ for male and female pilgrims. In all such instances, the rules for male pilgrims allow for more outward expression. Most noticeable is the difference in dress code for pilgrims once they enter *iḥrām*, the state of consecration. The *iḥrām* clothes for men consist of two, unstitched pieces of white cloth, while women can wear any clothing provided that they hide their body contours and leave the face and hands exposed. The expression of women's liminal status is thus given less emphasis than men's. Also, all pilgrims utter the devotional *talbiya* prayer once they have pronounced their intention to enter the *iḥrām* state, and continue to repeat the invocation throughout the pilgrimage. Whereas men chant the *talbiya* out loud, women should murmur it softly to themselves. In a similar vein, for a specific part of the *saʿy*, the rite in which pilgrims walk back and forth seven times between the hillocks of al-Ṣafā and al-Marwa, men are advised to run, while women should continue at a walking pace.

37 See Al-Ajarma 2020 and Buitelaar 2020 for more examples in the contemporary era.

38 Formally, pilgrims who do not have a Saudi residence permit are only issued a hajj visa if they book a package tour from a recognized tour operator. Foreign Muslim migrant labourers with Saudi residence permits need to obtain an official permit to perform the hajj, but they can perform it individually or in self-organized groups. Some overstay their labour contract and residence permit in order to perform the hajj, putting them in an even more precarious situation. Lücking, for example, demonstrates that work and pilgrimage are closely intertwined in the views and practices of migrants to Mecca from the Indonesian island of Madura, for whom the waiting list for a hajj visa is 20 years. For some Madurese labourers, the *ʿumra* visa appears to have become a popular way of entering Saudi Arabia in order to work there and wait for the hajj season. Once they arrive in Saudi Arabia, they go into hiding and many of them work illegally while waiting (Lücking 2017, 261).

39 See Buitelaar (2021) for a discussion of how Asra Nomani aligns the meaning of the story of Hājar to her own experience as an abandoned single mother.

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So far, Asra Nomani's hajj memoir is the only one I have come across that includes a critical remark on the Saudi laws prohibiting women from running during the *saʿy* (cf. Nomani 2006, 65). Many more female pilgrims, particularly younger ones, voice their discontent about being relegated to the rear of the courtyard of the Grand Mosque in Mecca during prayer time, from where they can only catch a glimpse of the Kaʿba (cf. Kadrouch-Outmany and Buitelaar 2021, 48–51). The restrictive measures for women at the *rawḍa*, the location in the Prophet's Mosque in Medina near his tomb, provoke even more female indignation (cf. Al-Ajarma 2020, 133–137; Janmohamed 2016, 220). Not only are the opening hours for women much shorter than for men, but female pilgrims—unlike pilgrims in the men's section—cannot see the shrine with the Prophet's tomb from the women's section, let alone touch it. An increasing number of women feel that this situation seriously hampers their spiritual experience.

Female pilgrims are prevented from setting their eyes on the Prophet's tomb for the same reason that women in most Muslim societies are prohibited from participating in funerals; it is feared that they might not control their feelings and start wailing (cf. Kadrouch-Outmany 2018). Like the rules that curb female pilgrims' bodily expressions whilst carrying out the hajj rites, the restrictive measures at the *rawḍa* lest they make a scene illustrate two things. First, feeling is as much a social practice as a subjective experience. Emotional discourses construct subjectivities and organize social relations (cf. White 2007). Second, emotional discourses are part and parcel of practices of inclusion and exclusion and other operations of power (cf. Irvine 1990). In this sense, emotions work as a form of capital (Ahmed 2004, 120).[40] I would therefore argue that prohibiting women from viewing the Prophet's tomb for fear of their emotional response is the result of a tradition of differently gendered valuations of pilgrims' emotionality, a tradition that is increasingly challenged by female pilgrims who feel that they should have the same access to the Prophet's tomb as male pilgrims.

The final factor that contributes to the different emotional responses of pilgrims concerns a key focus in all three sub-projects in the hajj research project on modern articulations of the pilgrimage to Mecca: the connection between the pilgrimage experience and pilgrims' everyday lives. Our findings show how the emotions that pilgrimage performance evokes in individual pilgrims tend to trigger further feelings that relate to people and issues that accompanied

40 Rather than speaking of concepts like 'emotional cultures' (Picard 2016) or 'emotive institutions' (White 2007), Ahmed uses the term 'affective economies' to emphasize that emotions have value and 'circulate' between people.

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them to Mecca in their thoughts. Such personal feelings may surface unexpectedly, for example, if a pilgrim is suddenly engulfed by grief when saying supplication prayers for a deceased parent who never had the opportunity to perform the pilgrimage themselves. Similarly, being surrounded exclusively by fellow Muslims may trigger emotions relating to ambivalent senses of belonging in European pilgrims with migrant backgrounds, as discussed in the chapter by Buitelaar and the one by Safar and Seurat. It may prompt them to reconfigure their attachments to the country of their family's origin, their country of residence, and to Mecca as a spiritual homeland. Conversely, the encounter with Muslims who are very different from themselves, and performing the pilgrimage in a different environment than their familiar lifeworld, may make pilgrims reflect on how they have been shaped by the cultural context in which they live their daily lives.

Besides making sense of emotions that surface unexpectedly, pilgrims—in addition to wanting to fulfil their religious obligation—may be motivated to go on hajj with the explicit purpose of working on their emotions. They may hope that the experience will help them come to terms with a divorce, for example, or not being able to conceive, their own mortality or the death of a relative or friend. Alternatively, visiting Mecca may relate to a felt need to 'fuel up a bit', to quote one of Caidi's research participants, for example after suffering burnout,[41] or, like Enes in Buitelaar's chapter, to turn the page and start the next phase of life with a clean slate.

5 Concluding Reflections on Mecca as a Storied Place of Attachment

Without exception, the pilgrimage accounts discussed in this volume testify to the enormous significance of Mecca as a place of attachment for Muslims, which explains the tremendous increase of pilgrim numbers as the means of transportation have improved. At the same time, however, the much-coveted journey to Mecca remains beyond the reach of many. Therefore, besides its ubiquitous presence in the form of images of the Kaʿba, Mecca features, above all, as a 'storied' place in the lives of most Muslims.[42] By focusing on personal narrative accounts of the pilgrimage experience, this book enhances our

41 Note how the desire to 'refuel', 'recharge' or 'reboost', as several of the interlocutors in my own research have reported, resonates with the 'energy grammar' that Fedele (2018) discusses for contemporary pilgrims to Chartres and Vézelay.

42 Compare Smith (2008), who discusses several case studies of powerful places 'built' with words.

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understanding of how emotional attachment to Mecca is both represented and (re)generated in storytelling. Combining chapters that discuss written historical travelogues with contributions that analyse oral contemporary accounts, the book sheds light on commonalities and specificities, and on continuity and change in the rich and multi-voiced tradition of hajj storytelling that Van Leeuwen discusses more extensively in chapter one.

The approach of this book to investigate the pilgrimage to Mecca as a living tradition by adopting the perspective of narrativization entails an inquiry into two paradoxical issues. The first pertains to the endeavour to study both continuity and change in the tradition of hajj storytelling. The pilgrimage derives much of its power from the fact that it is located in the place where Islam originated. Therefore, pilgrims tend to seek and cherish experiences of continuity and authenticity first and foremost. This makes researching how narrators have accommodated the enormous changes that have occurred since the mid-nineteenth century in their pilgrimage accounts all the more interesting. For this reason, from the outset, the aim of the historical sub-project of the research project on modern articulations of the pilgrimage to Mecca was to investigate, among other things, representations of the advent of modern technology in travelogues from the latter half of the nineteenth century and early decades of the twentieth century. The chapters addressing pilgrimage accounts from this period provide ample examples of pilgrims' variegated responses. Looking back, it is difficult to understand why the original research plan had a blind spot regarding the impact of a more recent technological innovation on pilgrimage practices: the introduction of social media. The desirability of including social media as a topic of investigation became evident as soon as the empirical phase of the project started. As the chapters in this book that address the use of social media demonstrate, its affordance to create co-presence between pilgrims and those they left behind has deeply influenced the mediation of the pilgrimage experience. Indeed, one could safely argue that the smartphone has become part of the repertoire through which Mecca's sacredness is experienced.

A second paradoxical element in the project's focus on the narrative mediation of the pilgrimage concerns the recurring statement in nearly all travel accounts that words cannot convey the powerful impact of performing the pilgrimage. The claim that the pilgrimage experience is beyond representation expresses the view that sensing Mecca's sacred power is ideally an unmediated experience that requires physical presence. The purpose of the book's focus on narrativization is not to invalidate such views, but to understand how narrators and their audiences come to interpret the pilgrimage experience in terms of an unmediated encounter with the sacred.[43]

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43 Compare Meyer (2016, 8), who argues that the current trend in anthropology to retreat

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The suggested lack of mediation is also reflected in the emphasis in pilgrimage accounts on the embodied emotions prompted by the physical encounter with the sacred place. Approaching the pilgrimage to Mecca from the perspective of narrativization elucidates how such 'emotions of encounter' are articulated at the interface between collectively shared storylines relating to an Islamic moral register and those connected to other grand schemes that inform pilgrims' everyday lives. Laila El-Sayed (2016, 3) speaks of 'emotions of encounter' to refer to the feelings triggered in travellers when meeting hitherto unknown people in unfamiliar lands. In my own use of the term here, it also encompasses feelings prompted by the experience of an encounter with the sacred. More specifically, I conceive of 'emotions of encounter' in terms of the feelings that result from the various ways in which different cultural discourses and moral registers conjoin in pilgrims' making sense of their encounters in Mecca. Such emotions of encounter encourage pilgrims to reflect on the connection between the meanings of the pilgrimage for them and significant events in their life. Various chapters in the book demonstrate how the narrators of pilgrimage accounts add their own voices to existing storylines and, conversely, re-align their life stories to these storylines.[44]

The analysis of pilgrims' narratives about the emotions of encounter in this book thus points to the salience of looking beyond the sacred sites themselves in order to trace the ways in which pilgrimage mediates between various realms of pilgrims' experiences.[45] Indeed, the book's focus on narrative mediation of the pilgrimage as a sensational form sheds light on how pilgrims make sense of their experiences by navigating storylines from a multiplicity of emotional discourses and grand schemes that inform their lives. Both the contributions that analyse historical pilgrimage travelogues and those that discuss contemporary accounts document how vocabularies belonging to different cultural discourses acquire novel meanings as pilgrims translate and reiterate them in new settings.[46] Moreover, the resulting picture indicates that moral registers

into a deep ontology-driven study of the specific ways of people's engagement with spirits, gods, and supernatural entities is ultimately unproductive. Instead, she proposes an approach to religion that not only explores a religious tradition or mode of being from within, but also offers a standpoint from which to say something about it.

44 See Picard (2016, 12) and Kaell (2014), who observed similar patterns in the storytelling of tourists and Christian pilgrims to Jerusalem respectively.

45 See Coleman (2021), who discusses numerous examples from other forms of pilgrimage to make a powerful argument about the need to reflect on how pilgrimage sites, journeys, rituals, stories, and metaphors are entangled with each other and with wider aspects of people's lives.

46 See also Bender (2003, 109), who makes a similar argument about the everyday religious experiences of American volunteers who identify as spiritual.

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pertaining to different ideals in pilgrim stories do not necessarily operate separately or cause fragmentation. Ideals about Muslim personhood, social mobility, and romantic love, for example, may be mixed and merged in the specific moral lessons that pilgrims draw from their pilgrimage experiences.[47]

The contributions to the volume thus demonstrate that the narrators of pilgrimage accounts are active agents who appropriate the cultural discourses available to them in order to interpret and represent the pilgrimage in their accounts in ways that help them to make sense of their place in the world and to shape their relationships with others. In this sense, the meaning-making in pilgrimage accounts resonates with Thomas Tweed's understanding of religions as 'confluences of organic-cultural flows' (Tweed 2006, 54). As Tweed argues, by designating where we are from, identifying whom we are with, and prescribing how we move across space and time, religion is about 'crossing and dwelling', about making homes and crossing boundaries (Tweed 2006, 74–79). The meaning of Mecca as a strong point of orientation and place of attachment that comes to the fore in nearly all chapters in this book demonstrate that pilgrimage—and its narrativization—can be a very apt vehicle for such crossings and dwellings.

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47 For a particularly interesting historical example of mixing and merging different moral registers, see Petersen (2017, 97–101), who discusses three hajj travelogues written by Chinese Muslim scholars in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The narrators of two of these hajj accounts translated important Islamic values into cardinal principles of the Confucian philosophical tradition.

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