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### Introduction

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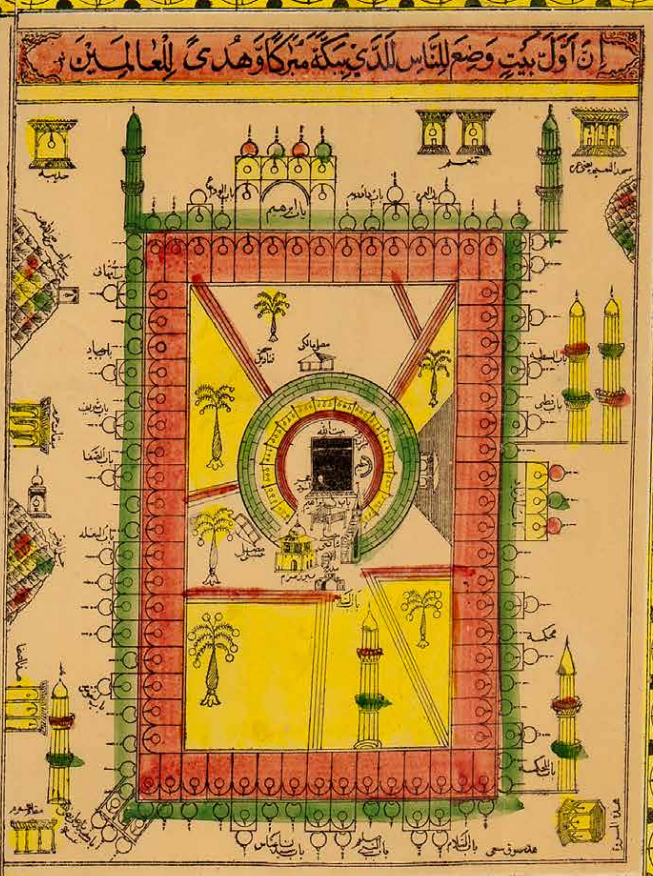
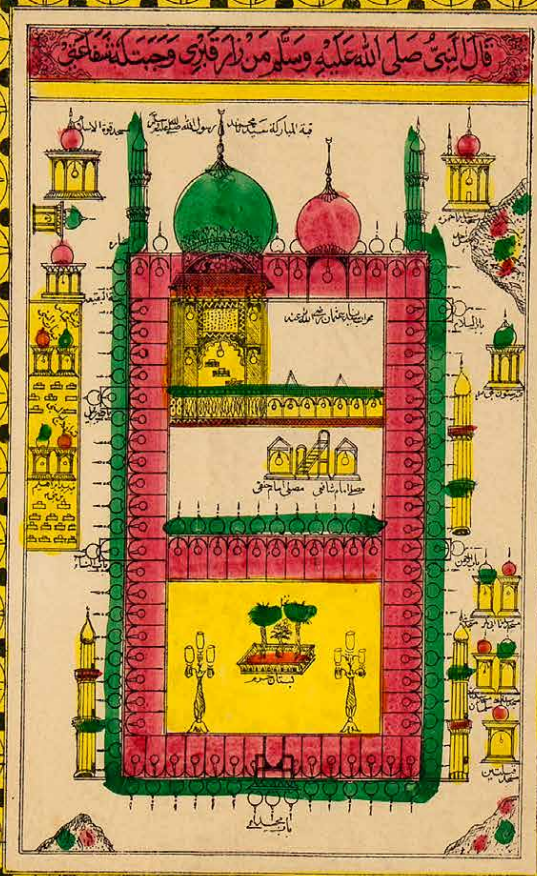
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# Hajj

Global Interactions  
through Pilgrimage



edited by  
*Luitgard Mols & Marjo Buitelaar*

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## INTRODUCTION

*Marjo Buitelaar and Luitgard Mols*

The chapters in this volume are the outcome of the two-day symposium *Hajj: Global Interactions through Pilgrimage*, which was held at the National Museum of Ethnology in Leiden on 28 and 29 November 2013. It was organised by the National Museum of Ethnology, the Leiden University Centre for the Study of Islam and Society (LUCIS), the Netherlands Interuniversity Research School for Islamic Studies (NISIS), and the Foundation for Ethnology in Leiden (FEL). National and international speakers were invited to discuss theory and practice of the Hajj from religious, cultural, material, historical, and social angles. In addition, insights into personal beliefs and experiences of the pilgrimage to Mecca were given by Dutch *hajjis* in an on-stage interview.

The immediate cause for this symposium was the exhibition *Longing for Mecca. The Pilgrim's Journey* that was held at the National Museum of Ethnology between 10 September 2013 and 9 March 2014. The exhibition, which was prepared in close cooperation with the British Museum in London, was the first comprehensive display of Hajj-related artefacts from national and international collections in the Netherlands. The exhibition was developed as a journey, starting with the preparation and the actual travels to Mecca and followed by the rites in Mecca, the visit to Medina, and the homecoming of pilgrims. Interviews with *hajjis* and *hajjas*, which were played on several screens throughout the exhibition area, gave first-hand insights into the expectations, experiences, and transformation of pilgrims. The exhibition also focused on the interactions of pilgrims, in both the past and present, through their shared goal of reaching Mecca in order to perform the prescribed rituals.

Revised versions of most of the contributions to the symposium have found their way into this book.<sup>1</sup> The book is loosely organised into two main parts: the first five chapters investigate the Hajj from a social scientific point of view. These focus on the religious, social, and political meanings of the Hajj and

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1 Unfortunately, not all participants of the symposium were able to contribute to this volume, but their insightful papers offer new points of departure for further research. Mohammed Cheppih, who talked about his personal experiences of performing the Hajj both as a pilgrim himself and a tour leader gave a realistic portrait of what it is to do the Hajj and Umra today; Léon Buskens explored the Dutch tradition of Hajj research and policymaking and the role of Christiaan Snouck Hurgronje in particular. The Ka'ba cover, or *kiswa*, was the topic of Nahla Nassar's contribution, in which she discussed its prestige, piety, and the politics with which its manufacture is surrounded. The concluding lecture by Finbarr Barry Flood, professor at New York University and the 2013 Adrian Gerbrands lecture-laureate, titled 'Sanctified Sandals – Imaging the Prophet in an Era of Technological Reproduction' will be published by FEL.



address the relationship between the significance of pilgrimage to Mecca for the religious lives of individuals and groups and the wider life worlds that they are embedded in. The second part of the book comprises seven chapters and takes material expressions of the Hajj as its starting point. It explores what Hajj-related artefacts can tell us about the import of pilgrimage in the daily lives of Muslims in the past and present.

While the embeddedness of Hajj practices and meanings in local contexts comes to the fore most obviously in the first five chapters of the book, the subsequent chapters on material Hajj culture also provide insights into historical developments of the Hajj ritual; they all address the issue how representations of Mecca and the Hajj and the exchange of Hajj-related objects have changed over time. More specifically, a theme that runs through many of the contributions is the impact of changes brought about by modernisation processes since the mid-nineteenth century, when improved transport and new technologies brought the Hajj within reach of a quickly increasing number of Muslims. The chapters with a social scientific approach, in the first part of the book, discuss the effects on Hajj practices and meanings for present-day Muslims of current dimensions of globalisation processes. The contributions that focus on historical documents and artefacts in the second part of the volume teach us that globalisation should not be mistaken as a recent phenomenon. They all point to the fact that Mecca has always been a cosmopolitan city and the nodal point of global interactions far exceeding religious activities only.

Together, the chapters in this book depict the Hajj ritual as a living tradition. Each with its own focus, the various contributions testify to the fact that, while the rites that make up the Hajj were formulated and recorded in normative texts in early Islam, details in the actual performance and interpretations of these rites are by no means static, but rather have evolved over time in tandem with changing socio-political circumstances.

Before presenting an overview of the contents of each chapter, we will shortly describe the rites that make up the Hajj.

## **The Rites of Hajj**

Every year, in the last month of the Islamic calendar, millions of Muslims from around the world arrive in Saudi Arabia for the ritual of the Hajj. From the eighth to the thirteenth of the month of *Dhu al-Hijja*, pilgrims perform prescribed rites in Mecca and its vicinity, following in the footsteps of the prophets Abraham and Muhammad. Through the performance of the Hajj, pilgrims are connected with the region in which Islam came into being, with the religion's early days, and with other members of the Muslim community who preceded them in their endeavour to accomplish this obligation.

The Hajj ritual is the fifth pillar of Islam, a duty for all Muslims whose health and financial means allow them to perform it. The other four pillars or obligations are: reciting the testimony of faith (the *shahada*: ‘There is no god but God, and Muhammad is the messenger of God’), praying five times a day, fasting during the month of Ramadan, and the giving of alms. In what stage of their lives Muslims perform the Hajj depends on individual circumstances and local customs. Some considerations might be practical, such as the ease or difficulty of obtaining a Hajj visa or having saved sufficient money for the journey. Others are cultural, such as views on when a person is ready in a spiritual sense to perform the Hajj, or spiritual, such as experiencing ‘the call’ to perform the Hajj by God or wishing for a spiritual closure of life as preparation for death in older age.

Performing the Hajj consists of a sequence of several rites. When pilgrims approach the surroundings of Mecca, they exchange their ordinary clothes for a pilgrimage or *ihram* dress, which symbolises the equality of all pilgrims before God and detachment from everyday life. Entering the state of *ihram*, or consecration, is done at one of the five official *miqat* locations that mark the boundary of the sacred area around Mecca. Men change into two seamless, white sheets that are draped around the waist and the left shoulder. For women there is no uniform dress code; they are free to dress as they find proper, as long as they cover their heads and wear clothes that hide the contours of their bodies. *Niqabs* or face veils are not allowed during the Hajj. It is at the *miqat* locations that pilgrims announce their arrival to God by reciting the *Labbayka* prayer: ‘Here I am at Thy service O Lord, here I am’. As they will continue to do during all Hajj rites, pilgrims will say *du’a*, or supplication prayers, which stimulate a devotional mindset. Then, they head for the Ka’ba, the cubic building covered with a dark-blue (almost black) cover in the centre of the courtyard of the Great Mosque of Mecca. Here they perform the first *tawaf*, the sevenfold, anticlockwise circumambulation of the so-called ‘House of God’ on earth. Pilgrims then proceed to say prayers at the Place of Abraham (*Maqam Ibrahim*), where a stone is kept that is said to have the footprints of this prophet. Next is the rite of *sa’i* (running), which commemorates the search for water by Abraham’s second wife Hagar for her baby son Ishmael. By running or walking seven times between the hillocks of Safa and Marwa, pilgrims commemorate Hagar’s ordeal and her trust in God to save her and her baby. The first day’s rites are concluded with drinking water from the Zamzam spring, which Hagar is said to have discovered at last where Ishmael kicked the sand. Zamzam water is the most coveted souvenir from Mecca, and many pilgrims carry home a jerrycan to share with their dear ones upon return or to use at special occasions such as weddings or in the case of illness. The maximum allowed amount of litres that is accepted depends upon the airline, and varies between ten and twenty litres. The first night of the Hajj is concluded by spending the night in the tent camps of Mina.

The second day of the Hajj journey marks the beginning of the Hajj proper. The most important rite of the Hajj takes place then: the standing (*wuquf*) on Mount Arafat and in its plain. Pilgrims pray from the afternoon until sunset, ask God for forgiveness of their sins, read from the Qur'an, and pray for family, friends, or the world at large. For most pilgrims, besides setting their eyes on the Ka'ba for the first time, the standing on Mount Arafat is the part of the Hajj with the greatest emotional impact. This is because it is conceived of as a kind of 'dress rehearsal' for Judgment Day, and therefore closely related to existential issues. During these long hours, the departure sermon delivered by the Prophet Muhammad on this mountain during his own Hajj in 632 CE, the year of his death, is also commemorated. If pilgrims fail to perform this rite, they must redo the Hajj in another year. In the evening, the pilgrims proceed to Muzdalifa, where they collect pebbles for the next day's stoning ritual. They spend the night praying in the open. On the third day, the pilgrims proceed to Mina, where the rite of stoning the devil takes place at the *jamarat*, the three pillars. This commemorates Abraham's chasing away of the devil when the latter tried to persuade him to disobey God and refrain from offering his son Ishmael. Pilgrims throw seven pebbles, one by one, at the largest of these pillars. This rite is followed by the Feast of the Sacrifice, or *Eid al-Adha*, during which sheep, goats, cattle, and camels are sacrificed in memory of the ram that God supplied as a replacement for the offer that Abraham was ready to bring at God's request: the sacrifice of his son Ishmael. It is then that men have their hair and beard shaved off and women cut off a lock of their hair. This rite concludes the Hajj proper. Pilgrims may take off their *ihram* clothing now if they wish to do so and return to Mecca for another *tawaf*, or seven anticlockwise circumambulations around the Ka'ba, to conclude the Hajj rites. Those who wish may return to Mina, where they may repeat the rite of stoning the three pillars during the following days. When this rite is completed, they return to Mecca to conclude the Hajj with a farewell *tawaf* around the Ka'ba.

Many pilgrims visit the Mosque of the Prophet Muhammad in Medina before or after the Hajj. Strictly speaking, this visit is not part of the Hajj ritual, but for many people it is a highly emotional opportunity to pray in the mosque where the Prophet, his daughter Fatima, and his successors Abu Bakr and Omar are buried.

## Overview of the Contributions

The book opens with a chapter on the anthropology of pilgrimage. Marjo Buitelaar applies the various stages of pilgrimage as a 'rite of passage' to the Hajj and discusses the key concepts of 'communitas' (comradeship and egalitarianism) and 'liminality' (being betwixt and between) that dominated pilgrimage studies until in the 1980s, when the focus shifted towards pilgrimage

shrines as sites of contestation between different groups in society. Buitelaar's contribution concludes with a proposal for an approach to the study of the Hajj that transcends the *communitas*–contestation controversy.

A discussion of the characteristics of the Hajj as a rite of passage is further elaborated in the chapter by Pnina Werbner. Werbner's focus is on the ways Pakistani Muslims in the United Kingdom interpret the Hajj as a ritual of purification and sacred exchange. After discussing the spiritual meanings for her study respondents of the ritual re-enacting of the stories of Abraham and Hagar, she moves on in the second part of her chapter to reflect on transnational dimensions of the Hajj. She does so by studying the interrelationship between pilgrimage to Mecca and pilgrimage to local saints' shrines in Pakistan, which some pilgrims refer to as performing a 'little Hajj', while others condemn the custom as un-Islamic.

Contestations of Hajj-related practices and meanings are also addressed in the chapter by Seán McLoughlin, who investigates personal stories about the Hajj of British Muslims. By analysing video testimonies that were produced in interviews with visitors to the 'Living Islam' Festival in the English East Midlands, McLoughlin demonstrates how Muslim identity is constituted performatively through the enactment of normative religious scripts such as the Hajj. He describes different patterns that can be discerned in personal stories about the expectations and experiences of the Hajj by (prospective) pilgrims of different ages, genders, and social classes. McLoughlin convincingly argues that, while the video-testimonies contain many references to liminal feelings of *communitas* associated with sacred transformation, the interviews also point to the 'fragile boundary' between the sacred and the profane and to the Hajj as 'an arena of competing discourses'.

The Hajj as an arena of competing discourses is the main focus of the chapter by Robert Bianchi. Taking Indonesia and Turkey as case studies for his analysis of the socio-political dimensions of the Hajj, Bianchi argues that the pilgrimage has become a pivotal and highly controversial feature of day-to-day political life in both countries. His analysis demonstrates that the tension between a growing demand for Hajj services on the one hand and the restrictive Saudi quota system on the other generates critical public debates about the role of secular governments in religious affairs and leads to scandals that spark countless battles in the media and legislatures.

Many of the modern Hajj practices and their contestations described by Werbner, McLoughlin, and Bianchi have historical roots in attitudes emerging from the 1850s onwards. Influenced by colonial expansion, intensifying globalisation, and religious reform debates, new lifestyles and forms of religiosity developed in which modern sciences, technologies, and worldviews were incorporated. In his chapter on the Hajj account written by the Muslim reformist thinker Muhammad Rida, Richard van Leeuwen asks what we can learn from Rida's text about the ways the context of modernity affected the

practice and meanings of the Hajj as a ritual obligation, a religious experience, and an act of travelling connected to lifestyle and self-identity.

The arts and material manifestations associated with the Ka'ba in Mecca and the Hajj rites at large are the focus of the next seven chapters. Mecca and the Hajj have always been an important source of inspiration for artists and artisans and a stimulus for the exchange of products and works of art among pilgrims. In her chapter 'Gifts, Souvenirs, and the Hajj', Venetia Porter gives an overview of the religious, political, and symbolic intent of the various gifts that were ordered by the elite and sent to (and kept in) the sanctuaries in Mecca and Medina. This is followed by a discussion of the meaning of much-valued keepsakes that were brought home by pilgrims. She concludes by exploring the local and simultaneously global artistic interaction in nineteenth-century Mecca, in which artists of different nationalities worked and resided side by side in the Holy City of Islam, a question that broadens our horizon on Mecca's importance in Islamic visual history.

In the next chapter, Oliver Moore explores both Islam in China and the visual manifestations of Chinese relations with Mecca and the Hajj. Through case studies, the social meanings of the Hajj in China are discussed, as are aspects of Islam's acculturation to Chinese conditions. The latter is exemplified by the hybrid nature of, for example, medieval tombstones in the south-eastern Chinese port of Quanzhou, known by medieval traders as Zayton, that display the names of *hajjis* in combination with invocations of Chinese mourning. Representations of the sanctuaries in Mecca and Medina also include the Chinese custom of showing mountains as successively receding objects. These and other examples are significant material expressions of the historical acculturation of Islam and the material manifestation of the Hajj in China.

Representations of the Ka'ba and the Great Mosque of Mecca are known from the twelfth century onwards, first on stone and paper and later also on other materials, like ceramics. Their styles are as diverse as the origin of the artists who produced the objects. Displayed in public religious places, such as the Ka'ba tiles embedded in the walls of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Ottoman mosques, they served to educate and remind Muslims of the fifth pillar of Islam. In his chapter, Mehmet Tütüncü studies a hitherto understudied early-eighteenth-century oil painting of Mecca from the collection of Uppsala University in Sweden. It is unique for its large number of identifying labels of a wide variety of buildings that give invaluable insights into the urban fabric of eighteenth-century Mecca, much of which is gone today.

Pilgrims did not return home only with souvenirs of the Hajj. In several societies, a pictorial or textual reminder of their accomplishment was added to the exterior and interior walls of their houses before their homecoming by those who had stayed behind. This custom of decorating the pilgrim's house with murals is most widely spread in Egypt, but also occurs in other places such as Libya, Syria, and the Israel-Palestine region. In Egypt, Remke Kruk and Frans Oort surveyed the murals in the Dakhla

Oasis. Their inventory of different sign units and comparison with the categories found in other studies leads to new insights concerning the meaning of these murals. During the period covered by their survey (1977–2005), Kruk and Oort observed notable changes: announcements are getting increasingly simpler and more uniform, and representations of human beings are mostly found in the older murals.

Besides wall paintings as testimony of the Hajj, pilgrim certificates also functioned as proof of the accomplishment of Islamic pilgrimage. Although they are already known from the twelfth century, the focus of Luitgard Mols' contribution is ten late-nineteenth-century specimens from Dutch collections. The figurative examples boast an extensive pictorial cycle that goes beyond the scope of the rites of the Hajj. This raises the question about their use: were they not solely testimonies of the Hajj, but also souvenirs, devices for instruction, and reminders of the faithful of their religious duties? The question about the purpose of the certificates also touches upon another issue, this time pertaining to the impact of Hajj performance on local social relations: what was their value as the material tokens of the symbolic capital gained by pilgrims upon return home?

Arnoud Vrolijk has approached the study of Hajj-related objects from quite a different angle. This already comes to the fore in the title of his chapter: 'Appearances Belie. A Mecca-Centred World Map and a Snouck Hurgronje Photograph from the Leiden University Collections'. Vrolijk meticulously studied and contextualised a seventeenth-century painted map with Mecca at its centre and a late-nineteenth-century group portrait with actors in oriental dress taken at the Dutch consulate in Jeddah, revealing different layers of meaning and intent.

In the final chapter, Neil van der Linden lists a selection of songs that were sung to celebrate and commemorate the ritual of the Hajj. Offering insights into intangible practices related to the Hajj, the developments that occur in this musical practice in the twentieth century and first decades of the twenty-first also serve to illustrate the evolution and adaptation of Hajj-related practices in general.

Finally, a note on the transliteration: We have chosen to keep the transliteration of Arabic and Urdu as simple as possible in the running text, avoiding diacritical marks and ayns and hamzahs, except in the case of bibliographical references. In the contribution of Mehmet Tütüncü, where Ottoman legends are discussed in an early-eighteenth-century painting of Mecca and its surroundings, Turkish spellings are also used. Dates are commonly given as CE dates. Where Hijri dates are used, they are followed by the Gregorian date in parentheses (and vice versa).

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