

Routledge Studies in Pilgrimage, Religious Travel and Tourism

MUSLIM WOMEN'S PILGRIMAGE TO MECCA AND BEYOND

RECONFIGURING GENDER, RELIGION,
AND MOBILITY

Edited by
Marjo Buitelaar, Manja Stephan-Emmrich,
and Viola Thimm



Muslim Women's Pilgrimage to Mecca and Beyond

This book investigates female Muslims pilgrimage practices and how these relate to women's mobility, social relations, identities, and the power structures that shape women's lives. Bringing together scholars from different disciplines and regional expertise, it offers in-depth investigation of the gendered dimensions of Muslim pilgrimage and the life-worlds of female pilgrims. With a variety of case studies, the contributors explore the experiences of female pilgrims to Mecca and other pilgrimage sites, and how these are embedded in historical and current contexts of globalisation and transnational mobility. This volume will be relevant to a broad audience of researchers across pilgrimage, gender, religious, and Islamic studies.

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Viola Thimm is Professorial Candidate (Habilitation) at the Institute of Anthropology, University of Heidelberg, Germany. She has been Principal Investigator of the project 'From Malaysia to Dubai: Muslim pilgrimage and gender in the context of consuming practices' since October 2013 (funded by the Olympia Morata Programme in support of young female professors, DFG, and the 'Nachwuchsinitiative Universität Hamburg' – Initiative for young scholars).

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The public prominence of religion has increased globally in recent years, while places associated with religion, such as pilgrimage centers, and famous cathedrals, temples and shrines, have attracted growing numbers of visitors and media attention. Such developments are part of a global process where different forms of travel – physical movement such as labor and lifestyle migration, tourism of various forms, the cultural heritage industry and pilgrimage – have become a major feature of the modern world. These translocal and transnational processes involve flows of not just people but also material objects, ideas, information, images and capital. This series provides a new forum for studies based around these themes, drawing together research on the relationships between religion, travel and tourism from a variety of disciplinary perspectives, ranging from anthropology, sociology, geography, history and religious studies to newly emergent areas such as tourism and migration studies.

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Introduction

Muslim pilgrimage through the lens of women's new mobilities

Marjo Buitelaar, Manja Stephan-Emmrich* and
Viola Thimm**

Muslim pilgrimage, gender, mobility

Travel to Arab countries is increasing more rapidly than travel to any other region of the world; the annual average growth is 10%. A significant part of this growth is due to the rising popularity of pilgrimage to Mecca. Every year, 300–330 million Muslims visit Mecca to perform hajj or *umra*. Hajj is the compulsory pilgrimage that every able Muslim should perform once in a lifetime, and *umra* is the 'minor' or voluntary pilgrimage (Vukonić 2010, 33). Through hajj and *umra* performance, pilgrims connect to a shared Islamic past and an imagined spiritual homeland, thus locating themselves ritually, symbolically and emotionally in and across 'cartographies of belief, practice, and identity' (Mc Loughlin 2015, 43). By promoting feelings of belonging to the *umma*, the community of believers, pilgrimage to Mecca thus plays an important role in Muslim homemaking and crossing boundaries on different levels, from the local to trans-local and global (Tweed 2006).

Although in practice hajj and *umra* pilgrims engage in numerous unscripted activities, both the compulsory and the voluntary pilgrimage to Mecca are strongly scripted ritual events. Hajj can only be performed between the 8th and the 12th day of Dhu al-ḥijjah, the last month of the Islamic calendar. Before commencing the hajj rites in and outside Mecca, pilgrims take off their everyday clothes to enter the state of *ihrām* or consecration. Whilst in *ihrām*, they are not allowed to shave, cut their nails or hair, or use perfumed toiletries. Sexual intercourse is also prohibited, as is the killing of animals. The rites in Mecca begin with the *tawāf*, the sevenfold circumambulation of the Ka'ba, the cubic building that represents God's house on earth in the centre of the court of the Grand Mosque in Mecca. After having performed the *tawāf*, pilgrims drink water from the well Zamzam and then walk (briskly in case of being male) back and forth seven times between the two hillocks of Safa and Marwa. This rite is called *sa'y*. It commemorates the plight of Hajar as she ran through the desert to find water for her son Ishmael after having been abandoned by her husband

* Reflecting equal contribution and responsibility, the order of author names in the introduction and that of editor names for the volume as a whole is purely alphabetical.

the prophet Ibrahim, known as Abraham in the Judeo-Christian tradition. Pilgrims then head to the hill of Arafat, which is located 25 kilometres outside Mecca. Arafat is where the prophet Muhammed is believed to have delivered his last sermon. At Arafat they meditate and pray for forgiveness of their sins from noon to sunset, the so-called rite of *wuqūf*. From Arafat, they go to the plain of Muzdalifa, where they collect pebbles for the *ramy al-jamarāt*, the ‘pelting of the pillars’, which takes place during the following days when they throw the pebbles at the three pillars in Mina, a rite that symbolizes the stoning of Satan. The first round of stoning marks the end of the hajj proper, marked by cutting a lock of hair (for women) or completely shaving off one’s hair (for men). This is followed by sacrificing an animal, usually a sheep. Once the sacrificial rite is completed the pilgrims return to Mecca. They can choose to travel back to the *jamarāt* for further stoning or to stay in Mecca. Before leaving the city to go home or travel onwards to Medina to visit the grave of the prophet Muhammad, they perform a ‘farewell’ umra. The umra ritual consists of doing the *tawāf* and the *sa’y*. The umra ritual is thus an intrinsic part of hajj, but it can also be performed on its own at any time of the year outside the hajj season. While the hajj lasts five days, an umra can be completed within two hours, as only the rites in Mecca are performed.

Usually much less scripted than hajj and umra is a third type of Muslim pilgrimage, which is known as *ziyāra*, an Arabic term meaning ‘visit’ or ‘visitation’ (cf. e.g. Arjana 2017). *Ziyāra* refers to visits to the shrines of local saints or generally recognized important figures in Islamic historiography. Muslim understandings of *ziyāra* differ from region to region. While most Muslims would recognize visiting the Al-Aqsa mosque in Jerusalem or the tomb of the prophet Muhammad in Medina as recommendable, for Shi’i Muslims *ziyāra* to the tombs of family members and companions of the prophet Muhammad, as well as visits to the shrines of *Imāmzādah*, descendants of Shi’i Imams, are considered nearly if not equally valuable as visiting Medina or Jerusalem. In a different vein, and even more closely related to the pilgrimage to Mecca, in some parts of the world *ziyāra* practices at certain local saint shrines occur specifically during the hajj season, functioning as ‘hajj of the poor’, a substitute pilgrimage for those who cannot afford to perform hajj (cf. Al-Ajarma 2020; Delage 2018, 70). In some cases, having performed a substitute pilgrimage a number of times is considered equal to having performed hajj.

The existing research on all three forms of Muslim pilgrimage provides valuable case studies for theorization in the fields of anthropology, religion studies, global history and area studies; in various studies a wide range of topics is addressed such as the intertwining of pilgrimage and other forms of Muslim travel with politics and economy (Rahimi and Eshaghi 2019; Bianchi 2004; Eickelman and Piscatori 1990), the spatial dimension of sainthood (Stauth and Schielke 2008) and the globality of Muslim networks (Freitag and von Oppen 2010; Cooke and Lawrence 2005).

While there is a considerable body of historical studies on hajj (cf. e.g. Can, forthcoming; Riyad 2017; Green 2015; Kane 2015; Slight 2015; Faroqi 2014; Tagliacozzo 2013; McMillan 2011; Wheeler 2006; Peters 1994) pilgrimage to Mecca has only recently become the subject of in-depth ethnographic research (cf. Al-Ajarma 2020; McLoughlin 2015, 2013, 2010, 2009a, 2009b; Saghi 2010). An obvious reason for this is that for non-Muslims Mecca is forbidden territory. Non-Muslim anthropologists tend to face less restrictions in getting access to local saint shrines. *Ziyāra* practices have therefore received much more attention than hajj and umra performances (cf. Rahimi and Eshaghi 2019; Laksana 2014; Stauth and Schielke 2008; Werbner 2003; Reysoo 1991; Eickelman 1976). As a result of this imbalance, insights in the local embeddedness of present-day hajj and umra practices have, as yet, not gained much prominence in the anthropology of pilgrimage. A first aim of this book is to provide the anthropological approach to hajj studies a stronger anchorage in pilgrimage studies. Therefore, most contributions focus on scripted and unscripted hajj and umra practices.

More specifically, the focus in this volume is on the views and practices of female pilgrims. Research on Muslim pilgrimage, particularly that on Meccan pilgrimage, lacks a systematic gender perspective. In the existing body of literature, only a few book chapters or articles offer an anthropological, sociological or religious studies perspective on gendered dimensions of Muslim pilgrimage (Sayeed 2016; Werbner 2015; Jaschok and Jingjun 2014; Honarpisheh 2013; Cooper 2012; Tapper 1990; Young 1990; Mernissi 1977). Although these works provide relevant insights into the gendered dimensions of pilgrimage and how these are embedded in broader socio-religious contexts, in-depth investigation of Muslim pilgrimage practices with a systematic gender optic is, as yet, lacking.

This is not the case for pilgrimage studies in more general terms. A number of studies have dealt with pilgrimage from a gender studies perspective. These studies predominantly deal with the Christian tradition, however (see e.g., Jansen and Notermans 2012; Samson 2012; Baker 2010; Derks 2009). The pilgrimage experiences of Muslim women are therefore largely missing in these studies. To remedy this lacuna, the contributions in this book investigate various gendered dimensions of Muslim pilgrimage by putting the perspective of women centre stage. All contributors address the issue of how female Muslim pilgrims are positioned and position themselves in multiple intersecting cultural and social discourses and contexts. Gratefully building on and aiming to contribute to the gendered study of pilgrimage in the wider field of pilgrimage studies (see e.g., Fedele 2013; Jansen and Notermans 2012; Samson 2012; Baker 2010; Derks 2009; Hermkens et al. 2009; Dubisch 1995), our volume explores how the religious imagination, experiences and identity of female Muslim pilgrims are informed by, and, in turn, inform, their agency, their socio-economic and political position, and their various senses of belonging.

To shed light on the interface between the religious and secular worlds that the women inhabit whose pilgrimage practices we study, we combine a gender perspective with a mobilities approach (cf. Coleman and Eade 2004). Approaching hajj, umra and *ziyāra* as meaningful and potentially transformative movements, the focus is on the agency of women as mobile actors who appropriate, re-negotiate and re-create authoritative ways of performing and interpreting pilgrimage traditions. To this end, we study the interplay between women's physical and social mobility to ask what opportunities female pilgrims see for themselves and where they experience social, cultural, political and other restraints in the various goals they pursue by performing pilgrimage. Thus we address connections between pilgrimage and embodied spirituality, economic and consumption patterns, politics, the nexus between the sacred and the mundane, and the relationship between extra-ordinary space and time and everyday life-worlds.

The case studies in this volume address these connections in different ways. Most chapters concern women's hajj practices (Al-Ajarma, Buitelaar, Fewkes, Karić, Kenny, Kadrouch-Outmany & Buitelaar and Van Leeuwen). Two chapters complement this key area by investigating umra (Lücking, Thimm). The comparative perspective of female participation in all three modalities of Muslim pilgrimage is enriched by the focus on *ziyāra* in yet another contribution (Rahbari). The various chapters that make up the volume are linked and speak to each other by making Muslim women and girls visible in Muslim pilgrimage and studying their experiences of being mobile through a gender lens.

This is not only a descriptive or empirical task but ties in with epistemological questions of knowledge production on Muslim pilgrimage. The contributions of Jacqueline Fewkes and Dženita Karić draw attention to the fact that historical source texts are mostly written and interpreted by men. As a result, female voices have predominantly been absent in Muslim pilgrimage accounts. The under-representation of women's experiences in written hajj narratives does not necessarily imply, however, that women have not participated in hajj performances. This calls for reflection on how to retrieve voices that seem to be absent in textual sources. Who is absent and why? Gender here intersects with other social categories of Muslims who similarly occupy marginalized positions in historical analyses and writings. For example, although a few historical testimonies exist concerning elite or aristocratic women's hajj journeys (e.g. Brack 2011; Mahallati 2011; Allen 2010; Lambert-Hurley 2008; Johnson 2000), these accounts do not capture the perspective of hajj performances by women of lower strata in society.

Tracing and studying the voices of female pilgrims appear all the more relevant today, as the rapid pace of globalization of hajj is accompanied by a feminization of transnational mobility that brings Mecca increasingly within reach of women from various social positions. Taking the empirical research void and the epistemological reflection as a starting point, the

main objective of this book is to reconfigure our understanding of Muslim pilgrimage through the lens of women's new mobilities. Thus, in the remainder of this introductory chapter we reflect on how combining a gender perspective and a mobilities approach can generate new findings and insights in the field of Muslim pilgrimage studies in particular and contribute to pilgrimage research and Muslim travel and mobility studies in general.

Globalization and women's new mobilities

The explosive growth of the pilgrimage to Mecca is a distinctively Muslim contribution to globalization with far-reaching political, economic and social ramifications (Bianchi 2013). Integrated into local and global tourism industries, both Meccan and local forms of pilgrimage are absorbed by market-driven economies and Islamic consumerism (Thimm 2017; Stephan-Emmrich and Mirzoev 2016; McLoughlin 2015). As Simon Coleman and John Eade write in their introduction to *Pilgrimage and Political Economy: Translating the Sacred*, this raises questions concerning what constitutes religion, what economic activity and what their interrelationship is in the wider landscape of networks, mobility, infrastructure and governance that shapes the practices at pilgrim sites (Coleman and Eade 2018, 3–4). Or, in the words of Ian Reader (2014, 8), it calls for studying how pilgrimages 'operate not only in the marketplace but through it'.

In this volume, Mirjam Lücking investigates the nexus between the marketplace and religious tourism in the activities of Muslim and Christian Indonesian pilgrims as they make a stop-over in Jerusalem on their way to Mecca to perform umra. Lücking demonstrates that religious consumerism in the form of buying souvenirs is typically an activity that women engage in. One reason for this is that in Javanese patterns of gender relations women play an important role in financial transactions. Money is considered to be impure, and, according to Javanese conceptions of femininity, so are women. For Indonesian Muslim women, shopping whilst on pilgrimage also carries religious connotations – the goods they purchase acquire extra value because buying them supposedly supports Palestinians, whom they conceive of as their 'Muslim brothers and sisters'.

In many parts of the Muslim world, Islamic consumerism has been made possible by the emergence of new Muslim urban middle classes (McLoughlin 2015; Werbner 2015). Members of these new Muslim middle classes are the main actors in the commodification and marketization of Meccan pilgrimage and particular local pilgrimage sites (Mols and Buiteelaar 2015; Reader 2014). Notably, in some countries, most strikingly in parts of Asia, transnational labour migration, mobile entrepreneurship and new urban middle-class religiosities are highly feminized (Frisk 2009; Stivens 1998). By shifting the regional focus to Africa, in this volume Erin Kenny discusses the potential of what Mario Katić (2018) coined as 'pilgrimage capital' for female entrepreneurs in Guinea, West Africa. These

women's status as pilgrims enhances how others come to respect and patronize their business. Kenny sketches how upon return from Mecca female Guinean pilgrims become important brokers of knowledge about Islamic fashion styles. She demonstrates how this enables these women to acquire the necessary resources to open up Islamic fashion businesses. In turn, the profits made allow the female entrepreneurs to engage in repetitive pilgrimage, thus expanding both their economic and religious capital.

To contextualize the interlinkages between Muslim pilgrimage and the feminization of the marketplace and globalization, social and infrastructural developments on both local and global scales must be taken into account. Within the broader field of mobility studies, mobility is understood as representing the generally shared notion that today's world is in constant flux, due to, for instance, technical development, wide arrays of infrastructure and digital communication (Fábos and Isotalo 2014). This current mobile world is characterized by increasingly dense and rapid movements of people, objects, narratives, symbols and representations. Since people have always been mobile, on the descriptive level mobility is obviously not a new phenomenon. Scholarly attention and an analytical approach to mobility, however, have developed only relatively recently. Across disciplines such as anthropology, geography, history, sociology or transportation research, approaching social phenomena through the lens of movement – either theoretically or empirically framed – has emerged as the 'new mobilities paradigm' or 'mobility turn' (see Hannam et al. 2006). Rather than the additive classification of different forms of movement under one umbrella term, what characterizes the approach in current mobilities studies is that it grasps the relations between human mobility, technology and transportation, bringing together technical development, infrastructure, objects and human movement (Endres et al. 2016, 1).

The importance of the mobility turn for developing new understandings of pilgrimage finds increasing resonance in research (Scriven 2014). In line with the emphasis in mobilities studies on the dialectic relationship between movement and place-making, in this volume we trace the spatial and temporal dimensions of Muslim women's pilgrimage as a multifaceted socio-cultural practice. Our focus is therefore not restricted to the geography of pilgrimage. We understand mobility as a relation: an orientation to one's self, to others and to the world (Adey 2017, XV). Our emphasis on the embodied, social aspects of Muslim women's mobility resonates with Bajc, Coleman and Eade (2007, 321), who state that pilgrimage may inspire us to rethink the 'complex interplay of forces involved in its emplacement within, and flows through, numerous social and cultural contexts'. While concepts like 'flow' and 'fluidity' invite thinking about Muslim pilgrimage in terms of global mobility, the specifics of the sacred, spiritual and moral geographies in which women's pilgrimage practices and experiences are embedded underline the meaningful or 'momentous' nature of this kind of journey (Salazar 2018). Just as mobility is hardly ever an end in itself (Salazar 2018,

6), in pilgrimage performance the outer physical and inner spiritual or emotional journey intertwine in a dynamic process that defines and shapes the people involved, reworks their subjectivities and transforms the meanings of place (Salazar 2018, 6; Scriven 2014).

‘Mobility’ is not merely a descriptive term, but also has a prescriptive dimension that either explicitly or implicitly conveys normative views on who is expected to be mobile in what ways and to which purposes. The rapidly increasing scope and density of flows of people, ideas and goods in today’s globalized world not only influence the desires of people for and actual practices of moving, but also inform their conceptions and ideologies about the purposes and effects of mobility. As a result of people’s new mobilities, social representations of time and space are modified, and new conceptions of im/mobility emerge (e.g. Salazar 2018; Adey 2017).

For instance, a so-called ‘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 (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, particularly among younger generations, ‘being on the move’ seems to have become a mode of living. Such lifestyle developments have significant implications on people’s travel practices.

Modern technology has had enduring consequences on Muslim communities and their forms of travelling during the era of colonial empires such as the introduction of the steamship (Tagliacozzo 2016; Green 2015) or long-distance railways (Kane 2015). The contribution by Richard van Leeuwen in this volume zooms in on the impact on women’s pilgrimage practices of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century modernization processes. Van Leeuwen discusses the writings on hajj by Bint al-Shāṭi’ (1913–1998), who profited from the *nahḍa* or ‘Awakening Movement’ to become one of the first Egyptian female scholars. Central to the chapter’s argument is how this reformist movement that arose in response to new technology and new forms of knowledge has influenced the interpretations of hajj by intellectuals like Bint al-Shāṭi’. Van Leeuwen illustrates the connection between new modes of transportation and the social conditions of feminized mobility by presenting translated quotations from the original Arabic text in which Bint al-Shāṭi’ reflects, for instance, on the historical development from camel riding to airplanes as a means to reach Mecca.

The inclusive approach inherent to the category of mobility invites one to study processes of religious becoming and belonging in the context of

individual experiences of physical movement. In this volume, the contribution by Khadija Kadrouch-Outmany and Marjo Buitelaar demonstrates how a seemingly mundane matter as sanitary arrangements during hajj can come to stand for the much larger issue of religious underpinning of gender equality. The authors discuss contestations of Saudi regulations concerning gender-segregation in certain places in Mecca by a group of young female pilgrims from the Netherlands. The women object to Saudi spatial arrangements not only as hindrances to their spiritual journey, but also because they contradict the women's views on gender equality. The authors argue that feelings of being denied equal access to spiritual reward in comparison to male pilgrims played a crucial role in women's responses to the restrictions they faced. They point out that the significance of women's objections to restrictions on their freedom of movement reaches beyond religious interests. Joint hajj performance with their husbands was also motivated by the desire to establish the women's marriage on an equal footing. This link to the specific quotidian life-worlds of the women, like those of many other female pilgrims sketched in this volume, shows that mobility is an integral part of religious self-formation and informs how religious experiences are interpreted in relation to changing notions and assessments of places that people currently dwell in, inhabited in the past or long to be in in future (Stephan-Emmrich 2018).

Women's involvement in processes of religious place-making in the context of Meccan pilgrimage reminds us that mobility intertwines with political processes both at home and abroad. As the case study by Kadrouch-Outmany and Buitelaar illustrates, mobilities are both productive of social relations and produced by them. The gendered politics of mobility during hajj performance thus provide insights into how, from the micro-movement of bodies to the politics of global travel, mobilities are implicated in the production and distribution of power (Cresswell 2010). Moreover, the spatiality of these politics forces us to study how social, cultural, political, economic and other contexts intersect in shaping Muslim women's mobilities and their related experiences as well as the ways in which these experiences are meaningful to them (Adey 2017, 63).

While a 'being on the move' lifestyle is a rather new phenomenon in most parts of the world, the flow-form conception of mobility it implies can also be recognized in the tradition of *ziyāra* to local Muslim saint shrines. One does not have to travel great distances to get to a local shrine, and visits are often frequent and part of everyday life rather than marking a transition from one season or life-stage to another. Until a few decades ago, for example, for many urban women in countries like Morocco, Turkey or Iran, visiting the tomb of a saint in the local cemetery was a regular Friday outing. Alternatively, women would visit the saint shrine during other days of the week to obtain the saint's *baraka*, divine power, or to request the saint's intercession for issues that troubled them. Visiting saint shrines, then, was very much a part of women's daily life-world and did not alter their status

or position (see Honarpisheh 2013; Tapper 1990; Mernissi 1977). By investigating Shi'i women's rituals of pilgrimage to Lady Masoumeh's shrine in Qom, Ladan Rahbari demonstrates in her contribution how her interlocutors subvert limitations they would face in mixed-gender spaces by practicing their pilgrimage in mobile single-sex spaces, that is, in a private car. The mode of transportation, then, opens up the possibility to gain autonomy and agency.

As a result of the global wave of orthodoxy aimed at 'purifying' Islam from local customs and beliefs that has swept through the Muslim world since the 1990s onwards, visiting local saint shrines has become an increasingly contested practice, particularly among Sunni Muslims. In contrast, mosque attendance has grown tremendously, most spectacularly in terms of the percentage of female participants. It is often in mosques that women learn that visiting Mecca is the only legitimate form of Muslim pilgrimage. Contrary to local pilgrimage, pilgrimage to Mecca has until recently been very much part of a 'limit-form' conception of mobility that poses clear spatial and temporal boundaries. Until a few decades ago, most Muslims tended to conceive of hajj performance as a once-in-a-life-time event and a major rite of passage that marks a radical change in one status and lifestyle. It was also associated with the more affluent in society. Since women in general tended to be less mobile and had less access to capital, except for in South-East Asia, where the number of female pilgrims has always been higher (Bianchi 2004, 119), in former days significantly more men than women performed hajj. They did so mostly at an advanced age, postponing the 'ultimate' religious duty until preparing to meet their Creator. In addition, it was generally felt that in terms of piety one should be 'ready' to go on hajj and that one would be 'called' to Mecca when God thought it appropriate.

While investigating how pilgrimage and cultural conceptions of mobility connect offers a productive approach to understand shifts in practices and meanings, the contribution in this volume by Fewkes reminds us that our inferences about the restraints that certain categories of women may face in their pilgrimage movements are not necessarily based on empirical facts (only) but also on where and how we look. The focus in Fewkes's chapter is on women's pilgrimage activities between the 14th and 19th centuries on the Indian Ocean, which she conceptualizes as an integrated, highly regionally connected space of movement. By contextualizing historical women's hajj journeys as part of broader movements based on trade and diplomacy, female involvement that would otherwise remain obscured becomes visible. Thus analyzing women's mobility within a wider configuration of movements, Fewkes demonstrates that pilgrimage, commerce and migration are overlapping social realms in which social actors can best be grasped as navigating all of them at the same time.

Air travel and the rise of new middle classes have brought hajj within reach of a much larger group of people in recent decades. In particular, we

see many more young and female Muslims perform pilgrimage. Moreover, an increasing number of pilgrims do not expect to visit Mecca just once but anticipate making multiple hajj performances. A related phenomenon is that among younger Muslims it has become less common to be addressed as *Hajji* (for males) or *Hajja* (for females), the honorific title for people who have performed hajj. One reason for this is that the title of *Hajji* or *Hajja* carries connotations with old age (Buitelaar 2018a, 35). Another reason 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 hold the view that not only should one strive to lead an ethically sound lifestyle both before and after hajj performance, but also that nobody is perfect; lapses are likely to occur and can be repaired by going on hajj once more.

The chapter by Karić in this volume demonstrates that shifts in etiquette may not only be indicative of changes in hajj practices due to the affordances of new transportation and the rise of Muslim middle classes, but equally of changing political circumstances and shifts in gender relations. Karić discusses recent developments in the views and practices of Bosnian Muslims with regards to hajj. In the past, addressing a woman as *hadžinica*, the local form of *Hajja*, was a reference to her being married to a man who had performed hajj. Today, a *hadžinica* is a woman who has performed pilgrimage herself. The shift in use of the term of address illustrates two things: first, nowadays women tend to be defined less in terms of the religious reputation of their husband, and second, more women than before perform hajj themselves. Karić explains the shift in etiquette against the background of the local Bosnian political context where Muslim identity has been rediscovered in a post-socialist era.

While Karić's contribution discusses a particular regional case, the overall picture that comes to the fore when comparing different case studies of present-day hajj performance is that a conception of space-time mobility in which a person goes through clearly defined life-stages continues to inform such performances only to a certain extent. Besides being influenced by the trend of repetitive hajj journeys, conceptions of mobility that underlie the experience and meanings of modern practices of the hajj are informed by the fact that the boundaries between one's quotidian life-world and the sacred city of Mecca are not absolute; numerous instances of 'context collapse' occur (see Davis and Jurgenson 2018). Thanks to Wi-Fi access in the courtyard of the Grand Mosque in Mecca, for example, pilgrims can stay in touch with the family and friends they left behind as they circumambulate the Ka'ba. Vice versa, those who stay at home can virtually join the pilgrims on their hajj journey (see Caidi, Beazley and Marquez 2018).

Integrating pilgrimage into one's daily life-world by making repetitive spiritual journeys to Mecca and Medina is directly related to shifts in conceptions of religiosity. Piety is no longer considered to come predominantly

with old age or to progress according to clear-cut stages such as having performed hajj (cf. Buitelaar 2015, 17). Rather, for many Muslims becoming pious is an actively pursued project of self-development (cf. Mahmood 2006). The contribution by Kenny in this volume demonstrates how the repetitive hajj journeys of Guinean female entrepreneurs in the fashion branch not only enhance their personal insights about what customers might desire in the marketplace, but also allows them to create a pious persona for themselves.

The ‘routinization’ of hajj performance (Saghi 2010) can thus be conceived of as a technique of the self to incorporate pious dispositions (cf. Buitelaar 2018a, 37). This trend is very much in line with the notions of individualism and self-identity as a ‘reflexive project’ (Giddens 1991) that characterize conceptions of the self in the flow-discourse that is part of postmodernity. Since religious selves intertwine closely with other identifications and pursuits, piety may come with ups and downs, and may suddenly gain in urgency, particularly in moments of ambivalence and personal crisis (Beekers and Kloos 2018). In such circumstances, rather than being motivated by a repetitive pursuit of piety, a spontaneous decision to perform hajj or umra can be prompted by a desire for a ‘time-out’ or a ‘spiritual boost’ to help one to deal with one’s predicament (Buitelaar 2018b, 81). In terms of Schielke’s argument about the appeal of Islam as a ‘grand scheme’ (cf. Schielke 2010, 14), one could say that precisely because Mecca is where Islam originated and since the Ka’ba there represents God’s presence and the ideal of the Muslim community, most Muslims posit the city above and outside the imperfections of everyday life. From this elevated position, its ‘magic’ can be evoked to seek guidance and strength when dealing with ambiguities, fears and struggles in everyday life.

In line with an approach to religion as an appealing ‘grand scheme’ to make sense of everyday life, the authors in this volume examine how the pilgrimage practices of female Muslims and the meanings they attach to them emerge from a lived engagement with various cultural discourses and practices that inform the ways in which the women try to make sense of the complexities of daily life. Although the pilgrimage to Mecca is compulsory for every able Muslim, as all contributions in this volume attest, individual Muslims have their own motives to wish to perform the pilgrimage at a specific moment in their lives. In this sense Mecca can be seen as a ‘palimpsest’ (Smith 2008, 5), in which individual pilgrims inscribe their own meanings on the existing normative hajj and umra ‘scripts’. Rather than creating different layers, this results in entangled meanings in which the past impinges on present meanings (cf. Kinnard 2014, 30). Applying Dialogical Self Theory (cf. Hermans and Gieser 2012) to study how pilgrims make sense of their experiences in their personal hajj narratives in her single-authored contribution, Buitelaar analyzes the ‘voices’ that represent intersecting identifications in the hajj memoir of Asra Nomani (2005). She traces how in

her narrations Nomani is engaged in dialogues with various personal and collective voices as she moves back and forth between different ‘I-positions’ such as ‘I the emancipated American woman’ and ‘I the Muslim daughter’.

Kholoud Al-Ajarma and Viola Thimm also explicitly adopt an intersectionality approach (cf. Shields 2008; Brah and Phoenix 2004; Crenshaw 1989) in their contributions by scrutinizing how religious and other social identifications co-constitute each other and shape the ways female pilgrims negotiate their locations in society. In her chapter on women’s umra practices, Thimm discusses how within the context of Saudi governance over Mecca, the ways that citizenship and gender intersect can have different implications for the possibilities women have to realize their wish to perform pilgrimage. The citizenship of Southeast Asian women under 45 restricts their opportunities to go on pilgrimage, for example, while that of nationals from the Gulf states can facilitate umra performance. A woman’s particular religious affiliation can likewise influence the feasibility of performing umra without a *mahram*, a male guardian. Thimm’s contribution thus draws our attention to how women’s spiritual and moral agency in pilgrimage activities and their wider capacity to be mobile or lack thereof is informed by their intersecting identifications.

Likewise, Al-Ajarma asks how age, gender and class intersect in facilitating or restricting the physical and social mobility of Moroccan women as they (aspire to) go on hajj. She demonstrates that the kinds of ‘capital’ one needs and can acquire through hajj performance tends to vary with the different social positions that women occupy on the basis of their intersecting identifications. While, for instance, the Saudi regulation that female pilgrims under the age of 45 must be accompanied by a *mahram* is a hurdle that all younger women wishing to undertake the journey to Mecca face, more affluent women may more easily find male relatives in their networks who can afford to join them than women from lower strata in society. As the story of one of the women discussed by Al-Ajarma illustrates, however, once a poor woman does accomplish to perform hajj, the new social bonds with fellow pilgrims may provide her with social capital that she can mobilize upon return home.

What all contributions in the volume share is that, similar to the intersectionally driven argumentation in Buitelaar’s, Thimm’s and Al-Ajarma’s contributions, each of them addresses how various axes of differentiation such as class, gender, ethnicity and nationality intertwine in pilgrimage practices in particular ways and shape the form and degree to which women can be mobile, and the ways in which their mobility is formed, framed, regulated, restricted or promoted.

In conclusion: pilgrimage, ‘grand schemes’ and Muslim women’s mobilities in everyday life

Approaching female Muslims’ pilgrimage performance from the perspective of the specific mobility cultures that shape women’s life-worlds, implies

a focus on how such cultures inform the normative, social and practical dimensions of their pilgrimage practices, and, in turn, how women's practices inform specific discourses on their mobility. With reference to the 'Muslim' in Muslim women's pilgrimage, the authors in this volume trace how Islam operates as one of the compelling grand schemes that inform women's meaning-making processes in everyday life, alongside other grand schemes such as ideals about marriage, consumerism and so on (cf. Schielke and Debevec 2012). The dialectic between 'grand schemes' and 'ordinary lives' allows us to understand Muslim women's pilgrimage as journeys whose momentous and transformative nature reveals itself in how women negotiate greater powers, religious ideals and compelling promises that different grand schemes offer (Schielke 2015, 90).

Analyzing female pilgrimage practices by applying a lens that includes power and hierarchy means looking at the myriad ways in which specific intersections of identifications shape women's desires and opportunities for mobility as well as the restrictions they face. The main aim of this book is to contribute to Islam studies, pilgrimage studies and mobilities studies by investigating how the mobilities of female Muslim pilgrims are based on the interplay of the different social relations, identifications and power structures that shape their life-worlds, and how these mobilities inform their pilgrimage practices and the meanings they attach to them.

Insofar as addressing Muslim pilgrimage 'foregrounds' Islam, the analysis through the lens of women's new mobilities thus contributes to 'de-exceptionalizing' Islam (cf. Coleman 2013). We understand the book as a step in establishing a new, cross-cutting research theme that brings together scholars from different disciplines and regional expertise who are interested in an involvement into the connectedness between gender theory, religious principles, lived social practices and new approaches to mobility.

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1 Under male supervision?

Nationality, age and Islamic belief as basis for Muslim women's pilgrimage

Viola Thimm

Introduction

'Saudi Arabia turns back 1,000 female pilgrims from Nigeria' headlines CNN in September 2012. The newspaper article informs its readers:

Saudi law requires each female pilgrim under the age of 45 years to have a male sponsor during the pilgrimage journey, regardless of nationality. "This rule is applied to all women in general who want to get an entry visa to Saudi Arabia to perform Hajj," pilgrimage ministry spokesman Hatim bin Hassan Qadhi said in the statement. (...) [T]he women were actually accompanied by male escorts, but (..) the checking system at the Jeddah airport was such that men were checked, cleared and asked to proceed.

This newspaper clipping highlights that: (1) female pilgrims from all over the world are required to enter Saudi Arabia with an eligible male chaperone; (2) this condition becomes especially relevant on a formal level for citizens who need a visa to enter Saudi Arabia; and (3) female pilgrims who exceed a certain age are excluded from the regulation. These regulations imply favouring particular categories of people and limiting others when it comes to the performance of Muslim pilgrimage. Given this as a starting point, this chapter wants to examine which role gender, religion, age and nationality – understood as social status positions – play in the context of hajj (pilgrimage) and umra (the 'minor' or voluntary pilgrimage). Using an intersectionality approach to compare the stories of women from Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Malaysia, the two guiding questions will be: Under which conditions do the identifications, categories and practices of gender, religion, age and nationality lead to restrictions or privileges for certain categories of people when it comes to the performance of Muslim pilgrimage? In what way do these identifications, categories and practices intersect with one another, that is, when and how do some of them have more impact than others?

To anticipate, many of the pilgrimage rituals (see introduction) can be either performed or experienced differently by women and men (Thimm, forthcoming). This chapter will only deal with the regulation that women have to be accompanied by a male chaperone (*maḥram*), whereas men do not face similar restraints. This chaperone is defined as a close male relative to whom the female pilgrim is in a relationship that excludes marriage. The Nigerian women pushed back from Saudi Arabia, introduced at the beginning, were accused of not being accompanied by such a male guardian. The requirement for women to be under male supervision during pilgrimage is subject to the visa rules and regulations issued by the Saudi Arabian government, which may be in agreement or disagreement with the particular Islamic interpretation the believers themselves follow. As these conditions intersect and cannot be discussed as isolated from one another, I will examine how they co-constitute each other by turning to the stories by three women related to Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Malaysia that exemplify some of these entanglements.

Women's perspectives, let alone gendered or even intersectional perspectives, have not yet been adequately analyzed regarding the hajj and umra. Only a very few articles or book chapters deal with detailed nuances of gendered aspects of Muslim pilgrimage (Sayeed 2016; Werbner 2015; Honarpisheh 2013; Cooper 2012; Young 1993; Tapper 1990), but scholarship has so far lacked a systematic approach. Some historical approaches deal with women's travelogues, mostly written by aristocratic women, but they do not necessarily apply a gender lens (e.g. Mahallati 2011; Johnson 2000).¹ In fact, encompassing works dealing with Muslim pilgrims (e.g. Arjana 2017, Tagliacozzo 2013) tend to neglect women's perspectives and describe men's practices such as wearing the two white unstitched pieces of cloth (*kain ihram* in Malay) as valid for both genders – thus ignoring parts of women's life worlds during pilgrimage (Thimm, forthcoming). With this overall dearth of scholarship, it is not surprising that going beyond an examination of gender issues, that is, applying an intersectional approach which examines gender as entangled with other axes of differentiation and identification, is a fortiori lacking in research on Muslim pilgrimage.

The academic void concerning gender issues in pilgrimage studies is especially true for Muslim pilgrimage but is relativized when broadening the scope of religion. In fact, research on Christian pilgrimage addressing gender issues has been published since a couple of years. In this academic literature, Christian pilgrimage gets primarily located in Europe. A volume edited by cultural anthropologists Willy Jansen and Catrien Notermans (2012) analyze connections between pilgrimage, gender, the nation-state and transnationalism in the context of different European regions and countries. The focus is on regional and transnational groups visiting holy shrines and how the subjects regard these sites as materialized markers of identity. In her dissertation, cultural anthropologist Judith Samson (2012) works on the shrine of Mary in the Netherlands and in Poland. She examines how different groups of pilgrims negotiate gender and European identifications

at these shrines. Samson is especially interested in how women and men relate to the Virgin Mary in the context of European nation-building discourses. Sanne Derks (2009), likewise a cultural anthropologist, analyzes how Christian female and male pilgrims from Bolivia draw on their faith in order to handle experiences of oppression. Derks connects this condition, *inter alia*, to gender. Film and theatre scholar Vanessa Baker (2010) examines with a performance optic how female Catholic pilgrims in Crete, Malta and Rome constitute gendered spiritual identifications and how they allocate meaning to these identifications through their performative practices. Similar studies of gendered practices and meanings are lacking in the study of Muslim pilgrimage. This chapter aims at (1) filling the gap by examining social practices, wishes and thoughts by Muslim women in this regard; and (2) thinking beyond gender by including other axes of identification as basis for gendered pilgrimage. An analysis of the entanglement of different status positions can be fruitfully undertaken with the framework of intersectionality.

The introductory newspaper clipping underlined that women with any nationality who need a visa to enter Saudi Arabia have to be accompanied by a male chaperone (*mahram*, see below for details) until they reach the age of 45. Gender, nationality/citizenship and age all intertwine in the differentiated effect of this regulation on pilgrims. These socio-culturally constructed categories are just some of many possible axes of identification and differentiation that can deeply shape people's life worlds and practices on the transnational, national, institutional, social and individual scales (Chaudhuri, Thimm and Mahler 2019; Thimm, Chaudhuri and Mahler 2017; Mahler, Chaudhuri, and Patil 2015). In the early beginnings of feminist research in the 1970s and the 1980s, the focus was very much on women's positions and perspectives. A more inclusive approach studying relations between different genders from women and men to transgender developed in the 1990s and 2000s. Analysing gender identification as a separate category, as was customary in the 1970s and 1980s, was criticized by so-called Third Wave feminists – Women of Colour and Black feminists² in the US – already in the 1980s as an artificial approach which maintains White supremacy by ignoring the life worlds of Black women. The intersectional approach which was developed in response has been debated ever since. The main issue is how we can best understand socio-cultural categories and practices as mutually constitutive rather than isolated (Crenshaw 2019, 1989; Shields 2008; Phoenix and Pattynama 2006; Brah and Phoenix 2004; hooks 2000, 1981). One backbone of this approach is the demonstration of and insistence on racialized women being discriminated through powerful structures and the struggle against this condition. In this sense, intersectionality has always been a political activist agenda ('political intersectionality') and an analytical tool to examine mutually constitutive axes of identification ('structural intersectionality'). Whereas the stem of research and activism in this field is grounded in Black feminist struggle and thought, taking Muslim identifications as an intersecting vector with

gender as a starting point has not yet been undertaken in intersectionality research, even though the political necessity is obvious since anti-Muslim racism in the West has become significantly stronger since the early 2000s.

The intersectionality framework will serve in this chapter as a valuable tool to examine female's conditions and experiences from different generations, with different citizenships/residency status (Saudi Arabian, Emirati and Malaysian) and who follow different strands of Islam (either Sunni or Shi'i and a certain *madhhab* – Islamic law school – therein) and their relatedness of the various categories to one another. Before I turn to the analysis of women's stories about their hajj experiences, in what follows, I will first give a brief overview of the methods and methodology I adopted for my research. Next, background information on requirements for females regarding Muslim pilgrimage (hajj and umra) will be provided. The subsequent empirically driven section will then showcase intersectionally interwoven conditions for women performing hajj and umra coming from different nationstates.

The context of this study is a pilgrimage to Mecca and Medina with or without stopovers undertaken by Malay Malaysians and by Emiratis. This study is based on an ethnographic multi-sited (Marcus 1995) approach to fieldwork, data collection and analysis between December 2013 and April 2018 for a total of 14 months. This multi-sited approach implies doing fieldwork in diverse but connected places – in this case in Malaysia and in the UAE where some Malaysians do a spiritual and leisure stopover on the pilgrimage journey. Based on principles of multi-sited fieldwork, I 'followed the people' from Malaysia to Dubai and back on their so-called 'umrah&ziarah Dubai' journeys, as they are called in Malaysia; packages that are part of the local tourism industry (Thimm 2017). Not being a Muslim myself and hence not allowed to enter Mecca and Medina according to Islamic regulations, I have not followed my respondents to these two places. Apart from this research phase, this study additionally draws on 12 months of ethnographic fieldwork conducted in the Malay Archipelago between 2009 and 2013 for a research on transnational mobility and gender (Thimm 2014).

In sum, 277 qualitative interviews, discussions and conversations in various forms and lengths with 217 people have been conducted between 2013 and 2018. However, not all of these interviews focused on experiences of Meccan pilgrimage but related to broader research questions. The interviews were primarily open and narrative and all of them were transcribed. Some of these interviews were recorded, some were not. In the latter cases, I took notes with verbatim statements of my respondents. Interviews were conducted either in *Bahasa Melayu* (Malay), English or local *Manglish* (a mixture between both languages).

Haneefah, Arwa and Rabihah: women's stories on hajj and umra

My 36-year-old Malay Malaysian respondent Haneefah was born and raised in Mecca, Saudi Arabia. The reason why she grew up there is because

her paternal grandmother set forth from Malaysia to Mecca in 1962 at the age of 15 shortly after her marriage to her cousin whose mother's deep desire was to perform hajj during her remaining years. Ever since, the family has lived in Mecca. Yet, Haneefah herself left Saudi Arabia for Malaysia in 2000 when she was 19 years old. During our conversations in 2017, she remembers that in the 1980s, her grandmother and her aunt usually went on hajj and umra (umrah in Malay) without their husbands or any other male company but with other female friends. Haneefah's mother performed the pilgrimage on a regular basis too. Ever since Haneefah was young, her mother performed the annual hajj as long as her health condition allowed it. Haneefah herself never understood this regular performance – that is to say, not until she moved to Malaysia. Once there she realized the implication of the 'hajj quota' system which in the Malaysian context means having to wait for decades for one's turn to go on hajj. As formal residents in Saudi Arabia, Haneefah and her mother, however, were not subject to regulations with regard to the frequency or time of pilgrimage performance – be it hajj or umra. She recalled that only at a later point of time the Saudi Arabian government launched a regulation that residents of the country are allowed to perform hajj only once or twice every five years. Haneefah herself performed hajj three times during her youth. Performing umra was the standard program every Saturday after waking up, initiated by her mother, as Haneefah told me:

I started to be very annoyed by it. Every Saturday, my mum woke me up very early, then we put on our clothes, performed umra, came back and had our breakfast. I mean when I was a youngster, of course I was more interested in doing other things on the weekends than going on umra again and again!

Experiencing pilgrimage as a weekly routine, Haneefa did not develop the kind of 'longing' for Mecca that can be observed among many believing Muslims all over the world. Instead, what for most Muslims would be an extraordinary experience, in her case became something ordinary. For residents of Mecca like Haneefah, the pilgrimage was nothing special. But was there anything special about being a *female* resident regarding the performance of pilgrimage? Asking her about the practices by women residing in Saudi Arabia regarding the regulation to be accompanied by a *mahram*, for example, she laughed as she replied:

Well, even though we don't need any visa which is the point where the requirement of a *mahram* is officially checked and controlled, we still need a *mahram* because it's overall a religious requirement. We always performed pilgrimage, both hajj and 'umra with a *mahram* because, in the end, it's normal to roam around the city with a male counterpart who's responsible for us. In the end, you need a driver, and he will be the *mahram*, the bodyguard then! Without a driver you don't get to the Al-Haram mosque anyway.

This excerpt shows that Haneefah followed a twofold pragmatic approach: on the one hand, she accepts the need of a male companion when a big distance is to be covered. On the other hand, she emphasizes the capacity to perfectly move around alone for shorter distances when being accompanied by a *mahram*. Both approaches inform her view on the *mahram* stipulation and influence her everyday gendered mobilities. Haneefah's older brother was the one who usually served both as a *mahram* and as a driver for her mother and herself. Religious regulations and pragmatic factors combine at this point. After some years her brother started to complain about accompanying his mother again for her annual hajj objecting to the responsibility and being obliged to perform every single ritual together with her.

Only around 1,500 kilometres away from Mecca lives my 27-year-old Emirati respondent Arwa. She comes from Sharjah, one of the seven emirates of the UAE located at the west coast between the emirates of Dubai and Ajman. In December 2017, I met her for the first time at her workplace at a university library in Dubai. She has not yet been on hajj but she has performed umra twice: the first time was in 2015, the second time only two months before we first met. Having her coffee from a mug with the Arab lettering 'I ♥ Mekka' on it, she remembered this recent journey as follows: 'I went with my family, we were a group of women only. I went with my aunties and cousins, we didn't go with a *mahram*.' I showed surprise and was interested in the reasons for this women-only group. Arwa explained that as Emirati citizens, they do not need any visa to enter Saudi Arabia:

We can just cross the border back and forth. And my family was fine about going without a *mahram*. My auntie just said that we need to go with a female family member who is above 45 years old, then it's fine. My brothers are younger and they are still studying, so they didn't come with us. And my dad didn't have time because of work. It was a sudden decision to go for umra; someone just asked "Shall we go?". And then, one week later, we just went to Mecca.

Arwa continued by emphasizing that she does not have many male relatives. Her rare male cousins are below 20 years old and her father, for example, does not want to take Arwa with him on his own pilgrimage since usually Emiratis, according to Arwa, consider it as distracting one from one's spirituality to have kids with them. The age of her cousins is a signifier not only for different priorities that the young men might have had but also for how family relationships are experienced in terms of gender and age: formally, the age of the *mahram* is not of importance as a son or cousin under 20 years of age could act as a perfect *mahram*. But this young age of the males in contrast to the much elder age of the females might have affected the use or mobilization of a *mahram*: the women preferred

to perform pilgrimage without the young male relatives rather than being accompanied by them in order to stick to rules or regulations.

Later during our conversation, Arwa and I discussed her understanding of *ziyāra*, the third form of pilgrimage (see introduction). She revealed that her mother is Shi'i Muslim and her father a Sunni. The majority of Muslims in the UAE are Sunni and she feels that talking about Shi'i identification is very sensitive. Two weeks later, we met again and I asked her whether there was any connection between being Shi'i and performing umra amongst females only. Indeed, as her female relatives as Shi'i women considered their journey to be safe and did not expect to face any risks, she said, they could just go on umra without any *mahram*. She added:

But my auntie also asked aunties in Saudi Arabia whether we can go. She said "I'm 45, can we go?" And maybe she also told them "I don't have an older boy and my husband doesn't come with me..." They said "You can go."

Arwa explained that the aunties her aunt referred to were Islamic clerics in Mecca. As Sunni Islam is the official religion in Saudi Arabia, these clerics were certainly Sunni Muslims and not Shi'a. In adopting a strategy to perform the pilgrimage, Arwa's female relatives creatively appropriated structural positioning to their own benefit, thus pinpointing to the importance of adopting a constructive approach to intersectionality to study the agency of research participants.

Shifting the focus from the Arabian Peninsula to Malaysia, there is Rabi-hah, a woman in her early 40s, who works as a lecturer at a private university in the capital Kuala Lumpur. In August 2017, she happily told me that she plans to perform her first umra in three months time. She planned to go on the journey with a travel agency which is based in the state of Johor because her brother works with that travel agency as *mutawwif*, a religious guide for the pilgrims. Rabi-hah's husband will not accompany her because he has performed the umra twice already and will take care of their 7- and 12-year-old children instead. The couple agreed that it is now 'her turn to go.' This issue of equal gender opportunities is revealing about gender relations and expectations over the course of the time. In the past, men have gone on pilgrimage more often than women, and furthermore most people took it for granted that the woman would take care of the kids during the man's absence.

I asked Rabi-hah with whom she would perform her pilgrimage. 'I will go with my brother as my *mahram*,' she replied. Rabi-hah emphasized that her brother would only function as such for the visa procedure and that she would be alone during the trip because certainly, she is not in need to be taken care of by her brother. 'I also travelled alone to Melbourne last year, there was no *mahram* there, so no problem of course!' I was interested to

know from her perspective what the function of the *mahram* is considering that her brother would not accompany her throughout the whole journey. She responded:

The *mahram* takes care of the family member, especially in the ancient time. Saudi Arabia is still using this rule. The contemporary fiqh [Islamic jurisprudence] actually says that you don't need a *mahram* if your travel is safe. But respecting the Saudi rules, I have no issue with it. It is culturally based, it's not Islamic ruling.

Rabihah presents herself as an independent woman who does not need a *mahram*. The only reason why she is accompanied by one is the corresponding requirement by the Saudi Arabian government. Her statement about travelling alone to Melbourne provides insight in how she feels about the Saudi Arabian regulation. She also appears to be proud of the way in which she manages to settle the issue and contest the rule by stating that once in Saudi Arabia, she will not need her brother.

Intersectional performances of Muslim pilgrimage

How can we analyze the three stories with an intersectionality lens? Between 1982 and 2007, Haneefah grew up as a resident from abroad (Malaysia) in Mecca, which, together with Medina, is one of the two cities in Saudi Arabia which Muslims perceive as holy. In the first place, living in Mecca enables its inhabitants to perform pilgrimage – hajj and umra alike – as often as they like and under self-chosen conditions. Since, according to Islamic understanding, only Muslims are allowed to enter Mecca and Medina, all residents of Mecca are, at least officially, Muslim. Yet the way Islamic practices and rituals, such as pilgrimage, are performed by these Muslims is not predefined but open to personal wishes, needs and possibilities. Haneefah comes from a parental home with a very pious mother who follows Sunni Islam. Both Haneefah and her mother performed pilgrimage regularly: they conducted the umra together every week, and while Haneefah performed the hajj twice, her mother did so annually. Performing the pilgrimage so frequently was unique to inhabitants of Mecca until today and to residents of Saudi Arabia until 2008.

Up to three million pilgrims from all over the world perform hajj every year and the number of pilgrims tends to rise annually. This tremendous gathering in and around Mecca results in polluted air, jammed roads, accidents and relatively high death toll among pilgrims (Bianchi 2017). To regulate these difficulties, in 2008 the Saudi Arabian government introduced, among other things, rules that target the frequency of pilgrimage performance of residents of Saudi Arabia, as Haneefah mentioned in her narration. The launch of these rules was introduced in the campaign 'No Hajj Without Permission' which aimed to reduce the number of domestic

pilgrims by implementing a limitation for them to perform hajj only once every five years. The Ministry of Interior controls this endeavour by issuing permissions which are checked at the *mīqāt*, the entry points to the Holy Land such as certain mosques, where the pilgrim's state of consecration begins with the formulation of their intention (*nīya*; *niat* in Malay) to perform their pilgrimage. As stated in the local Saudi newspaper *Arab News*, all local pilgrims are carefully checked at the *mīqāt* and those without permission are denied any access to Mecca:

Failure to possess a permit for hajj may result in you being turned back by the security authorities. (...) Pilgrims won't be allowed entry to the holy capital without the appropriate permission, as security checkpoints at all entrances to the city will apply procedures of investigation, verification and seizure of violators, referring them to the appropriate authorities to apply regulations against them.

(Arab News 2018)

In 2018, 52,000 permits were issued to domestic pilgrims. Although officially every local person who wants to perform hajj must obtain such a permit, in practice this requirement is only applicable for locals living outside Mecca, allowing a loophole for local residents of Mecca such as Haneefah's mother. In a chat I had with a Saudi in his 40s during a shopping tour in Dubai, he revealed:

Saudis are only allowed to perform hajj once every five years which is the internal quota in order to control the mass of people. But I live in Mecca and I can say that I'm happy because it doesn't concern me at all! When I want to perform hajj, I just only put on my white cloth for pilgrimage and that's it! Just going there from home! It's easy for me. Because I don't need to pass any *mīqāt*, don't need to pass any point of control where the security guys could see that I've performed hajj already within the last 5 years. So I always go on hajj every year.

Apparently, the structuration and realization of pilgrimage for Saudis and foreigners living in Saudi Arabia is highly based on one's own interpretations of Islamic rules and regulations and not on institutional guidelines. This is still valid for those living in Mecca itself, whereas Saudi residents from outside Mecca have to follow the quota but are still relatively free in any other matters of the performance of pilgrimage.

This condition grounded in the nationality or legal residential status is furthermore of interest in terms of how it intertwines with gender. As Haneefah pointed out in her narration, there was no official control of herself and her mother to ascertain them being accompanied by a *mahram*. Nevertheless, they always performed their pilgrimage, no matter whether hajj or umra,

with Haneefah's elder brother as a male chaperone. This practice is rooted in their personal interpretations of certain Islamic stipulations.

Haneefah and her family were highly influenced by the Saudi Arabian state direction of Islam which is Sunni Islam following Hanbalite law school (*madhhab*) of Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*). The Hanbalite law school is one of the four *madhhab* of Sunni Islam, the other ones being Hanafite, Shafi'ite and Maliki. All Sunni law schools have their own interpretations about how to handle the Islamic sources (Qur'an and hadith, the deeds and sayings of prophet Muhammad). In fact, the Hanbalite law school is the most conservative one; unlike the other law schools, its founder, Ibn Hanbal (780–855), did not allow any analogous interpretations (*qiyās*) of the Qur'an. The reason is that he questioned the idea that human rationality could be more valid than divine revelation (Ansary 2010, 118f). Regarding the performance of pilgrimage by women, the Hanbalite school, similar to the Hanafite school, follows the interpretation that all women have to be accompanied by a *maḥram*, regardless of their age.

This regulation led to the frustration by Haneefah's elder brother who had to go on hajj regularly, no matter whether it was his own wish or not, as it was his duty to serve as *maḥram* for his mother and sister. In this case of Haneefah's family, the demand to perform pilgrimage with a *maḥram* became a nuisance if not a burden for the brother, a teenager who is not willing to spend his time on recurrent pilgrimage tours. Haneefah's brother got bored by having to accompany his mother and sister. Considering the fact that he is an adolescent who is in charge of taking care of his mother, being responsible for her and functioning as 'bodyguard' as Haneefah put it, the rule to be supervised by a male as a female feels awkward if not ridiculous to him. This relates to the condition that in terms of family relationships, he is not superior to his mother so that it feels difficult for all actors to be forced into this gendered relationship. Thus, the *maḥram* issue is not only a matter of religious orientation but also, if not above all, a family matter which is underpinned religiously-theologically. The age of the *maḥram* is of impact on how the women (and the *maḥram* themselves) feel about having to depend on them.

This intersection of gender with citizenship/legal residential status, family rules and religious orientation gets complemented by age in other regional and national contexts. Arwa, my Emirati respondent who performed the umra in 2015 and 2017, holds a passport which allows her to enter the neighbouring country Saudi Arabia without any visa requirements. Besides, for the UAE, this regulation is only valid for the three GCC states – Bahrain, Kuwait and Oman.³ This opens up the possibility for Arwa and her female relatives to travel to Saudi Arabia for the umra without any point of control regarding being accompanied by a *maḥram*.

However, GCC nationals must obtain the official hajj permit to enter Saudi Arabia so that the performance of this compulsory pilgrimage is still bound to official stipulations. Going on hajj as a UAE citizen means having

to apply for a permit at the General Authority of Islamic Affairs and Endowments (*Awqāf*). Twenty thousand UAE nationals applied in 2017, out of which 6,228 were approved. This equalled a rise of Emirati pilgrims of 25% compared to the previous year (*Gulf News* 2017). But even for the hajj, Emirati citizens enjoy certain advantages on the administrative level, for example, they are eligible to book so-called 'Express hajj packages' enabling them to arrive in Mecca directly before hajj starts and to leave straight afterwards.⁴ For Arwa and her women-only group, going on umra as UAE national meant that the women did not have to take care of any state rules but only of their own interpretation of Islam. Arwa's maternal side of the family belongs to the Shi'i strand of Islam, according to which groups of female pilgrims can perform the umra without a *mahram*.

Demands for women with regard to being accompanied by a male chaperone differ for Shi'i Muslims from Sunni Muslims. The two main law schools of Shi'i Islam, Imami and Zaidite, do not follow the Sunni Hanbalite and Hanafite understanding of the general company of a *mahram* as a precondition for women performing hajj or umra. Even though the Zaidite strand formulates that women below the age of 45 do need a *mahram*, it does not enforce this principle. The Imamis even do not regard a *mahram* as obligatory at all. The important issue for Shi'i Muslims is, however, the degree of safety of the women's journey. Only when it is considered safe are females allowed to perform the pilgrimage without a male chaperone (Sayeed 2016, 68; Mahallati 2011, 832). The way how to realize this in social practice is not further defined. Hence, since Arwa and her female relatives do not require a visa to enter Saudi Arabia based on their nationality, there is no material checkpoint for them where a possible obligation of having a *mahram* would be checked. Instead, and similar to Haneefah and her mother, they only need to follow their own Islamic understanding regarding the issue of a *mahram*. As one of Arwa's aunts was over 45 years old, she took over the responsibility and actually served as the *mahram* in the sense of the protecting guardian. Interestingly, being unsure about having the freedom to do so, this aunt consulted female Sunni scholars in Saudi Arabia regarding this matter. These Saudi religious scholars regarded the group travelling without a *mahram* as unproblematic. According to the Saudi Arabian visa regulation, a woman over the age of 45 may travel without a *mahram*, but only on condition that she travels with an organized group and that she can provide an official letter from her *mahram*, signed by a notary, stating that he has no objection and authorizes her to travel. Since Arwa and her group do not pass any immigration checkpoints, there is no point for them to be asked for this kind of letter. Therefore, they can ignore this regulation – and the Saudi Arabian 'aunties' do so too.

Notably, the advice of the aunties that Arwa and her female relatives could travel to perform the umra without any male company contradicts Hanbalite jurisprudence. However, in 2014, this Hanbalite, that is, religious, regulation was eased institutionally by the Saudi government. In

2013, a committee formed by the Ministry of Minority Affairs recommended to the government to allow women above the age of 45 to perform pilgrimage without a *mahram* as long as they travel in a group of at least four. Based on this suggestion, Saudi Arabia changed the hajj guidelines accordingly (*The Indian Express* 2018).

This shows two facts: first, the obligation for women to perform pilgrimage with a *mahram* only until they reach the age of 45 is already an ease of state regulations. Before that and following Islamic Hanbalite interpretation, all women, regardless of their age, were required to be accompanied by a male chaperone. That this rule was not checked until Saudi Arabia started to professionalize, industrialize and commercialize the hajj will not be of further discussion here (see Thimm 2017 for details). Second, the ‘aunties,’ in fact the female Islamic scholars based in Saudi Arabia, give out their advice in accordance with state policies rather than with interpretations based on Islamic principles. However, since for Arwa and her female relatives the male companionship only depends on the interpretation of the belief system, their GCC nationality functions as a loophole for their mobility.

The intersectionally interwoven net of conditions for women to perform pilgrimage is rather different for those requiring a visa to enter Saudi Arabia, as is the case for Rabihah from Malaysia, for example. By the time of my meetings with Rabihah in Kuala Lumpur, she was close to performing her first umra. She lives in a country in which Malay Muslims, as Rabihah is, form the majority of the population. Malaysia is a multicultural society where almost 69% of the citizens are classified as *Bumiputera* (Malays and native people, such as *Orang Asli* or *Kadazandusun*), 23% of Chinese ancestry and 7% of Indian ancestry (Department of Statistics, Malaysia 2016). According to the Malaysian constitution, Sunni Islam, following the Shafi’ite law school, is the official religion of the state and the compulsory religion for all Malay Muslims (Federal Constitution, article 3 [1]; article 160).⁵ Hence, the government established Islam as the religion for the majority society and grants special protection to this religion. On the basis of Islamization processes and professionalization of Muslim pilgrimage since the 1970s, performing hajj and umra is a huge issue for the majority of Malay Malaysian Muslims (Thimm 2017). The numbers of pilgrims are increasing but when it comes to hajj, they are restricted by the number of visas that the Saudi Arabian government issues to every nation-state. In the case of Malaysia, in 2016, 22,230 visas were issued. In 2017, the number rose up to 27,999. Numbers for umra do not yet exist since monitoring was only established in 2014 by the Monitoring Council (*Majlis Kawal Selia Umrah*) and their data is not yet available.

Individual travel for the purpose of pilgrimage is exclusively possible through local travel agencies which are approved by the Saudi Arabian government. According to the Saudi Arabian visa regulations:

Women and children are required to be accompanied by their husband/father or a male relative [*mahram*] and proof of relationship is required

for the umrah [Malay spelling, VT] visa or hajj visa to be granted. This could be a marriage certificate for a wife or a birth certificate which includes the name of both parents for a child. The *mahram* must travel into and out of Saudi Arabia on the same flight as his wife and children.⁶

The marriage or birth certificate is handed in, in Rabihah's case, by her brother and his agency. The requirement to be accompanied by the *mahram* when entering the country and passing the immigration was one official reason why the Nigerian women introduced in the beginning were turned back in 2012 when their *mahram* already passed through and were therefore no longer together with their female relatives. The mentioned certificates to be shown upon visa application refer to differentiated specifications on who can serve as a *mahram* for the purpose of women's pilgrimage. In a brochure of Ibn Ziyad,⁷ Malaysia's biggest travel agency, for example, prospective pilgrims can read that a daughter aged below 45 and a son aged below 18 are to be accompanied by the father. A wife can be accompanied by the husband, female siblings aged below 45 and male siblings aged below 18 by male siblings aged 18 or above, a granddaughter by the maternal or paternal grandfather. If the female daughter, sibling or granddaughter is aged below 15 and the male son, sibling or grandson is aged below 13, then the mother also has to follow the kid or teenager. The rules are further explained for niece, stepchild and adopted child. Hence, the room for interpretation is extremely low for females (and male children) when it comes to the question how to handle the issue of being accompanied by a *mahram*.

In Rabihah's case it becomes clear that her *mahram* only functions as fulfilling rules issued by the Saudi Arabian government and controlled by the process of entering the country via booked travel packages. From Rabihah's own Islamic perspective, she sees no need to be supervised by a man on her travels, no matter whether she goes on holiday, business trip or pilgrimage. This self-confident stance as a woman corresponds with the viewpoint of her law school. Rabihah, a university lecturer in her early 40s, who earns her own income, arranges her family life and travels regularly for reasons of leisure or business, is quite capable to undertake her pilgrimage journey without any male supervision. Based on her citizenship, however, she is still bound to nationstate rules. In this case, Rabihah considers the Saudi legislation on the requirement of a *mahram* rather as an empty legal shell than as a reasonable guideline.

Conclusion

The intersectional analyses of the three cases presented in this chapter illustrate how one seemingly stable condition (female's company by a *mahram* on pilgrimage) can vary when different intersecting axes of identification interweave with this condition. The general requirement for females to be accompanied by a legal chaperone is subject to manifold further statuses

and situations. As showcased with Haneefah's, Arwa's and Rabihah's stories, besides gender, other enabling or limiting factors are age, citizenship/nationality and the Islamic orientation. For Haneefah, a resident in Saudi Arabia, citizenship was not an issue. Her age was not important either since her family's Islamic understanding (Sunni Muslims following Hanbalite *madhhab*) requires a male chaperone regardless of any age. Similarly, Arwa, an Emirati citizen, was not affected by nationstate regulations targeting her national identification, but the identification as Shi'i Muslim was the crucial point for her and her female relative's decision to travel without any male. Age matters as each of these three women took the possibilities based on citizenship to evade regulations grounded in age. For Rabihah, her Malaysian citizenship forced her to produce a *mahram* as she was subject to state regulations which aim at her gender and her age – even though her Islamic understanding as Sunni following Shafi'ite law school does not require it. Thus, considering more than one axis of differentiation in socio-cultural analysis reveals how connections and shifts of some individuals' and/or groups' positionalities vary by the examined axis of identification and affect the positionality as a whole. Shifts in these axes affect people's positionalities as these are mutually constitutive rather than additive. All this is evident in pilgrimage experiences by females in contemporary Saudi Arabia, UAE and Malaysia.

I wish to emphasize that state regulations and Islamic guidelines targeting nationality, gender and age structurally predetermine people's lifeworlds. This furthermore means that I do not aim for equating individuals' power with institutional or state power. The three cases are clear examples that elites in positions of power (governments, religious scholars) exercise control over their subjects which typically is of limiting or even discriminating character and which produces inequalities (gender). However, the cases simultaneously offer evidence about how elites can initiate changes with reverse implications (age). But these simultaneously operating discriminating or facilitating structures can be interpreted, accepted, followed, circumvented or resisted as subjects exercise agency individually and collectively. This, in turn, is embedded in their possibilities or limitations based on their social locations and status positions.

Thus, this chapter aimed at providing an insight into how women experience the powerful regulations and positions, comment on it, contest it, strategically use it to their advantage, and attach meaning to it at the crossroads of all the social identifications that inform their sense of identification. By being creative agents, they illuminate everyday life concerns of experience, ambivalence and contingency, and form their female, religious or moral selves. With Haneefah's, Arwa's and Rabiha's stories I have illustrated how individuals navigate their way through different socio-political, cultural and religious conditions.

Notes

- 1 A valuable exception is the contribution by Fewkes in this volume.
- 2 Since 'Black' and 'White' are not interpreted to be skin colours but status position, these are written with capital letters.
- 3 See website of Saudi Arabia Visa: <https://www.saudiarabiavisa.com/hajj-umrah-visa-saudi-arabia/>.
- 4 See website of the UAE Government: <https://government.ae/en/information-and-services/passports-and-traveling/travelling-abroad/travelling-abroad-for-hajj-and-umrah>.
- 5 Federal Constitution Malaysia. n.d. <http://www.agc.gov.my/agcportal/uploads/files/Publications/FC/FEDERAL%20CONSTITUTION%20ULANG%20CETAK%202016.pdf>. Accessed January 21, 2020.
- 6 See website of Saudi Arabia Visa: <https://www.saudiarabiavisa.com/hajj-umrah-visa-saudi-arabia/>.
- 7 This is a pseudonym.

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2 Young Moroccan-Dutch women on hajj

Claiming female space¹

*Khadija Kadrouch-Outmany and
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Introduction: the hajj and other desires and pursuits

Mecca is crowded during the hajj season. Immensely crowded, in fact, both day and night. Since the 1970s, the number of pilgrims traveling to Mecca from all over the world to fulfill their hajj obligation towards God has exploded; by 2019, the numbers had risen to 2.5 million.² To accommodate the mass of pilgrims, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is currently expanding the accommodation and related services in Mecca at an unprecedented speed (McLoughlin 2013, 242). The number of regulations to control the flow of hajj pilgrims also increases. Pilgrims have no choice but to entrust the Saudi Ministry of Hajj with the regulation of their movements during the pilgrimage. They are not allowed to wander around freely outside the perimeters of the area where the hajj rites take place; their visa only permits access to the so-called Ḥaram or sacred area surrounding Mecca. To enforce this regulation, pilgrims have to hand in their passports to Saudi officials upon entering the Ḥaram area, and get it back only on the bus back to the airport.

Female pilgrims face additional restrictions. To begin with, women under the age of 45 who travel to Saudi Arabia can only obtain a hajj visa if accompanied by a *mahram* or male guardian.³ For single women this can be quite a challenge, not in the least because of the financial burden and the lottery system that many countries have introduced in order to handle the Saudi quota system.⁴ Also, regardless of age or marital status, due to Saudi gender-segregation regulations all female pilgrims face restrictions in their freedom of movement once they enter Saudi Arabia.

This chapter follows the movements of a small group of Dutch female pilgrims, most of whom with Turkish and Moroccan backgrounds and aged between 25 and 40, as they navigate gender-segregated localities at the three most important hajj sites: Mecca, Mina and Medina. We include instances in which the women complied with Saudi regulations as well as instances in which they challenged them. Adopting an intersectionality approach, we analyze how the women's responses to and evaluations of gender-segregation at these sites relate to their everyday life-worlds, more specifically to their self-conceptions as women and as Muslims.

This chapter is based on research within a larger project on modern articulations of pilgrimage to Mecca. The point of departure of the project, and hence for this chapter, is that pilgrims' self-conceptions are informed by various cultural discourses or 'grand schemes' that shape their habitus (Schielke and Debevec 2012, 5). Such discourses shape the 'sensibilities', that is, the moral and aesthetic dimensions of the experiences and emotional lives of individuals (Mahmood 2009, 836). Our aim here is to demonstrate how the multifaceted needs and desires that result from being informed by various cultural models and ideologies simultaneously feature in the young women's expectations and practices during the hajj and the meanings they attach to their experiences.

Hajj performance derives its emotional power not in the least by allowing pilgrims to 'step in the footsteps of the prophet Muhammad' and re-enact episodes from Islam's early historiography. Despite the appeal of the hajj as going back to the very beginning of Islam, on a more general level this chapter sheds light on how the practices and meanings that make up the hajj are not static but are actively appropriated by pilgrims. They experience and interpret the pilgrimage within the context of their own life-worlds and in some respects adapt it to these life-worlds. Sometimes this adaptation takes the form of explicit efforts to challenge the hegemonic order, at other times appropriation takes the form of tacit renegotiating and re-creating prescribed practices and meanings. Our focus is therefore on how the religious motivations of the women whom we follow in this chapter for claiming 'female space' in the places where the hajj rites are performed interconnect with other desires and pursuits in their daily lives.

The chapter is structured as follows. In the next section, we will give a methodological account on the production and analysis of the data presented in this chapter. After discussing the analytical framework in a subsequent section, we then zoom in on women's responses to specific practices of gender-segregation in the three locations that are central to the hajj rites: Mecca, Mina and Medina. We will demonstrate that in each of the hajj sites discussed, women's conceptions and concerns about the 'mundane' and the 'sacred' intertwine. In the concluding section, we will discuss our findings within the wider theoretical framework of women's agency in their appropriation of space.

Methodology: a multiple-voiced conversation

The authors of this chapter are co-researchers in a subproject on the practices and meanings of the pilgrimage to Mecca for Dutch Muslims of Turkish and Moroccan descent within the larger hajj research project mentioned above.⁵ At the time of writing this chapter, 40 pilgrims who grew up in the Netherlands had so far been interviewed on the meaning to them of the pilgrimage to Mecca, among whom 27 women in the age group we focus on here. The selection of specific locations to study women's responses to

gender restrictions, as well as the analysis of the data and the argument in this chapter are based on the knowledge and insights developed in the wider research project of both authors and were jointly written.

Besides conducting eight of the interviews for our joint subproject, the first author Kadrouch-Outmany also joined a group of pilgrims from the Netherlands on the hajj of 2016. As research data on the hajj produced through participant observation *in situ* are rare, our primary focus in the chapter is on the ethnographic data she ‘collected’ during the hajj of 2016. To show how the data was produced in close conversation with the women whom Kadrouch-Outmany joined on their hajj journey, in the ethnographic vignettes depicting women’s responses to Saudi regulations concerning gender-segregation in Mecca, Mina and Medina, the voice of Kadrouch-Outmany is present in the form of the I-narrator presenting her observations and own experiences in the text that is provided in box. The analytical and interpretive texts in the chapter represent the voices of both authors.

The group that Kadrouch-Outmany traveled with consisted of 220 pilgrims, 80% of whom were younger than 45 years old.⁶ The numbers of male and female pilgrims were more or less equal. There were many young couples in the group, quite a few of whom in the company of parents, in-laws and/or siblings. In this sense, as our interviews indicate is often the case for pilgrims from the Netherlands, the hajj was very much a ‘family affair’. In this specific group, the large majority of pilgrims consisted of Moroccan-Dutch citizens. In addition, there were some Dutch converts and Dutch-speaking pilgrims with Surinamese, Pakistani, Palestinian, Iranian, Iraqi, Afghani, Turkish backgrounds. We zoom in here on the experiences of a small group of young female pilgrims who kept each other’s company much of the time.

Like other female pilgrims younger than 45 years old, Kadrouch-Outmany needed a *mahram* or male companion to get a hajj visa. Fortunately, her husband agreed to join her on this field trip. Not wanting to be separated from their two-year-old son, the couple took him along as well. Furthermore, they decided to undertake the journey not for fieldwork purposes only but also to fulfill their own obligation as Muslims to perform the hajj. Therefore, they fully participated in all hajj rites.⁷

From the outset, Kadrouch-Outmany was open and transparent to the travel agent and her fellow travelers about her visit to Mecca as both pilgrim and researcher. Most people were appreciative of her research interests and some agreed to a follow-up interview after their return home in the Netherlands. It is likely that some pilgrims in the group did not appreciate being included in a research project and for that reason kept their distance, which was not hard to do in a group of 220 pilgrims. On the whole, however, rapport was quickly developed with a considerable number of fellow group members. Traveling with a toddler certainly contributed in that respect; most pilgrims were happy to engage with him. The researcher’s closest relationships were with pilgrims of her own gender and age group,

but it was also easy to engage in informal interviews and small talk with pilgrims of other generations, particularly with women.

Female agency and the appropriation of space

Although most scholars in the social sciences and humanities distinguish between 'space' and 'place', there is no general agreement on how these concepts are to be defined (cf. Massey 1994, 157). For the sake of our argument here, we follow Setha Low (2017, 11–33) who uses 'space' and 'place' predominantly to refer to different geographical scales. In Low's use of the terms, a place is a special kind of physical space that is used for particular purposes and attributed specific meanings. Such places should not be conceived of as bounded, fixed or homogeneous. Rather, as Massey (1994, 5) argues: 'If (...) the spatial is formed of social relations at all scales from the local to the global, then place is a particular articulation of these relations'. A place therefore extends beyond the interrelations of those present in a specific place to the world outside it. It is in this open sense that we conceive of the various sites where hajj rites are performed as places; while the pilgrims gather at each hajj site to perform specific ritual obligations, on the basis of their positions in various sets of social relations, different groups and individuals bring in their own conceptions of how these obligations are to be carried out and interpreted.

As we will see, in many instances, Saudi regulations concerning gender-segregation demand that men and women perform the rites in different spatial areas. Since any differential allocation of space inevitably affects the practices and views of those involved, in line with Low's understanding of place and space, strictly speaking one could argue that single-gender locations at a particular hajj site are specific male or female places. As we will demonstrate, however, rather than possible gendered specificities, it is the religious nature of the activities performed by female and male pilgrims alike that were the women's main concern at the various hajj sites. We therefore refer to areas that are allocated to female pilgrims at the various hajj sites as 'space for women' or, alternatively, 'female space'. We do so exactly because the young women whose experiences and views we discuss claim equal gender rights in the performance of religious obligations, including the right to make equal use of the various hajj sites as their male counterparts rather than being relegated to a different place.

As Jacqueline Brown (2005, 8) argues, 'place is an axis of power in its own right', meaning that the materiality of spatial locations cannot be separated from their social, political and symbolic dimensions. The objections raised by the young female pilgrims we study in this chapter concerning the unequal distribution of space at hajj sites illustrate that physical space is always simultaneously embodied and symbolic; people's conceptions and experiences of physical space and its boundaries are informed by and, in turn, inform their self-conceptions and wider life-worlds. Since the women

whose movements we follow operate in various intersecting cultural contexts and corresponding webs of power relations, the import, for instance, of religious and secular discourses that shape their spatial desires in the situations we discuss are difficult to disentangle. As we will demonstrate, in some instances, women referred to the spirit of Islam to claim gender equality, while at other times, rather than gender equality, the negative consequences on their spirituality of hindrances to optimal performance of hajj rites were at the forefront of their objections.

To analyze how people move through space as they go through their daily routines, French philosopher Michel de Certeau (1984) distinguished between 'strategies' and 'tactics'. Strategies pertain to the actions of those who have powerful positions in the wider web of relations through which space is organized, while tactics concern the quick moves, manipulations and diversions of those who make use of places that are controlled or regulated by others (de Certeau 1984, 6). De Certeau's theorization of how people use space in the practice of everyday life is a particularly apt heuristic tool to study women's appropriation of space during the pilgrimage. Adopting the distinction between strategic and tactical use of space, however, one risks representing the women discussed here as passive respondents to dominant spatial structures rather than approaching them as actors whose practices are constitutive of the place where they operate. Also, conceiving of women's agency in terms of resistance to domination relates to a particularly modern Western conception of the autonomous subject. Different societal constellations, however, produce different kinds of desire for agency. As anthropologists like Mahmood (2005) and Frisk (2009) have demonstrated for female members of piety movements in Egypt and Malaysia, for instance, the agency of the women they studied was not so much based on a desire to liberate themselves from male-dominated gender relations, but rather on a desire of self-realization in terms of submitting to God. Having grown up in the Netherlands in Muslim families with migration backgrounds in non-European countries, the habitus of the women we focus on here is shaped by various cultural discourses simultaneously. Taking agency to refer to an individual's situated capacity for action and interaction (cf. McNay 2005, 182), we therefore approach the agency of the women under study in terms of the multiple sensibilities and the intentional and reflexive pursuit of various desires that inform their hajj practices and experiences at the same time.

As is argued in the introduction to this volume, although hajj is situated in an extra-ordinary place far removed from where the women studied live, their everyday concerns, practices and views travel with them. The aim of this chapter is to gain insights in how the daily life-worlds of the women we follow inform their negotiations of Saudi regulations concerning gender-segregation and their active appropriation of space at the various hajj sites in the sense of re-forming and re-creating it. In the next section, we will therefore first ask how the expectations and motivations of the women are related to the various cultural discourses or 'grand schemes'

that inform their life-worlds (cf. Schielke and Debevec 2012). In the sections that follow, we will zoom in on how what De Certeau (1984, 6) would call their ‘ways of operating’ must be understood against the background of these motivations and expectations. More specifically, we will analyze how, in evaluating and challenging the boundaries of the space assigned to them, the young female pilgrims combine what to them is the spirit of the hajj with the value of gender equality.

The hajj, marriage and gender equality

A first indication of the ways that various desires combine in the women’s hajj practices and experiences comes to the fore in their motivations to perform the pilgrimage. As mentioned above, there were many young couples in the group of pilgrims Kadrouch-Outmany accompanied. When sharing stories with each other about their decision to perform the hajj that year, the most recurrent reason mentioned by young female pilgrims with whom Kadrouch-Outmany performed the hajj was related to a wish to start early married life by performing the hajj together with their spouses. For example, one woman stated:

When we got married we immediately decided to spend as little money as possible on the wedding, but rather go on hajj the same year. I got married last May, and we immediately decided to perform the hajj the same year.

Another woman similarly explained that she and her husband had wanted to perform the hajj together soon after their wedding. Since she got pregnant very quickly, however, the couple chose to postpone the sacred journey a few years. When their son was old enough to leave him in the care of others, the couple decided to realize their plan to celebrate their marriage by going on hajj:

God gave me this wonderful husband and I wanted to share our obligation to perform hajj with him. So instead of asking money or gold as a dowry, I asked for the hajj. I got pregnant very quickly after our marriage, so we waited for our son to get a bit older and decided to embark on hajj together.

As the opening sentence ‘God gave me this wonderful husband’ in this excerpt indicates, wishing to start one’s marriage by making the journey to Mecca together can be motivated by several factors. First of all, both the informal conversations during Kadrouch-Outmany’s fieldwork and the interviews we did with other pilgrims of the same age group suggest that the aim of bonding through joint hajj performance plays an important role. Although, or maybe exactly because, hajj performance is physically

quite demanding, it can be a very rewarding experience in a spiritual and emotional sense. To go through this special experience together and support each other when things get tough can bring husband and wife closer together. Second, going on hajj as a kind of religious honeymoon is also related to showing one's gratitude to God for having brought the couple together. Wishing to get God's blessings for the marriage or making a vow that the life the couple starts will be dedicated to serving God are other factors that were often mentioned by the people we interviewed as feeding their desire to perform hajj as a honeymoon trip. Last but not least, many recently wed pilgrims, both male and female, mentioned that sharing the journey of a lifetime with their spouse was in line with their desire to be equal partners in the marriage.⁸ Some of the women whom Kadrouch-Outmany accompanied on their hajj journey had studied together with their spouses or had jobs which require them to work alongside other men, and many of them were engaged in the same social activities as their partners. In their views, the spirit of the hajj reinforces the relationship of equality between their spouses and themselves. As one woman put it: 'For Allah man and woman are equal in marriage. And for Allah all people are equal during hajj'.

Wishing to begin one's marriage well and on an equal footing by performing the hajj together significantly raised the expectations of many couples concerning the journey. However well informed many were, it soon transpired that the young couples had not always realized just how gender-segregated many of the activities during the hajj in fact are. In many instances, the ideal of going through all the hardships of the pilgrimage side by side with one's spouse proved to be difficult to put into practice. This obviously caused disappointments and tensions.

In what follows, we discuss women's responses to such instances of gender-segregation in three different locations: Mecca, Mina and Medina. For each of these three hajj sites, we concentrate on the interplay between specifically religious and other considerations, more particular on views about gender relations that come to the fore in women's responses to the division of space at gender-segregated hajj venues. The I-narrator in the ethnographic vignettes situated in Mecca, Mina and Medina refers to Kadrouch-Outmany.

Mecca

Having arrived late at night in Mecca, our group had a good night of sleep before going to the Grand Mosque to greet the Ka'ba, and to perform the welcoming *tawāf*. Afterwards, I joined a company of several male and female fellow travelers to stroll through the streets of downtown Mecca for a first exploration of the city. My companions and I noted that many shops and restaurants had gender-segregated

areas. This amused us as being something typically Saudi; a touch of local folklore that made us realize we were in a very different setting than home. We also saw separate queues for men and women in front of bakeries and juice bars, and, even more amusing considering their being Western-owned chains, gender-segregated counters at Starbucks and fast food restaurants like Domino's Pizza and Kentucky Fried Chicken. With hundreds of thousands pilgrims needing to eat, the queues in front of these counters were very long. Noting that the queues for women were much shorter than those for men, my companions soon learned to use the gender-segregation to their own benefit by having the women order food.

They were much less amused by the way Saudi hajj regulations aim at reducing the mixing of genders in the Grand Mosque to a minimum. Both male and female pilgrims like to gather in the front of the prayer area in the mosque courtyard for contemplation or prayer while enjoying the beautiful view of the Ka'ba. Whenever the call for prayer is heard, however, guards hasten to summon the women to the rear of the prayer area where they have no view whatsoever on the Ka'ba.

On one such an occasion, I accompanied a young couple from our group to the Grand Mosque to perform our prayers. We were quite early and sat down on the first floor where we had a magnificent view on the Ka'ba. We used the time before the prayers to take some selfies, make videos, and eventually to do what we had come early for: saying *du'ās*, supplication prayers. When the call for afternoon-prayer was heard, the guards quickly approached us to summon my female companion and myself towards the area in the back. My female companion tried to negotiate with the official: she explained that she had been looking forward very much to the spiritual reward of performing her prayers with a close view on the Ka'ba. She suggested that if she would sit next to her husband, I could sit between her and a pillar, thus precluding any man from sitting next to me. The guard did not even look at her while she was trying to reason with him but only reiterated his order she and I move. Although *ṣabr* or patience is one of the virtues that pilgrims are expected to demonstrate during the hajj, my female companion could not help venting her frustration once we had moved to the back:

Well, here we are again, behind those ugly roadblocks. I can't even see the Ka'ba anymore! They really know how to ruin the atmosphere.

The guards do not always succeed in keeping the mosque area gender-segregated. Contrary to most mosques both in Saudi Arabia and elsewhere in the world, The Grand Mosque of Mecca has no separate entrances for men and women. When pilgrims perform the *tawāf*, men and women therefore circle together and cannot avoid bumping into each other every now and then.

Although only few of the women whom we interviewed for our research project volunteered information about it, female pilgrims are generally aware that not all surreptitious physical contact is innocent. Encouraged by the #MeToo movement, in 2018 a Pakistani woman posted a message on Facebook to complain about being sexually assaulted whilst performing the *tawāf*. Since then, many women have felt empowered to break a taboo on criticizing such despicable behaviour at Islam's holiest site and share their own experiences of sexual harassment during the hajj on Twitter using the hashtag #MosqueMeToo.⁹ Besides the desire to share the spiritual reward of performing the rites with one's spouse, then, another good reason to perform the *tawāf* in the company of one's husband – or any other *mahram*, for that matter – is that he can cover you by walking behind you, as some women told us they asked their husbands to do. For similar reasons, if a group of pilgrims performs the *tawāf* together, tour leaders often ask male pilgrims to form a circle around the female pilgrims. Another precaution that some women take is to wear a protruding rucksack that prevents men from getting too close to them.

When the call from the minarets announces the next prayer time, those circling the Ka'ba hold still and perform their prayers on the spot. Men and women thus do their prayers side by side here, which is against the wishes of the guards, but much to the appreciation of many pilgrims who interpret gender mixing during the *tawāf* and prayers as a symbol of the value equality of men and women in Islam. In all other parts of the mosque, however, guards see to it that many pray in the front and women in the back.

In downtown Mecca and in the Grand Mosque, then, the first contours of a certain pattern of appreciation of the division of male and female space began to suggest itself among the women with whom Kadrouch-Outmany traveled. Gender-segregation in restaurants and at counters did not upset but rather amused them. We would argue that one reason why they did not object to this particular Saudi organization of male and female space was that it actually worked to the women's benefit as they were served more quickly than men. Another reason was that they viewed this gender-segregation as a kind of local folklore. Although inspired by an interpretation of the Islamic doctrine they do not share, it did not negatively affect the women's ritual practices. They were more reluctant to be relegated to the rear areas of the Grand Mosque to perform their prayers behind men. The female pilgrims who commented on this mainly considered it unfair to be withheld the spiritually rewarding experience of praying in full view of the Ka'ba. Some added that in their view, separating male and female pilgrims was against the spirit of equality of all Muslims that characterizes hajj. Nevertheless, since ultimately these Saudi regulations did not hamper their religious activities as such, they did not seriously challenge them. Their willingness to accommodate would diminish, however, once the group left Mecca to go to the tent camp in Mina for the next hajj rites.

Mina

After having performed the rites in Mecca, for the next five days pilgrims stay in Mina from where they travel to other hajj sites.¹⁰ Mina is a huge tent camp located about five kilometers east of Mecca. The camp consists of 100,000 air-conditioned tents where pilgrims of different nationalities are accommodated in separate areas. Men and women are not allowed to sleep together in Mina, so that couples split up and sleep in single-gender tents. Sleeping shoulder to shoulder on worn and slim mattresses in a tent with up to 100 fellow pilgrims, one's patience is tested to the limit during the sojourn in Mina. Younger pilgrims try to communicate with their spouses through their mobile phones, but this does not always work. Being exhausted by the heat and the crowd, spouses may fall asleep, or batteries run low as others beat you in getting to one of the few rare sockets to charge their phones.

And so it could happen that walking down the aisles between the tents during our first day in Mina, I bumped into a young woman from our group who was obviously very distraught. Tears running down her face, she told me she had just had a rather upsetting encounter with a few women in the tent. Wanting to unburden her heart to her husband, he appeared nowhere to be found, which aggravated her frustration:

I can't find my husband! Where are they when you need them most?! I can't reach him, I can't go into his tent, nobody knows where he is and I need him to comfort me.

Eventually the husband was reached and came to meet his wife in the aisle, who was close to a breakdown by the time he arrived.

Interestingly, many older women did not seem to be bothered by the gender-segregation and were more orientated towards each other than towards their husband or alternative male guardian. While they enjoy performing the hajj in the company of family members, the older women we have interviewed never mentioned the significance of hajj as bonding with one's spouse. An obvious explanation for this is that most of them have been together with their husband for a much longer period of time and have settled in their relationship. Another explanation, more pertinent to the discussion of space in this chapter, is that most first-generation Moroccan and Turkish migrants to the Netherlands have transplanted to their daily life-worlds in the Netherlands, the strong gender-segregation that characterized the spatial division of space in Morocco and Turkey in the 1950s and 1960s, particularly so in rural areas. Therefore, these older women

are oriented towards and invest much time and energy in bonding with other women. In a similar vein, it struck Kadrouch-Outmany and many younger women whom we interviewed that older women did not seem to be bothered by the lack of personal space in the tent, but actually seemed to be quite comfortable. Comparing the Moroccan context in which women of her generation had grown up and the Dutch context that the younger women are used to, in the following excerpt, an older woman in the tent offered the first author a convincing explanation for intergenerational differences in the experience of the space in the tent in Mina that come to the fore both in Kadrouch-Outmany's observations and in many of our interviews. Talking about her distressed daughter-in-law, the woman stated:

These young people are used to having it all for themselves! You all are so spoiled. You are used to having your own clean and tidy room, your own bed, your own closet. Living in Morocco as a child, I slept on the floor together with my six siblings in the same room where my parents slept on a bed. We lived in a three-bedroom house with three families. We shared everything, from rooms to toilet, clothes and food. Young people are used to have everything of their own.

Indeed, it is especially the young women who appear to be keen on hygiene and privacy and who avowed to feel extremely uncomfortable in the crowded tent camp. Elderly women would agree that the provisions in the tent were basic, but they did not seem much bothered by this. For many younger women accustomed to having personal space and time and a certain standard of hygiene, to the contrary, the lack thereof in the tent camp came as a 'culture shock'. As Kadrouch-Outmany noted, fellow pilgrims of her own generation complained a lot about the conditions in the tent and wondered how to devote themselves to spirituality in these circumstances. In the interviews that we did in the Netherlands, we noted that besides complaining about bad management and pilgrims being cheated by their travel companies, in hindsight quite a few of our interlocutors who commented on the situation in the Mina tents had reformulated the experience in terms of an important spiritual lesson: being thrown back on yourself one learns to be humble and reflect on what really matters in life.

For the specific group of women whom Kadrouch-Outmany accompanied on hajj, the lack of space inside the tent was not their biggest concern.¹¹

By the end of their first day in Mina, all that the women around me seemed to be talking about were the toilets. Washing and toilet facilities are located outside the tents. For every 500– to 700 people in the tent area where the pilgrims from the Netherlands were staying, there

were only 30 toilets/showers to share. Of these 30 toilets, 20 were to the men, and only 10 to the women. The queues at the women's toilets were at least 20 women deep, and waiting for one's turn could easily reach up to an hour and a half. Many women in the queues were screaming shouting and pulling, testing to the limit those who were trying to respect the ideals of the hajj and their state of *iḥrām* by remaining patient and considerate. One young woman decided to check out the section with men's toilets. She reported on what she had found there with a mixture of amazement and anger:

Guess what: they don't have just 10 toilets like we do, they have 20! While they can do their ablutions in the washing area outside the toilets! Some toilets had one or two men waiting their turn, but there were no real queues! I told my husband to take it up with our organization, but they responded that the allocation of toilets is a Saudi thing so they can't interfere. Can you believe that? Saudis telling me where to pee!?

Many young women burst into laughter in response, bringing out in the open their shared indignation about the discriminatory sanitary arrangements. Why would men have more toilets and showers? Is it not exactly equality between all Muslims that, amongst others, the hajj symbolizes, some women argued?

This time, Saudi regulations of gendered space was no longer considered amusing. Instead, it infuriated the women. What made the situation particularly difficult to accept was that it hampered what they had come to do; queuing up for the toilet for an hour and a half meant that this waiting time could not be used to perform whatever spiritual activities they wished to engage in. Some women complained about having missed out on their *fajr* or early morning prayers because they had to wait too long to perform the ablution.

Determined to get access to more toilets, some young women worked out a plan; they suggested to forming a group and going up to the men's section to appropriate at least three toilets there. As they did so, the other women formed a queue. Some men did not react, but others got angry, screaming shouting things like: 'The women's section is on the other side!' 'This is for men only!' 'Don't mix with the men!'. Some women clearly felt intimidated, but as agreed beforehand, most ignored the men. Coming out of the confiscated toilets, their faces expressed: 'Victory!'. The women's joint response to the shortage of toilets was highly effective: in the days that followed, the women had 13 toilets at their disposal. The time lost in line was reduced significantly, allowing more time for the women to engage in religious activities.

Reflecting on this calculated action of repairing the unequal distribution of space, one can see the implication of the tactics the women employed. Mina, as well as the various other hajj sites they moved in, are controlled by the Saudi regime. The young women succeeded in actually changing the allocation of toilets as regulated by the officials in a peaceful, tranquil and confident way. Contrary to the areas where the actual rites are performed and that are associated directly with Islam's sacred history, Saudi surveillance at the toilet blocks was more or less absent. The women's 'tactical' maneuvers were not without effect; they successfully operated in a different mode than intended by the officials who control the tent camp. In this instance, it was difficult, if not impossible, to disentangle the various desires that motivated the women's action: they objected to the unequal distribution of space both because it symbolized men's privileged position and because waiting in line hampered their religious obligations, thus affecting their spirituality. On a more practical level, we surmise that their irritation was also fed by the fact that in their daily lives, they are accustomed to more comfort and higher hygienic standards than what they were confronted with in the toilet and shower arrangements in Mina. In this sense, multiple modern sensibilities interwove in how the young women experienced the restrictions on female space.

Medina

After completing the hajj and recovering from the days in the Mina tent camp in a luxurious hotel in Mecca, a bus drove Khadija-Outmany's group to the city of Medina, 450 kilometers north of Mecca, to visit the grave of the prophet Muhammad in the mosque called al-Masjid al-Nabawī. Families and spouses can sit together in the enormous mosque courtyard of the al-Masjid al-Nabawī between prayer times, but the mosque itself is completely gender-segregated. Guards see to it that men and women enter the building through separate entrances that give access to separate male and female sections. The Prophet is believed to have said that the mosque area between what used to be his house and the mosque pulpit is one of the gardens of Paradise. To perform a prayer in this so-called *rawḍa* equals the reward of 1,000 prayers. Pilgrims are very keen on visiting the *rawḍa* both for its religious merits and because of the physical proximity to the Prophet.

The *rawḍa* is located in the men's section of the mosque. Men are free to visit it at any time between the dawn prayer and the last evening prayer. Also, men visiting the *rawḍa* can actually see the structure that hosts the grave of the Prophet. Women, however, are confronted with several restrictions. First of all, the visiting hours for women are much shorter: during the hajj season in 2016, the *rawḍa* was open to women during the few hours between the last prayer in the evening and the first at dawn. Second, women cannot enter the whole *rawḍa*. The area accessible for them is shielded off with big screens, even though men do not visit the *rawḍa*

simultaneously. The women's area covers only a fourth or less of the entire *rawḍa*. Most importantly, women are barred from seeing the grave of the prophet Muhammad.

On the second night of our stay in Medina, at ten o'clock I went down to the hotel lobby to join a group of young women to go to the *rawḍa*. A woman who had already been there the previous evening informed us what to do once we would get there:

Make sure to hold on to each other very tight when the guards announce that you may enter the *rawḍa*. Make pairs of two or three, and once you're inside make a circle and then let everyone of you do her prayers inside that circle. Otherwise women will just push you aside or even worse, step on you. It's very crowded and women push and pull and that's very scary when you're in *sujūd* [prostration]!

On our way to the mosque we felt excited and well prepared. When we found the entrance to the *rawḍa* and passed all the security checks, we entered a part of the mosque that looked like a waiting room. The *rawḍa* was some twenty 20 meters away from where we were seated and shielded behind white screens. One guard came to chat to our group and pointed out objects behind the screen:

'That is the top of the pulpit of the Prophet, and that is the top of the prayer niche of the Companions, and in the back there is the grave of the Prophet.'

Eagerly following the direction her finger pointed, all we could see of these objects were the very top parts that stuck out above the screens. To our left I saw something that looked like the top sill of a door. Noting what drew my attention, the helpful guard explained:

Ah yes! What you see there is the women's entrance to the mosque that the Prophet had provided for so that there would be no barrier for women, and so they would know they are free to enter the mosque to perform prayers.

This explanation struck me as ironic: the contrast between the situation described and the one we found ourselves in could not have been larger. After having waited for about an hour, the guards made an opening in the screens and summoned us to get up. All women rushed to the *rawḍa* simultaneously, many of them pushing or elbowing others aside to be among the first to enter. As we had been advised, the women with whom I had come made a circle to allow each of us enough space to take turns in performing a short prayer. We had barely finished when after half an hour the guards yelled that our time was up and started pushing us towards the exit.

We left gravely disappointed. As soon as we got to the mosque courtyard one of my companions shared her indignation and disappointment and stated:

I never thought it would be like this. I can't imagine wanting to come here again, and having to push and pull myself in. That was really hard for me, I'm sure I hurt someone when we entered the *rawḍa*. I had imagined it to be different. My husband made it all look so relaxed and easy. We've only been in Medina for a day now but he has already visited the *rawḍa* several times, making plenty of pictures and selfies inside. Whereas I hardly saw anything, being with so many and all over each other in such a small space.

Another woman added:

This was absolutely nothing like I had imagined. I didn't feel close to the Prophet at all, and I didn't get a chance to do or say any of the things I had planned. I couldn't even reach my notebook with *du'ās*. I was more worried about keeping the circle intact, and when praying I was worried about my safety. I didn't really feel present. I'll come back better prepared tomorrow.

This young woman felt disillusioned and deprived of what should have been one of the spiritual highlights of her journey. She was determined to visit the *rawḍa* again the next day and suggested we join her. By then, we were mentally better prepared for the visual and physical limitations of the *rawḍa*. This time my companion was determined to do what she had not managed to do the night before; she first took out her notebook to say all the supplications she wanted, and then prayed in our protecting circle, and upon finishing her prayers she even managed to take a group selfie. Although it still hurt her that she was prevented from having visual or physical access to the grave of the Prophet, her disappointment had somewhat abated and having adjusted her expectations, she was pleased that at least she had managed to accomplish her most important religious goal of praying in the *rawḍa*.

To be sure, not all women who shared their stories about the *rawḍa* with us blamed the Saudi regime for the restrictions that female pilgrims face there. Pointing to the highly emotional response of many women who actually fought their way into the *rawḍa* to illustrate their point, some of our interlocutors stated that women tend to be more emotional than men. It is for this reason, they argued, that both female pilgrims themselves and the Prophet's grave need to be protected lest wailing women wreak havoc.¹²

Since men and women earn equal amounts of *ajr* or religious merit for praying in the *rawḍa*, according to the same women ultimately it does not matter that women's access is restricted. Thus, these women prioritized gender equity in the eyes of God over gender equality. Some other women, on the contrary, referred to this argument to criticize it as internalized sexist views from former times. Indeed, the indignation about Saudi regulations concerning gender-segregation at the *rawḍa* was shared by most of our younger female interlocutors. Some stated that because of their objections to the subordination of women in the ways the Saudi organized the hajj sites, they were relieved that since they now had fulfilled their religious obligation to perform the hajj, they would never have to visit Mecca again. Resonating with the findings of Nadia Caidi (2019) concerning the relationship between hajj expectations and experience, on the one hand, and the amount and nature of knowledge that prospective pilgrims have at their disposal, on the other hand, others reasoned that, being sadder but wiser, they might lower their expectations and give Mecca and themselves another chance.

Conclusion

What comes to the fore in the stories shared by the young female pilgrims we observed and talked with about gender-segregation during the hajj is that their negative experiences in the *rawḍa* was the most difficult for them to come to terms with. While some also criticized the rude behavior of fellow female pilgrims who shamelessly fought others off to obtain the best place to perform their prayers, the discriminatory nature of Saudi regulations concerning male and female access to what is considered to be 'one of the gardens of Paradise' was criticized most. What makes the situation in Medina different from instances of gender-segregation in Mecca and Mina is that in the *rawḍa* women are prevented from seeing or touching highly valued objects referring to the prophet Muhammad, while men do have access to them. Being deprived access to these objects for many amounts to actually being denied equal access to sacred space in comparison to men. The situation thus had a direct impact on the spiritual reward the women had hoped to experience during their hajj journey.

Intertwined with disappointment about the spiritual reward was indignation about the Saudi control of sacred space as being against the conception of Islam as a religion that stands for gender equality. As mentioned before, besides wanting to fulfill their religious obligation and a desire for spirituality, for many young women in the group that Kadrouch-Outmany followed as well as for a considerable number of the women whom we interviewed, performing hajj together with their husbands was also motivated by the wish to reinforce their mutual relationship as equal partners in their marriage. Although it had not been easy to spend time with their husbands in the tent camp, both in Mina and in Mecca the couples had been able to

carry out hajj rites in each other's company to an extent that was impossible in the al-Masjid al-Nabawī.¹³

In terms of de Certeau, we can discern a pattern both in the strategic control over the hajj sites by the Saudi regime and in the tactical responses of the young women as they appropriated the space at these sites. The strongest surveillance was in places that are central to the hajj rites and therefore considered the most sacred. One obvious reason for this is that the flocking together of millions of pilgrims must be controlled to avoid accidents. Another reason is that presenting itself as the legitimate custodian of the Holy places is an important source of symbolic power for the Saudi regime (cf. Bianchi 2004, 45).

As came to the fore most strongly in the women's response to women's limited access to the *rawḍa*, gender-segregation at the most sacred places where spiritual reward is thought to be the highest is what upset the young women in particular. Separate sections for men and women at shops and restaurants did not bother them much; this practice could be subsumed under the rubric of local folklore and was turned into the women's advantage. More importantly, it was inconsequential for their devotional practices and the spiritual rewards of hajj performance. Things were different in the Grand Mosque in Mecca. There the women could be seen to make the quick moves, manipulations and diversions that de Certeau describes as characteristic of those who make use of a space that is 'owned' by others. Sometimes the women managed to circumvent the gaze of guards and stay together with their husbands in the mosque courtyard. But when they were ushered to the rear area, complaints and compliance went hand in hand. Although the women objected to the exclusive privilege of men to have a full view of the Ka'ba when performing one's prayers, it did not hamper their religious performance to pray further in the back.

De Certeau's argument concentrates on circumstances where people can exert only limited influence, thus subverting situations without deliberately challenging them. In Mina, however, by taking possession of three of the men's toilets the women openly resisted the gendered organization of space. That they succeeded in doing so is probably related to the fact that the toilet area is considered not just a mundane but a lowly valued space where control is lax. The women's motivation to appropriate more space for women in the toilet area illustrates that the use of tactical religion by 'ordinary' people has no clear-cut boundaries but can permeate different domains of life. Besides disapproving in principle of the unequal treatment of men and women, the women also objected to the sanitary arrangements because the long queues seriously hampered engaging in devotional practices.

In keeping with Schielke (2010), the fact that it were younger women who challenged the unequal distribution of space by the Saudi authorities, while older women seemed to comply willingly with the rules demonstrates that pilgrims' expectations and experiences of the hajj depend on the various cultural discourses that inform their life-worlds. For older women, gratitude about being 'called' by God to perform the religious

obligation of hajj performance dominates, and they tend to humbly accept everything that comes with it, finding it inappropriate if not blasphemous to criticize anything related to the holiness of Mecca. This is in line with how they have been brought up: most of them were born in rural Morocco or Turkey, where, besides being accustomed to harsh conditions, most of them had learned to accommodate the notion that women come second after men.

The life-world of the younger women differs considerably. In the most practical sense, having grown up in the Netherlands, their embodied experience of gendered space is informed by their being accustomed to privacy in the sense of space and time to themselves as individuals as well as to high standards of comfort and hygiene. In terms of religiosity, the meaning of hajj seems to have shifted from a focus on fulfilling a religious obligation and act of penitence that characterized the expectations and motivations of older generations, to enjoying the pilgrimage for its spiritual reward and a means of spiritual self-enhancement (Buitelaar 2020; 2018). Also, having been educated in Dutch schools and generally having (or looking for) jobs themselves rather than depending on the income of husbands, the young women have internalized discourses about gender equality. Maybe most importantly, they have learned to speak up for themselves. These intergenerational differences inform the religious styles of the women. For older women, hajj is mostly about paying one's debt to God and asking for forgiveness. While younger women acknowledge these meanings of the pilgrimage, for them the desire to experience the sacred atmosphere as an aid to spiritual self-formation is of at least equal concern.¹⁴

For the younger women whom Kadrouch-Outmany accompanied on their hajj journey, finding a solution for such a seemingly mundane matter as sanitary arrangements thus came to stand for much larger issue of gender equality in Islam, demonstrating that the desires and sensibilities of these women are not only informed by principles that they derive from Islamic sources, but also include liberal political concepts such as rights and equality.¹⁵

Notes

- 1 We would like to thank the Netherlands Organization for Scientific Research (NWO) for their generous grant (360-25-150) for the research project 'Modern Articulations of Pilgrimage to Mecca' on which this chapter is based.
- 2 <https://www.arabnews.com/node/1538466/saudi-arabia>
- 3 For an historical overview of how scholars within the various Islamic Law Schools have debated regulations for female pilgrims, see Sayeed 2016. For present-day implications of the current Saudi *mahram* regulations for women and for stories about the different ways in which female pilgrims deal with them, also see the contributions of Al-Ajarma, Buitelaar and Thimm in this volume.
- 4 cf. see the contribution by Al-Ajarma in this volume.
- 5 Two other contributors to this volume, Richard van Leeuwen and Kholoud Al-Ajarma, also participate in the larger research project.

- 6 The composition of hajj groups can vary considerably depending on the travel agency that the pilgrims travel with: some travel agencies work predominantly through mosques who book package tours for members from their own congregation who are guided by their own imam. Older generations of Muslims in the Netherlands tend to prefer these tours in which one travels in the company of people one knows. Other travel agencies are very active in marketing 'premium' package tours that appeal mostly to more affluent and also more demanding younger Muslims. Some target clients of specific ethnic backgrounds, others advertise an inclusive approach (personal communication Said El-Amraoui of Hadjinfo).
- 7 Kadrouch-Outmany has reflected on participating in the hajj as an insider's outsider in Kadrouch-Outmany 2018a.
- 8 To be sure, our interviewees mentioned other, more pragmatic reasons as well; it is easier to perform hajj before getting children for whom caretakers would have to be found. Also, since one should not have any debts when undertaking the hajj, it is convenient to perform it before getting a mortgage for a house.
- 9 Note that a few years earlier, Eltahawy (2015, 48–52) already reported about being sexually assaulted during the hajj. At that time, however, her testimony was not picked up.
- 10 The most important rituals of hajj start in Mina. First is the standing at the mount Arafat to contemplate one's life and ask God for forgiveness, followed by spending the night in the open in Muzdalifa to collect pebbles, which on three subsequent days are used for the rite of throwing seven pebbles at the *jamarāt*, pillars that represent the Devil.
- 11 Due to limited space in this article, we only focus on one specific mundane struggle in this section. Obviously there were many more ranging from getting food and medical help to charging mobile phones.
- 12 The view that women should be forbidden to attend funerals because of their perceived emotional nature is more commonly found among Muslims of different cultural backgrounds, cf. for example Kadrouch-Outmany 2018b.
- 13 The strict Saudi control over access to the grave of the prophet Muhammad is not only related to Wahhabi views on gender relations, but also to the view that veneration of the dead, including the Prophet, is forbidden. This contravenes the religious views of the majority of Muslims from other religious denominations.
- 14 cf. Haq and Jackson (2009), who observed similar intergenerational differences between Pakistani-Australian Muslims.
- 15 cf. Hafez (2011), who builds a similar argument for Egyptian women active in revivalist movements.

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3 Power in Moroccan women's narratives of the hajj

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Introduction

The *Hajja* is leaving with the pilgrims (*hujjā*);
She is wearing her Mellali *hayek*;²
How lucky you are, *HAJJA*!
Going to Hajj whilst young (*shābba*);
She tells you, “Look after the girls!”
She tells you, “Look after the lands!”
I am praying to God, my Master...
The ship is leaving;
Each has an intention;
My grave and night are coming...

This song was sung to me by *Hanna*,³ an 82 years old Moroccan woman on a September evening in 2016. She spontaneously began singing it as we sat in her son's modest living room in a small town close to Rabat when I asked her about her experiences with the hajj. The song refers to different aspects of hajj, including its history, its social and symbolic significance, and gendered aspects of the journey. Hanna's song starts with a declaration that a female pilgrim (*Hajja*) is leaving with the rest of the pilgrims to Mecca. In the past, Moroccan women leaving to hajj used to wear a *hayek*, a white cloak that covered their entire body, head and part of their face. In the song, being able to go on hajj is a subject of 'envy'. This is linked to the fact that it was rare for women to perform the pilgrimage in Morocco during the time the lyrics were composed. Therefore, women were, indeed, envious of female pilgrims who were able to make the journey to Mecca.

The song then addresses other aspects of hajj in Morocco such as the importance of saying farewell to those who stay behind, begging family members and friends for forgiveness and asking them to look after the girls and lands. This farewell is linked to the next lines of the song which function as a reminder of death and the grave. Mentioning death has a religious significance as a reminder of the importance for Muslims who are capable

of performing the hajj to do so. In the past, going on hajj was associated with older age, when people would prepare themselves for death. The hajj journey itself took many months and was full of dangers and hardships, including the risk of death on the pilgrimage route from disease, thirst or violence. Therefore, most pilgrims leaving from Morocco to Mecca took into account that they might never return home. The reference to death also serves as a reminder of the Day of Judgment when Muslims believe people will stand before God, just as they will stand near Mount Arafat during the hajj ritual to contemplate their lives and beg God to forgive their sins. The song continues with glorifying God for allowing pilgrims (both male and female) to perform hajj. According to Hanna, who learnt it from her mother, this song has been passed orally from generation to generation for a long time. It is uncertain how old the song is, but it does allude to the means of transportation at the time when Hanna learned the lyrics: ships. Up to the 1940s, while some caravans of Moroccan pilgrims travelled over land to Saudi Arabia, others went by steamship, the invention of which gave an enormous boost to the pilgrimage to Mecca since the 1850s (cf. Slight 2014, 55).⁴

Hanna's song, then, represents a creative account of various social, religious and emotional dimensions of the hajj. Taking Hanna's song as a starting point, in this chapter I explore the meanings of hajj for Moroccan women, both on a personal and on a social level. On the basis of empirical data collected through a year of ethnographic fieldwork in Morocco, I argue that the significance of the pilgrimage as a mark of success on the social, spiritual and financial levels differs across different categories of Moroccan women. Through hajj, Moroccan women negotiate different forms of capital, including social, cultural, spiritual and religious capital, which are also informed by their habitus and everyday practices.⁵

My starting point in this analysis is Elizabeth Tonkin's argument that in various ways, narrators are formed by their own narratives (Tonkin 1992, 50). Looking at the socio-cultural implications of women's growing access to cultural, social and symbolic capital related to hajj, my argument builds on Pierre Bourdieu's concepts of habitus and capital as tools to explain and analyze women's narratives and the ways these stories are embedded in their daily lives (cf. Bourdieu 1986).⁶ Bourdieu (1990) explored how in different social fields, possessing various types of 'assets' can confer power and profit to their holder (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, 119).⁷ Depending on the field it functions in, according to Bourdieu, capital (or power) can present itself in economic, cultural or social forms. Building on these forms of capital, several anthropologists argued for other forms of capital, including symbolic capital, moral capital, and audible capital, among others (cf. Cooper 1999). For example, performance of the hajj song helped Hanna to produce symbolic capital as a woman who could not perform hajj herself. Studying the oral narratives of Moroccan women thus provides insights

in the ways they negotiate the ways they are embedded in different sets of power relations in everyday life.

I will more specifically highlight the social diversity of Moroccan women's mobility which is influenced by geographical origin, class, education, financial means and marital status. I will demonstrate that these variables have a direct impact on women's desires to go Mecca, their ability to actually perform the hajj and the experiences of those who have been before, during and after having concluded the pilgrimage. In the next section, I will examine Moroccan women participation in pilgrimage from Morocco to Mecca.

Moroccan women's participation in hajj

In general, not much information is available on women's participation in hajj journeys from Morocco to Mecca in the past. This lack of knowledge is related to the illiteracy of women as the vast majority of women had no access to writing their accounts. As a result, women have most likely passed on their accounts orally that reached us through means such as Hanna's song. In addition to singing her song, Hanna told me the following account that gives us an impression of the mobility of people in the rural area where she lived, and that of women in particular:

When I was young, our world – as girls – was our village; we did not think that anything existed beyond the village; we would not know how to go anywhere outside of the village. Hajj was more difficult and you needed to have money to be able to go to Mecca. I can remember that in our village, one would find one person in the whole area who had enough money to go on hajj: a man!

Historically, both in rural and in urban areas, Moroccan women lived in *hareems* (harems) or 'enclosed households' where extended families lived together as one unit. Particularly in cities but also in families in rural areas that could afford to observe female seclusion, women required permission from their husbands or other male family members before leaving a household (Sadiqi 2003). This was the case at least until the declaration of independence from the French protectorate in 1956. As Hanna explains, the tradition of female seclusion strongly affected who would perform the hajj:

The man who went to hajj from our village was a *faqīh*, a religious teacher who worked at the mosque... As little girls, hajj felt way beyond our reach.

In general, until the 1990s, as in much of the Muslim Middle East, in Morocco religious education and participation in formal religious practices such as mosque attendance and pilgrimage were associated with men.

Women's education was lacking or secondary to men's (cf. Badran 1995; Kandiyoti 1991). Paradoxically, women did represent the majority of religious practitioners of 'everyday' religion. They were, for instance, very active in local pilgrimage such as visiting local saint shrines (Davis 1983; Smith 1980).

As a result of the wave of orthodoxy that has swept over much of the Muslim world since the late 1980s, local pilgrimage to saint shrines has diminished considerably in Morocco, while women's mosque attendance has grown. For women, however, it remains more difficult to fulfil the obligation to perform hajj than for men. One reason for this is that in line with the Wahhabi interpretation of Islamic law, in Saudi Arabia it is considered unlawful for a woman to perform the hajj in the absence of her husband or a close male relative. These views have been integrated into hajj regulations, restricting the opportunities to perform hajj for all Muslim women, regardless of their nationality or Islamic denomination. This provision is only relaxed for women over 45 years of age: they are allowed to travel in groups particularly organized for women without a *mahram* or male companion.

Another obstacle that women may be confronted with comes to the fore in the story that *Hajja* Salma, a woman I met in Temara, a city in the suburban area of the capital Rabat, told me about her own hajj experience:

My husband went to hajj and umra⁸ three times before I went. His first hajj was in 2004. I performed hajj in 2014; I applied in 2009 and could not go because my mother was sick and I could not leave her behind. I applied again in 2010 and 2012 but was not until 2013 that I was successfully selected to perform hajj. I went alone with a group of other women; one man from the travel agency was responsible for us.

(*Hajja* Salma, October 2016)

Hajja Salma's reflection on her hajj experience echoes the stories of many women whom I came to know in Morocco. Although travel for the purpose of pilgrimage has in principle become an accepted pursuit for Moroccan women, due to traditional gender expectations, in practice women often sacrifice the obligation to perform hajj in order to fulfil their 'duties' towards their husbands, children and their responsibilities towards their wider families.

Becoming a *Hajja*: cultural capital in shared narratives of the hajj experience

Moroccans who have performed the pilgrimage to Mecca usually acquire a higher social status. This comes to the fore, amongst others, in the honorific title that is added to their names: *Hajj* for men, *Hajja* for women. As Fatima Sadiqi (2003) has pointed out in her book on gender and language in Morocco, the politics of naming is important in the public discourse

in Morocco. Oral blessings and naming a person *Hajj* or *Hajja* carry a very positive value and were described to me as being part of Moroccan *tashrīf*, which roughly translates into ‘honoring practice’. It is *tashrīf* to call a person who has performed the pilgrimage to Mecca *Hajj/Hajja* as a sign of respect. Some female pilgrims told me that the importance of being called *Hajja* is in the fact that they can distinguish themselves from other Moroccan women and express their own sense of religious achievement as pilgrims. In general, those who perform hajj expect to be addressed as *Hajj* or *Hajja*. The honorific title is thus a symbolically loaded expression that signifies an elevated status. Women who succeed in performing hajj see the new title as a metaphor for their spiritual achievement and a reflection of their religiosity.

Saying *du‘ā* or supplication prayers for someone to perform the hajj is a very common element in conversations between Moroccans. An example was a prayer expressed by a young man in the old *medina* or city centre in Rabat where I was walking with my Moroccan friend Salma. When a woman in a colourful dress stopped to look at the collection of scarves he was selling, he said out loud, “*Allāh ya‘tīk al-hajj*” [May Allah grant you the hajj]! Come and buy from me’. My friend Salma smiled approvingly and explained to me: ‘It is most precious in Morocco to pray to God and ask Him to grant someone the hajj to Mecca’ (Field-notes, September 2015).

In the public sphere, being addressed as *el-Hajja* is a form of cultural capital for women who have performed the hajj. The term of cultural capital refers to non-financial social assets that promote social mobility beyond economic means. It refers to a person’s distinctive skills, knowledge and practices that promote social mobility and allow people to enhance their social position (Newcomb and Crawford 2013, 66). While some female pilgrims, particularly younger ones, do not mind if people do not use the honorific title upon their return, others insist on it. A young Moroccan friend of mine, for instance, recalled a conversation she had had with a friend of her mother who had returned from hajj:

(...) I congratulated her on her safe return from hajj and said, “How are you auntie (*khalti*)?” She frowned at me and said, “You should not call me auntie anymore!... Call me *el-Hajja*!”

(August 2015)

Demanding to be called *Hajja* is making claims to a special status in terms of piety and wisdom, and often also in terms of economic status as someone who could afford to go on hajj. Such claims are increasingly being contested, however. Many people – both men and women – whom I got to know in the course of my fieldwork in Morocco asserted that a person who has been on hajj should not necessarily be referred to as *Hajj* or *Hajja*.

Significantly, one also finds that people who have performed hajj question the habit of making something special out of a person who has been to Mecca. Lubna, a *Ḥajja* I got to know in Mohammedia, for instance, told me:

Why would people call a pilgrim *Ḥajj* or *Ḥajja*? Would they call a person who performs prayer [*ṣalāt*] *muṣallī* [a praying person]? Pilgrimage is like praying, a duty that one has to perform as a Muslim. I would not ask people to call me *Ḥajja*!

As we will see in another section where I will return to Lubna's hajj experiences, there is more to Lubna's assertion than modesty only. For the purposes of my argument here it suffices to say that some pilgrims share Lubna's view, yet most continue to prefix their names with the title *Ḥajja*, which traditionally is held with respect in Morocco.

The rules of etiquette are subtle, however; pilgrims are expected to convey their new status among the local community in a discreet fashion. Although displaying their entitlement to the title of *Ḥajj/Ḥajja* openly is part of demonstrating their piety, to demand openly to be addressed by the honorific title or to 'show off' one's religious status demonstrates a lack of propriety and, more importantly, one's credibility as an exemplary Muslim. It is only a thin line between accorded respect for achieved spiritual enrichment and being accused of using the honorific title as sign of superiority. In order to comply with cultural expectations, pilgrims should capitalize on their new status with care. It is not considered pious to boast about being a *Ḥajja*; modesty must prevail.

This became clear to me in the criticism expressed by the young woman who told me about the request of a friend of her mother to call her *Ḥajja*. In the view of my interlocutor, this demand was inappropriate; one should not brag about being a *Ḥajja* since the respect thus claimed is something that should be gained through recognition of one's piety by others. Therefore, the woman who told me the story of her mother's friend confided that she always deliberately 'forgets' to address the woman in person by her honorific title:

I know that I am expected to call her "*el-Ḥajja*" and respect her... But – may God forgive me – every time she visits us, I call her auntie [*khalti*] on purpose...

For many women, the symbolic capital that comes with becoming *Ḥajja* provides access to other forms of capital within the Moroccan society. The next section gives an example from Fes where a young woman was able to negotiate her position within the local community after performing the hajj.

Hajj and access to religious capital

At the time of my fieldwork, Sawsan was 32 years old, born and raised with a 'comfortably financial family' as she herself characterized her family (Sawsan, October 2015). Sawsan performed the hajj in 2012 together with her father. Since then, she has become one of the most respected young women in her neighbourhood. Both younger and older women come to seek her advice on daily matters and request her religious guidance, as she enjoyed cultural and religious capital.⁹

In Sawsan's case, her privileged status as the daughter of a well-known official provided her with access to large social networks. Her new title, *Hajja*, allowed her to claim a high moral stance and to exert religious influence on women in her family's network. I was told that Sawsan was already known as a wise young woman before she went on hajj. Yet, only after the completion of her hajj, women began to come to her house and seek her advice. Sawsan's mother told me proudly:

I felt that she was going to perform hajj whilst young. Now, she is *Hajja*, she has religious knowledge and many women come to seek her wise advice.

For Sawsan, her religious knowledge and her ability to articulate that knowledge by offering advice to women function as religious capital and as a marker of her social competence. In the eyes of those who know her, being a *Hajja* at such a young age proves that she is religiously devoted for which she deserves respect and a position of authority among young women in her neighbourhood. Sawsan demonstrates her religious 'knowledge' at women's gatherings by giving advice and offering her opinion on different matters. During a women's meeting that I attended in October 2016, I noted that women asked Sawsan many questions about the hajj and umra. They wanted to hear her opinion when the Saudi Arabia's government decided to increase the fees of the hajj entry visa. When she spoke, both young and old women listened attentively to what Sawsan had to say and nodded in agreement. Sawsan also displayed her piety in how she dressed and by interspersing Islamic terms in her daily conversations. Her parents reconfirmed Sawsan's high religious reputation by calling her *Hajja* when they talked about her to other people.

Sawsan's extraordinary position as a young *Hajja* helped her to accumulate distinction and prestige. Such prestige or symbolic capital exists only as far as it is recognized in the eyes of others (cf. Bourdieu 1990). By increasing her religious knowledge, her hajj performance and subsequently sharing her knowledge and experiences with other women and helping them to overcome daily dilemmas, Sawsan gained respect in her local community.

Sawsan's case is not unique; I have noted numerous occasions where having been on hajj provided Moroccan women with self-confidence and

a legitimate foundation from which to access power within their social networks. Some qualifications are in place here, however. First of all, this power predominantly applies in female networks.¹⁰ What characterizes Sawsan's case is that her elevated religious status spilled over into other domains: she is often invited to participate in social events such as weddings, birth celebrations and women gatherings. This illustrates that more broadly, the pilgrimage experience is also a social project and that a valuable asset of pilgrimage concerns the fact that it also renders social capital in the sense of 'strategic positioning' (cf. Bourdieu 1986).

A second qualification that should be made relates to the ways in which social stratification in Morocco affects the ways in which hajj performance of female pilgrims from different socio-economic positions is assessed. The criteria that constitute the symbolic capital that hajj performance may generate changes in each context depending on cultural as well as socio-economic factors. While Sawsan gained much respect and religious capital in her social network after performing hajj, this may not be the case for women from less privileged backgrounds. I will demonstrate this in the next section by discussing the hajj stories of Lubna, the earlier mentioned young woman. Lubna is only three years older than Sawsan, but she comes from a very different social background.

Social capital, pilgrimage and financial needs

The travel and accommodation costs involved make it almost impossible to perform the pilgrimage to Mecca for people who have few financial means. Most Moroccans I encountered considered the fees for hajj travel packages very high. In fact, only some women were financially able to perform hajj. Those who could afford it are often either women with affluent husbands who paid for them, or women who run their own business or have inherited some money. The earlier mentioned *Hajja* Salma, for instance, was able to perform hajj after the death of her father. For women who have very little or no financial capital, it is much harder to perform the pilgrimage.

One of those women is Lubna, who grew up in an impoverished urban neighbourhood in Mohammedia, a city that is part of the larger economic conglomeration around Casablanca. Lubna is the oldest of four children, which means that from an early age, she shared in her parents' responsibilities for taking care of her younger siblings. She lost her father in 2004, and not long after, she started her first job as a daily worker in a large factory. Since then, she has been the family breadwinner and has faced many challenges, including her mother's and brother's illnesses.

Lubna remembers well how impressed she was as a child whenever her mother would tell her the story about the hajj journey of her great grandfather, who, as her mother expressed it, 'walked on his feet' from Morocco to Mecca. As a result, from her childhood onwards, every time she heard the description of the sanctuaries in Mecca and Medina, Lubna felt a strong

desire to go there herself. Recently, her dreams came true; in 2015 she performed the hajj, which is quite extraordinary for a woman in her position. Financially, she could not have afforded to pay for the hajj herself. Lubna was very lucky, however, to win in a the annual lottery her employer organized to provide three workers with 50,000 Moroccan dirhams (±5,000 Euro) earmarked for the hajj journey.

The responses Lubna received from her fellow factory workers and from family and friends in the neighbourhood when she won the money prize that should enable her to buy a package tour for the hajj confronted her with her marginal position as a poor and single woman. She vividly recalls how everyone coveted the prize:

I still remember how everyone gathered, waiting to hear the next name. The manager took out a folded piece of paper out of the box in front of him, and read the name out loud: “Lubna, congratulations!” I could not believe it at first but I acted indifferent. A female friend standing next to me touched my arm and congratulated me. A male colleague standing to my left said, “If you do not want it; give it to me!”

While it is possible that her male colleague may have been joking, Lubna would soon learn that while they would not say so in her face, some people deemed it more appropriate that a young and poor woman like Lubna should renounce the prize in favour of somebody else. Lubna decided to ignore the rumours that reached her ears and focus on overcoming the next obstacle to realize her dream.

Indeed, winning the lottery as such was no guarantee that Lubna would actually be able to perform the hajj. The way to Mecca was still long, as she found out when trying to register for a hajj visa at the local governmental pilgrimage department. The local male governor informed her that prize or no prize, like all Moroccans Lubna would have to go through the visa lottery system before she could undertake the pilgrimage to Mecca.

Two problems occurred in this process. The first was that for the thousands of other applicants who also registered at the local office where Lubna was to apply for her hajj visa, only 390 visas were available. The chance that Lubna would be among the lucky ones who would obtain a visa was therefore very small. The other more serious issue was that in accordance with Saudi Arabia’s policy concerning male guardianship for woman, Lubna could not even register without a *mahram*, a legitimate male companion. Lubna was thus confronted with the task to find a male relative who was willing and able to accompany her on the journey to Mecca. She decided to ask her grandfather. At the age of 85, he belonged to the category of the eldest 15% of registered applicants who are automatically selected to perform the pilgrimage without having to go through the lottery system.¹¹ Several uncles stepped in to raise enough money to buy Lubna’s grandfather a hajj package tour.

Ironically, while it was Lubna who needed a male companion in order to be able to perform the hajj, in the official records Lubna was eventually registered as the companion of her fragile grandfather rather than the other way around. Her grandfather was privileged because of his old age, while Lubna was disadvantaged, both because of her gender and because of her age. Lubna told me that she was happy that her grandfather could perform the hajj because of her.

Having found a way to overcome the restrictions imposed on her as a female pilgrim, Lubna was now ready to prepare for her hajj journey. As it turned out, however, her worries were not over yet. When I met her for the first time, Lubna had just come back from Mecca. Upon her return to Morocco, she had expected that, in line with local etiquette, many visitors, including family members, friends and neighbours, would come to her house to congratulate her on her safe return. During the first few days following her return, indeed, some family members and close friends did visit her. Lubna's neighbours, however, and many women whom she considered her friends never came to her house to congratulate her. Lubna explained this to me by referring to the gossip her decision not to relinquish her prize had caused: 'A woman! Unfit to perform hajj because of poverty and young age...' (Lubna, November 2015). She suspected that behind her back, her neighbours and friends accused her of being conceited and not knowing her place.

To understand the wilful breach of etiquette by Lubna's neighbours and her disappointment about their comportment, it is helpful to reflect on the socio-cultural context in which the views and experiences of the various parties that feature in her hajj story are embedded. In a poor neighbourhood like Lubna's, it is very rare that people have the means to go to Mecca. The hajj is by and large conceived of as a practice of higher class of people who lead different lives, a privilege beyond the reach of one's own kind. While those who are better off are envied for being able to fulfil desires that remain beyond reach for oneself, such envy is impersonal and generalized, concerning unknown people outside one's own orbit. Lubna's story illustrates that if, to the contrary, a person from one's own circle achieves something that was not deemed possible for one's own kind, the confrontation with one's own unfulfilled desires can be unsettling. A young woman with modest means who performs the hajj defies social expectations. Showing Lubna 'her place' by accusing her behind her back of considering herself better than other women in the neighbourhood and by breaching the local etiquette of paying her a congratulatory visit upon return from Mecca can thus be interpreted as a way to restore order by punishing Lubna for the potential threat her success implied for people's acceptance of their own disadvantaged situation.

Fortunately, Lubna's recollections about the resentment of her neighbours and former friends were not the last of her hajj stories. Thanks to the bonding that resulted from sharing similar experiences during hajj, Lubna

managed to build meaningful relationships with fellow female pilgrims, thus being able to extend her social network beyond her daily environment. Not only did she feel appreciated by the women with whom she had performed the pilgrimage, but through her contacts with them, she also gained access to the different layer of society to which many of her fellow pilgrims belong. Cultivating her relationships with her new pilgrim friends thus compensated for the loss of former friendships, and provided Lubna with social capital that allowed her to reach out to a world beyond her old social network.

Lubna's story reminds us of the importance of taking an intersectionality approach in studying the experiences of hajj pilgrims; age, class and gender intersect in a very specific way in both her physical and social mobility. Her story demonstrates the enormous impact of the socio-cultural context on the gendered views on and experiences of people concerning the hajj. Lubna's habitus and everyday life, particularly her social background and her economic status, were reflected in her expectations and experiences of the hajj as much as her gender. The fact that her uncles were willing to finance the hajj of her equally poor grandfather, whereas Lubna experienced social pressure to relinquish the money prize for her own hajj journey, points to the influence of patriarchal views and practices that affect Moroccan female and male pilgrims differently. I will therefore look into the impact of patriarchal views on women's mobility that continue to inform Moroccan culture on the hajj experiences of female pilgrims.

Women's hajj, power and patriarchy

Hajja Zahra, one of the women whom I came to know in Fes, is the first wife of a successful local businessman. Her husband has been on hajj twice and he performs the umra, the 'smaller' or voluntary pilgrimage to Mecca, on a near annual basis. In the past, he would sometimes allow *Hajja* Zahra to accompany him. Nowadays, however, he takes along his younger, second wife to look after his needs whilst in Mecca. In a gathering with several other women, *Hajja* Zahra whispered to a female friend sitting next to her:

I really want to go again! But he [her husband, KaA] said no. He said he had no money to send me again! [She wiped her eyes with her hand, KaA] I feel fire in my chest when I remember those places; I miss visiting Mecca [she put her hand on her chest and sighed, KaA].

According to Islamic law, women have the same rights as men to engage in religious activities, including hajj performance; all pilgrims, regardless of their gender, ideally seek the permission of everyone who can make claims on their services or have supervisory power over them to perform the hajj. In practice, however, women meet with more obstacles than men. In the past,

family units in Morocco were mostly agnatically organized in which patriarchal views and practices prevailed (cf. Sadiqi 2003). To act outside the permission of male family members was very difficult and risky for women. Nowadays, significantly less families live in large extended family units. Patterns in familial power relations have not changed to the same extent, however; in general men continue to have more authority than women, especially over their wives and unmarried daughters. As a result, female family members tend to be more restricted in their freedom of movement than male family members. Therefore, besides the fact that for every woman under the age of 45 who wishes to go on hajj there should be enough money for an additional hajj journey of her male companion, women also face the obstacle of getting permission from their male relatives to go in the first place.

As *Hajja* Zahra's story shows, in present-day Moroccan society, which in Moroccan-Arabic is called *Lkelma d rrijāl*, 'the oral word of a man' can control the mobility of their female relatives. I witnessed *Hajja* Zahra bringing up the issue of her longing to return to Mecca on several occasions, and each time her words were accompanied by tears and sighs. One of her most repeated remarks was that she feared she would die before settings eyes on the Ka'ba again. *Hajja* Zahra's grievances are aggravated by the fact that since her husband married his second wife, this younger woman gets to accompany him on his umra trips. This privilege has become the focus of attention in the rivalry between the two wives. In this sense, *Hajja* Zahra's longing for Mecca should be interpreted in terms of her feelings about her marital situation as much as in her desire to live a pious life.

In the context of Moroccan patriarchal family relations, women often have to act strategically to negotiate 'permission' from their male relatives for their movements outside the house. In this situation, bargaining with others to speak to their husbands can be an effective tactic. *Hajja* Zahra, for example, spoke to people who were close to her husband, such as his sister-in-law, her sons-in-law, her older sons and her husband's older brother. The conversations I witnessed between her and her relatives reflected a process of negotiation in which both male and female family members were involved.

In some cases the permission women seek from their husbands is not a permission in any formal sense, but more of an agreement. Most female pilgrims that I got to know during my fieldwork performed the pilgrimage to Mecca alongside their husbands. To go on pilgrimage with one's spouse appeared to be the simplest way to avoid disagreements or restrictions imposed by the husband. It also reduces their risk of becoming the object of gossip: in the eyes of outsiders the legitimacy of women who perform pilgrimage is enhanced if they do so to accompany their husbands as dutiful wives. Therefore, while in religious terms the hajj of a woman equals that of a man, the symbolic capital that male pilgrims gain by hajj performance tends to be bigger than that of female pilgrims.

Women, symbolic capital and male's ability to perform the pilgrimage

Since pilgrimage to Mecca is obligatory for both Muslim men and women who are able to perform it, some women invest heavily in tactical manoeuvring in order to fulfil their religious duty. Other women, however, put male relatives – particularly their husbands – before themselves when it comes to efforts to allow one family member to perform the hajj. In this sense, even women for whom the hajj is beyond personal reach can influence who travels to Mecca indirectly. It would be a mistake to interpret such activities in terms of altruism only. Creating or enhancing a relationship of indebtedness can be an effective way to exert power over others, particularly for those who have limited access to formal power.

During my fieldwork, I came across several examples of women who exerted this 'hidden' power. Approaching hajj performance as a family project by assisting family members in going to Mecca was a common phenomenon among the women I met. As mothers and housewives women play a principal role in transmitting socio-cultural norms and values and providing encouragement and support. In the next subsection I explore how a wife can play a pivotal role in the pilgrimage of her husband. I will zoom in on the story of Auntie Sarah, a 50 years old higher educated woman living in the urban conglomeration of Casablanca. When interviewing Auntie Sarah about her husband's pilgrimage to Mecca in 2010, this is how she began her story:

There was this time when I told my husband: "I have a feeling you will go to hajj". He said: "I wish these words will go directly from your mouth to Allah".¹² I told him that I had a good feeling about it. I registered his name, attended the selection process, and there it was. They called the first name, then the second and ... the third was his, "al-Sharīf Mūlāy Muḥammad".

(Auntie Sarah, 20/08/2015)

Auntie Sarah herself has not performed the hajj. She knew that her husband wished to go but that he did not have the financial means and therefore kept postponing his registration year after year. Without consulting her husband, she decided to register his name for the *qur'a* as the lottery for hajj visa is known in Morocco. In her view, her husband's intention, or *nīya*, to go on pilgrimage needed to be pushed forwards and she was the one to make that step on his behalf. Smiling somewhat triumphantly, Auntie Sarah told me:

After every prayer, my husband would put his hands up and pray, "Yā Rabb, Oh God; I hope that these feet will be washed with Zamzam water".¹³ One day I was coming back from work when I saw a poster

about the hajj registration. I thought to myself, that's his opportunity, I will go and register my husband; we did not have the financial means or anything to help us make it happen, but I did not think about that at the time; all I thought about is that I can help my husband in making his wish come true.

Besides providing verbal support and encouragement, Auntie Sarah saw it as her responsibility to give practical support to her husband in proceeding on the path to his pilgrimage. She recalls that upon leaving the registration centre and walking back to her house, she wondered what other people would think when hearing that she had registered her husband for the hajj visa lottery: 'They might think that I control my husband!'. Once at home she told her husband what she had done. She clearly remembers the happiness she saw on his face when he realized what his wife had done for him.

A few months later, again without her husband, Auntie Sarah joined the hundreds of men and women that had gathered at the registration centre to hear the results of the hajj *qur'a*. The third name mentioned was that of her husband. Overjoyed she phoned her husband to deliver the good news that he would be able to perform the hajj in the year to come.

Having come this far, Auntie Sarah faced a new responsibility: finding the necessary funds to make it possible financially for her husband to perform the hajj. She told me:

We did not have any "*santim*".¹⁴ Our savings amounted to around 4,000 dirhams; not much at all compared to the 45,000 dirhams that we needed for hajj fees. I told him, "Let's ask the school for a loan of 20,000 over our salaries." Next, I called my sister in Italy and asked if she could give us 1000 Euros. I was involved in a money saving project with the teachers at my school and we had saved about 10,000 dirhams in that group. We put all the money together and I went to pay. All that I returned with were 200 dirhams.

Auntie Sarah's role did not end there; she next took on the responsibility of managing the salaries of her husband and herself to save the money needed to buy the necessary items for hajj such as *ihrām*¹⁵ dress, shoes and other needs. When her husband finally left for Mecca, she made sure to tell him how to spend the money he took with him and what gifts to buy. She herself spent days shopping in Casablanca for 'hajj gifts' for friends and family who would come to congratulate her husband upon his return. She bought prayer mats, beads, scarfs and other gifts. She also worked for many days preparing sweets and food for the return of her husband.

Listening to the stories that Auntie Sarah and other women, particularly when they shared such stories during women's gatherings, reminded me of the argument made by the anthropologist Barbara Cooper concerning the claims that women make to authoritative religious space by sharing their

hajj stories with others as instances that ‘present women with an occasion to talk strikingly openly about themselves and their own lives’ (Cooper 1999, 91). I recognized this in the women I worked with in Morocco coming to the fore, for instance, in the setting in which Auntie Sarah told me her stories. It struck me that while her husband is a well-known teacher in the local community and was willing to share his pilgrimage experiences with me, during the three interviews I had with him and his wife in the their home he mostly gave the floor to Auntie Sarah and would often nod his head in agreement with what she was saying.

While in her article Cooper focuses on the stories of women who had performed the hajj themselves, I noted that Moroccan women who had not performed the pilgrimage could still be active agents in the process that led their male relatives to perform pilgrimage to Mecca. Like Auntie Sarah, women would take centre stage in their stories and speak about their roles confidently and in detail. The culturally specific nature of power and influence wielded by women thus came to the fore both in the performance and in the content of the hajj stories that women told me either in person or at women’s gatherings I attended. From these performances and stories I learned that wives may play both a motivational and a practical role in encouraging and supporting their husband’s pilgrimage. In her stories about the pilgrimage of her husband Auntie Sarah claims authority by presenting herself as the motor behind the success. Similarly, the songs sung by Hanna that I discussed in the beginning of this chapter also function as symbolic capital for a woman who could not perform the hajj herself. This production of symbolic capital through narratives and songs in return justifies and acknowledges the position of those who could not go to Mecca vis-à-vis those who did perform the hajj. Although these women were not the ones who performed the pilgrimage in Mecca, they nonetheless claimed authority as active agents in the process that allowed others to perform pilgrimage.

In conclusion

In this chapter I have studied how female agency comes to the fore in Moroccan women’s stories about pilgrimage to Mecca. Zooming in on the stories of women who varied considerably in terms of age and socio-economic class allowed me to relate women’s hajj experiences to their mobility in everyday life and to the various forms of capital needed for and generated by performance of the pilgrimage to Mecca. Until recently, because of the physical and social mobility implied by visiting Mecca, most Moroccans tended to associate the hajj performance with men rather than women, whom they associate with more local pilgrimages to saint’s shrines. Although the number of female pilgrims has grown over the last few decades, the stories presented in this chapter addressed the challenges that women continue to face before they are able to go on pilgrimage to Mecca.

Some challenges affect all women, such as restrictions on women's mobility due to patriarchal traditions according to which women fall under the guardianship of men. A major obstacle for all female pilgrims is that according to Saudi hajj regulations, women under the age of 45 need to be accompanied by a male guardian. As the stories of *Hajja* Zahra illustrate, living in a polygamous marriage is a patriarchal tradition that can also become particularly painful when tensions between marriage partners are played out in relation to the issue which wife gets to join the *pater familias* to cook and do the laundry for him on his journey to Mecca. At the same time, framing marital tensions in terms of being thwarted in one's efforts to develop one's piety by revisiting Mecca, *Hajja* Zahra has a powerful tool to negotiate her position as first wife.

Cultural gender expectations may also result in women prioritizing their domestic responsibilities as caregivers for family members over their ambition to fulfil the religious obligation of hajj performance, as *Hajja* Salma did. Again, such choices should not be interpreted one-sidedly as pointing to women's lack of agency. The story of Auntie Sara illustrates that women may have their own reasons to invest in facilitating other family members to perform the hajj. For one thing, they often share in the religious prestige that comes from having a *Hajj* in the family. Moreover, by putting much effort in helping others to go to Mecca, women can lay claims on the same family members and thus improve their position in the family.

Besides factors that affect all women, hajj performance can also be hampered by the specific ways in which women are positioned in different sets of power relations, for example, on the basis of their age or socio-economic position. The stories I have discussed here thus illustrate the need to take an intersectionality approach to understand how women's hajj experiences are related to their mobilities. Hannah, the old woman who sang a hajj song for me, grew up at a time when Moroccan participation in the pilgrimage to Mecca was rare. Her song not only reflects the enormous symbolic significance of such extraordinary occasions as women departing for Mecca, but also refers to the envy this caused among those who stayed behind.

Envy plays a major role in the hajj stories of Lubna, the young lower-class woman who was able to go on hajj thanks to the factory lottery she won. Lubna suffered from the resentment of her neighbours and friends who considered it ludicrous for a woman in her position to perform hajj. Yet, making new friends among her fellow pilgrims opened up opportunities for Lubna for upward social mobility. Contrary to the criticism that befell Lubna, on the basis of her privileged status as the daughter of a well-known official with a broad network, the equally young and single Sawsan gained powerful symbolic capital through her hajj performance. The honorific title *Hajja* allowed her to claim a powerful, moral position among the women in her family's network.

The specific stories of individual women that I have discussed are at the same time very personal as well as representative of broader cultural

patterns that inform Moroccan women's desires, views and practices of the pilgrimage to Mecca. In this sense, they underline Tonkin's argument that, in various ways, narrators are formed by their own narratives; the stories my interlocutors shared with me contain both 'scripted' and 'unscripted' elements relating to the specific intersecting positions of the women involved in Moroccan society. While some elements in the stories I discussed may be 'unscripted' from a purely authoritative religious point of view, besides pointing to sometimes very individual character traits, such elements often do tend to be 'scripted' in the sense of corresponding either implicitly or explicitly to cultural views on the daily lives and mobilities of the category of women that the narrators belong to. Specifically, the stories I have analyzed in this chapter illustrate that the universal Muslim obligation to perform hajj can work out very differently for different categories of Muslims in terms of the various forms of capital one needs to possess in order to be able to embark on hajj, and the various kinds of capital that performance of the pilgrimage may generate.

Notes

- 1 I would like to thank the Netherlands Organization for Scientific Research (NWO) for their generous grant (360-25-150) for the research project 'Modern Articulations of Pilgrimage to Mecca' on which this chapter is based.
- 2 Worn by women in more cold areas of Morocco, *el hayek* (or *haik*) is a traditional white outdoor cloak made of silk and wool. It covers the whole body except the face and hands. This large piece of garment is a symbol of modesty and discretion (Mellali: made in Beni Mellal, a city located in the centre of Morocco with rich historical background, particularly from the Ishmaelite Era (XVII Century).
- 3 *Hanna* is a phrase used locally to address grandmothers as a sign of respect.
- 4 Resources that I came across during my fieldwork included a short video from 1949 documenting the Pilgrimage to Mecca from Morocco. The film states that 450 pilgrims who were chosen among 2,500 from Morocco sail towards Jeddah leaving for Mecca, whereas hajj flights did not commence until 1957 (Guttery 1998).
- 5 Habitus is defined (by Bourdieu) as an experience and possession of a tradition by an agent.
- 6 Pierre Bourdieu's concept of capital is connected with his theoretical ideas on class. He identifies three dimensions of capital each with its own relationship to class: economic, cultural and social capital.
- 7 The field, in the conceptualization of Bourdieu, is a competitive arena of social relations where agents/institutions/entities/organizations deploy immense physical, mental, symbolic and strategic resources in the production, acquisition and control of capital.
- 8 The umra is the so-called 'smaller' or voluntary pilgrimage to Mecca that can be performed throughout the year.
- 9 I have classified the acquisition of religious knowledge through hajj as both cultural and religious capital because the process strongly resembles that of an educational process. The power of religious capital lies in how it represents a form of power.

- 10 It must be noted that in Sawsan's case, her father also showed much pride in her being a young pilgrim. I observed, for example, how he would also pay close attention to her when she was giving her views and that he also occasionally asked her advice.
- 11 In Morocco, the eldest 15% of pilgrims do not go through the lottery system in order to give more opportunity to older people to perform the pilgrimage to Mecca. In 2016, the oldest pilgrim was 95 years old and the youngest of them was born in 1933 – 83 years old. These oldest pilgrims were allowed to be accompanied by one person to look after them who would not have to go through the lottery system themselves.
- 12 *Min fummek ilallah* (From your mouth to Allah) is a local expression that indicates hopes for whatever has been said to be realized: May God fulfil your wishes.
- 13 Drinking water from the well Zamzam, which, according to the Islamic tradition, Hajar discovered to quench the thirst of her baby son Ishmael after having been abandoned by Abraham in the desert, is one of the rites of the hajj.
- 14 *Santim* (from the French word centime) – one santim is worth 1/100 of a dirham and is abbreviated c. It is rare to see a coin smaller than 20c these days and there is no smaller currency than a santim.
- 15 *Ihrām* are the clothes one wears once entering the state of ritual consecration. For men, *ihrām* consists of two white seamless sheets draped around the waist and left shoulder. Women can wear any kind of clothing that hides bodily contours. Women should cover their heads but leave their faces uncovered.

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4 Shi'i Muslim women's pilgrimage rituals to Lady Fatemeh-Masoumeh's shrine in Qom

*Ladan Rahbari*¹

Introduction: Muslim pilgrimage and ritual

The intimate connections between commerce, religion, fashion, celebration and consumption have been subject of considerable scholarly attention (Mitra 2016). In sacred journeys, the boundaries of tourism and pilgrimage, consumption and celebration are often blurred as the pilgrims use marketed material objects for spiritual reasons and take part in activities which include enjoyment that is rewarding in more than a merely spiritual sense. Throughout the pilgrimage, everyday materials and practices – from clothing to cars – used or consumed in the ritual, embody and acquire sacred, secular, material and spiritual qualities. Since the religious domain is not immune to the workings of the market (Sinha 2014), sacred journeys and pilgrimage rituals are theorized in the realm of both religious and secular journeys.

This study is interested in the exploration of the sacralisation of everyday practices and objects, and marketization of the sacred in pilgrimage. Pilgrimage shrines are frequently attractions for vacationers engaged partly in 'religious tourism' or 'pilgrimage tourism' rather than in purely religious and spiritual journeys (Badone and Roseman 2010). Pilgrims' behaviours provide an insight into the nature of symbolic, mystical and material consumption (Moufahim and Lichrou 2019). These elements inform the research and analysis of women's pilgrimage to recognize and distinguish different things, practices and connections that women as pilgrims make with the objects, spaces and temporalities in religious and spiritual domains. This study thus addresses not only spiritual and immaterial aspects of rituals but also the materialities involved in relation to gender and, more specifically, to women's pilgrimage performance.

Gender is specifically relevant for the study of women's pilgrimage activities due to the existing limitations put on women's mobility in some interpretations of Islam. There are dispensations for women, including limitations on travelling without being accompanied by a *mahram*,² according to some branches in Islam, and on travelling if one's husband forbids one to do so (Battour, Ismail, and Battor 2010). Despite this, in many Muslim

contexts, women are well represented among visitors to the shrine (Gulevich and Colby 2004, 386). According to authoritative interpretations of Islam, men and women are moral equals in God's eyes and are expected to fulfil the same duties of worship, prayer, faith, almsgiving, fasting and pilgrimage to Mecca (Oxford Islamic Studies 2019). Prescribed forms of pilgrimage and travels to shrines and holy places have been a large part of Islamic social activities and discourses (Nikolaisen 2004), regardless of gender. Muslim pilgrims of all genders undertake the *ziyāra* for a variety of reasons: to make religious vows; to offer their gratitude to religious figures for favours received; to ask for healings or other forms of help; to absorb the spirituality of the place; or simply to be inspired by or express their admiration and love for the holy person (Gulevich and Colby 2004, 386). Gender, among other identity markers, can affect interpretations and intentions of pilgrims, the ways rituals are practiced and embodied, and the symbolic relationship between the pilgrim and the realm of the sacred.

This chapter aims to contribute to the studies of Muslim pilgrimage and women's religious and embodied everyday practices, in particular through exploring the intersection of spiritual and everyday elements of religious mobility. The study also offers insights on women's single-sex pilgrimage in the Iranian context. The findings will most likely find resonance among researchers and scholars interested in topics of Muslim pilgrimage, gender and religious women's mobility. This chapter is organized as follows: in the next section, the practice of pilgrimage and the centrality of Lady Masoumeh's shrine in Qom are contextualized within the contemporary cultural and political discourses of pilgrimage to holy sites in Iran. In the subsequent sections, after introducing the research methodology, women's rituals, mobility, tourism-pilgrimage nexus and interpretations of emotional and spiritual trajectory throughout the journey are investigated. This trajectory is studied in relation to the sacralisation of the everyday and the marketization of the sacred.

Who is Lady Masoumeh?

It is estimated that approximately 10–15% of all Muslims worldwide follow the Shi'a branch of Islam. Shi'a is thus a minority Muslim group globally, but the population constitutes a large majority in Iran, and a majority in countries such as Iraq, Bahrain and Azerbaijan. Shi'i population's geographical distribution spreads from the Middle Eastern and Asian countries to the Shi'i diaspora in Europe and America (Kalinock 2006). In Shi'i narratives, Imams – descendants of the Prophet and *Imāmzādahs* – Imams' children – serve not only as spiritual and political leaders, but also as the only maintainers of the 'true' path of Islam after the Prophet.

The city of Qom in Iran – sometimes called the Shi'i Vatican (Blair 2016) – is largely considered the contemporary centre of the Twelver Shi'a.³ The city increasingly attracted Shi'i theologians after the mid-17th century

(Canby 2009) when during the Safavid Dynasty Shi'a was coined as the official religion of the Persian territories.⁴ Most of the available Shi'i sources are produced, supported and sanctioned by political entities and theological institutions located in the city of Qom. The practice of pilgrimage is one of the ways in which Qom institutions – coupled with the Iranian state – promote their Shi'i identity. One of the most significant sacred sites in Iran is the shrine of Lady Fatemeh-Sughra or Fatemeh-Masoumeh (called Masoumeh in this paper) in Qom. The shrine is considered the second most important site in the country only after that of Lady Masoumeh's brother, Imam Reza, which is located in the city of Mashhad. Lady Masoumeh (790–816 CE) was the seventh Imam, Musa Al-Kazem's daughter with his wife Najmeh,⁵ and the eighth Imam, Reza's sister.⁶ There are multiple Shi'i hadiths (narrations about the sayings and acts of the Prophet and the Imams) from different Shi'i Imams that venerate Lady Masoumeh and her shrine in Qom and that predict that the city of Qom would become the centre of Shi'i knowledge (YJC, 2015). A hadith from Imam Sadegh (702–765 CE – sixth Shi'i Imam) states:

A lady who is descendant of me, by the name of Fatemeh, will be buried in Qom. Whoever visits her, will be rewarded by entry to Heaven – Imam Sadegh.

(Majlesi volume 48, page 317)⁷

There are similar hadiths from Imam Reza and Imam Javad (ninth Imam of Twelvers) who encourage believers to visit Lady Masoumeh's shrine. The shrine is exalted also because besides Lady Masoumeh, three daughters of Imam Javad are buried there. The shrine is especially attractive for practicing Muslim Shi'i women. Like other prominent female religious figures, such as Fatemeh-Zahra⁸ and Zeinab,⁹ Masoumeh's life (and death) story, her personal characteristics and political imagery make her a role model for Shi'i women. It is because of this status that Lady Masoumeh's shrine is estimated to be visited by around 20 million pilgrims every year (Shabestan 2014).

Lady Masoumeh represents historical Shi'i resistance to anti-Shi'i regimes and her birthday is the national Girls' Day (*Roos-e Dokhtar*) in Iran. She is venerated as the symbol of virginity and singlehood. The political aspect of her imagery should be understood within the larger Shi'i political narrative as a people who believe that the rightful place of their Imams as political rulers was denied to them. Their history is one that is based on narratives of discrimination and oppression by anti-Shi'a forces that continue to exist in some Sunni Muslim majority contexts. Shi'a believe that all their 12 Imams were martyred. This martyrdom discourse resonates in the life-story of Lady Masoumeh, who died while travelling to Khorasan to re-unite with her brother, who was also her 'guardian' after the death of their father. While the conditions of her death are unknown, there also speculations that Masoumeh, similar to her brother, was poisoned (Eshtehardi 2001) and martyred.

In terms of Lady Masoumeh's gendered imagery as a single woman, different sources have offered divergent accounts. According to one source, her singlehood was due to the severe suppression of Shi'a and especially Imam Reza's family, resulting in no one daring to ask for her hand in marriage (Hawzah 2007). Another argument is that there were no men who matched her level of spirituality and knowledge. This explanation might not seem so far-fetched if we consider a hadith by Imam Sadegh (the sixth Imam) in reference to Lady Fatemeh-Zahra that states:

If God had not created the Commander of the Faithful [Ali, LR] for Fatemeh[-Zahra, LR], then there would not have been a suitable husband for her in the whole world from the time of Adam to the end of mankind.

– Imam Sadegh (Al-Islam n.d.-a)

Thus, in line with this view, the same reasoning could have been applied in the case of Lady Masoumeh. The Shi'i historian Yaqubi (897–898 CE) suggested a third argument, according to which Lady Masoumeh refrained from marriage in compliance with the will of her father, Imam Musa Al-Kazim (Yaqubi 2003). The two latter hypotheses are, however, rejected by contemporary Shi'i institutions in Qom (Hawzah 2007) since they contradict the high value of marriage in Islam and among the Shi'a.¹⁰ Their argument is that because of the significance of marriage in Islam, the lack of good matches is not a strong justification for singlehood. Similarly, due to the high emphasis on the social value of marriage in Islam (Rahbari 2019), Yaqubi's suggestion that Imam Musa Al-Kazim did not want his daughters to marry is disqualified by Shi'i institutions in Iran (Hawzah 2007). Another undiscussed explanation is that since Lady Masoumeh died at a young age (estimated 28), she may not have had the chance yet to marry at the time of her passing. It is noteworthy that no sources have interpreted Lady Masoumeh's celibacy as a voluntary act. Despite the significant characteristics of her story such as singlehood and the fact that she travelled as a young single woman for political reasons, Lady Masoumeh is not portrayed as making the choice to be single on a purely voluntarily basis, but rather as an exception to the rule. Her situation is thus interpreted as not having been able to fulfil the highly desired social goals of marriage and motherhood due to the political conditions of the time and the oppression of the Shi'a.

Methods

This anthropological study is conducted by using different qualitative methods, such as participant observation, informal open-ended individual and focus group interviews and follow-up conversations as well as bibliographic research of both online and offline inventories on Muslim and Shi'i pilgrimage. The desk research included reviewing existing sources on

Lady Masoumeh. The empirical research was undertaken during different moments for a total of three months in 2014 and 2015. For this paper, interviews were held with five women who practiced pilgrimage to the Shrine of Lady Masoumeh in Qom periodically and collectively. The focus was on the women's preparations, journey and activities on the way to and back from the shrine. Interviews were conducted in informal settings, in participants' houses as per their preference. The participant observation included travelling with three women to the shrine of Lady Masoumeh.

The age range of the participants was between 30 and 50 years old. They were all married women who had between one and five children. Four of the participants were not employed outside of home¹¹ and one participant – the youngest – had a part-time teaching job. The interviews were conducted in Farsi/Persian, a language that all five participants spoke fluently, also the official language in Iran. However, two participants stated that their mother-tongues were not Farsi. The four older participants called each other by the last names of their living or deceased husbands. This shows that while being friends and having known each other for several years, there was a certain level of formality in their relationships. The youngest woman was called by her first name by everyone, and her name followed by *Jan* (an endearment term that means 'dear' in Farsi). It is important to note that the researcher's positionality as a young Iranian woman who was perceived as Shi'i Muslim and who was familiar with two of the participants before the time the interviews were conducted was constructive to trust-building and facilitated the interactions and communications during the research.¹²

Visiting the Lady in her house

The participants of this study highly valued the practice of pilgrimage, whether as hajj or as a *ziyāra* to Shi'i figures' shrines. Among the women, one participant had performed hajj. The other women explained that they had plans or that they hoped they still had time, highlighting that the practice of hajj only becomes 'mandatory' if a person was well-off and that it often happened in the latest stages of their life when they were mature and prepared to take the step towards a comprehensive spiritual cleansing. Pilgrimage to Shi'i shrines, however, were perceived to be possible to perform at any age or spiritual stage. In fact, the women used every possible opportunity to practice pilgrimage and had taken their children to different shrines such as Imam Reza, Shah Cheragh,¹³ Jamkaran,¹⁴ *Imāmzādah* Saleh¹⁵ and Lady Masoumeh.

The five women of this study performed their pilgrimage together in the car of one of the participants. They explained – with humour – that they usually made the journey with five, because it was the maximum number of people that you could fit in one car, allowing them to reduce logistic difficulties and to enjoy the journey towards the shrine. They also explained that they enjoyed other women's company and that it was considerably

easier for them to make decisions such as making a toilet stop or to shop for souvenirs and food on the way when only other women accompanied them. They believed that the presence of men would complicate the interactions and reduce their freedom. They shared the costs of their journey among themselves. Three of the women took turns driving from Tehran to Qom, a trip that took them around two hours.

For my interlocutors, lack of non-ritualistic mobility and refraining from leaving the house for mundane activities was in itself an act of pious devotion and agency. They chose to ‘limit’ their own physical mobility outside the domestic space to maintain what they considered an ideal form of devout piety. The women explained that they had never asked for permission from their spouses (if any) to leave their homes,¹⁶ nor had they ever faced any limitations in performing pilgrimage or moving outside their homes in general. They stated that they chose not to leave their houses if there was no need. In short, they stated that no one except themselves limited their mobility and that they were even encouraged to practice pilgrimage by their family male or/and female members. Their physical mobility was thus in itself not interpreted as a problematic or non-pious practice by themselves or by their families. Its value was, however, defined by the intentions and the end-goal of the mobility. If the goal was paying a visit to a sacred shrine, going on a trip was nothing but a laudable cause.

Piety plays an important role in the collective Shi’i narratives of infallible or devout female religious figures. In fact, prominent female figures like Fatemeh-Zahra, Zeinab and Masoumeh are admired foremost for their piety. This notion of piety is a complex set of attitudinal, behavioural and spiritual aspects, and has relations to women’s physicality and embodiment as well as their mobility and presence in public spaces. It is to maintain this piety that leaving private spaces without permission of the male guardian is condemned unanimously by Shi’i scholars with juristic authority (*mujtabahid*) (YJC, 2018). Fatemeh-Zahra, who is given the highest regards in Shi’i narratives, is believed to have never unnecessarily interacted with men, nor having left the house except for matters of extraordinary urgency (Hoseinian Qomi 1998). Similar narratives exist about other Shi’i female figures such as Zeinab and Masoumeh.

While in Muslim contexts the piety of a woman cannot be entirely deduced by what she wears, the attires and types of hijab provide some clues on women’s adherence to religious modesty based on the context (Lewis 2017). In Iran, the relation between piety and certain forms of clothing is enforced by the country’s compulsory hijab law (Shirazi 2017), but also on a social level, wearing chador is associated with higher levels of religiosity. The five women of this study believed that Lady Masoumeh’s grace stimulates piety, especially that of younger women who have not yet found their spiritual path. They believed that the grace of Lady Masoumeh facilitates the adoption of piety as a behavioural and embodied code – including but not limited to a proper hijab – usually in the form of a chador.

In a session at one of the participants' houses, the participants told the story, completing each other's statements, of a young woman who had adopted the proper hijab – a chador – after visiting Lady Masoumeh. Although they did not believe that the Lady's grace was the only factor affecting her choice of hijab, they believed that it had been effective in guiding the young woman into taking this step. Some of the women referred to Lady Masoumeh's nickname, *Karimeh* – meaning munificent and benevolent. They explained that they visited Lady Masoumeh because they knew she would take heed of their calls and grant them their wishes. Despite Lady Masoumeh's position as an *Imānzādah* – who are in fact revered by the virtue of their relation with the Imams (Glazebrook and Jalal Abbasi-Shavazi 2007) – she is treated and revered in a similar way as the Imams in Iran. This could partly be owing to the hadith by other Shi'i Imams about the value of pilgrimage to Lady Masoumeh's shrine.

Dressing to impress the Lady

The pilgrimage to Lady Masoumeh's shrine requires ritualistic objects and preparations. One participant in the group explained their pilgrimage as visiting Lady Masoumeh 'in her house'. To pay such a visit, it was important that the women were presentable, clean and pure. This notion of purity was connected to personal hygiene but went beyond that. To ensure purity during the rituals, the women made sure to perform an ablution ritual in their preparation.¹⁷ As a rule in Shi'i Islam, visiting mosques and shrines is not sanctioned for menstruating women. While this rule does not apply to *Imānzādahs* such as Lady Masoumeh, the women of this study preferred to practice pilgrimage when they were not menstruating to respect the shrine. For this, they planned their pilgrimage when it suited everyone according to their cycles. Ablution was performed right before the women got dressed and ready to start their journey.

Visiting shrines in Iran usually requires following certain dress code regulations. While men may be required to wear long sleeves and trousers, the regulations are much stricter for women. Women should not only observe proper hijab, but are also often asked to wear a chador and, in more extreme cases, to avoid wearing make-up and nail polish. Although wearing a chador is not demanded at all shrines, and while different forms of requirements are made arbitrarily by shrine's managers, it is the most prevalent requirement. Qom is generally known as a city where dress code regulations are much more strictly held than in other large cities in the country. The city has been considered a holy Shi'i city for centuries and has had a more strict dress code for women from the 17th century during the Safavid era (Figueroa 1984), when the shrine was built, until today.

For the five participants of the study, the compulsory nature of the chador was, however, not an issue since they were all *chadori* women, meaning that they always wore chador outside the house. Four of them wore the

classic hijab and one – the youngest woman – had opted out for the new trendy chador-*melli*, which is literally translatable to ‘the national chador’. Chador-*melli* is a hybrid chador that is a combination of a *manteaux*¹⁸ and the classic chador and is perceived to be suitable for modern religious women who are socially and physically mobile. A chador-*melli* allows for more freedom, especially for the person’s arms and hands, the younger participant explained. None of the women believed that covering one’s faces was a religious necessity and considered it a practice that was outside the Iranian social norms and thus not desirable. The act of dressing in chador to visit the shrine – despite it being their everyday choice of public attire – was a differentiated experience. They used their best chadors, which were made of higher quality and more expensive fabric, and scented the chadors with rose water to smell and look good for the Lady, ‘just like when one goes to a party [*majlis*]’.¹⁹

When confronted with the question whether they agreed with the compulsory hijab – as it is mandated in Iran – the women unanimously supported its mandatory nature, discussing that first of all, it was the tradition of Islam, and a nation that carried the name of Islam must therefore present itself with such a virtue; and second, in the context of pilgrimage, it was disrespectful to the shrine of the Lady or those of other important figures in Shi’i history to appear in front of them in what my interlocutors considered un-Islamic attire. While the women rejected the chador as a universal Islamic attire and respected the choices of other women who wore *manteaux* or chose less strict dress codes, they did believe that at shrines special regulatory measures were needed to guarantee the required respect for the Imams and *Imāmzādahs*.

The participants also prepared to seize the chance for doing charitable work. They brought money and sometimes food as *nazr*. A *nazr* is a vow that a person makes in commitment to God, to the Prophet, Imams or *Imāmzādahs* (Shirazi 2005). Once *nazr* or the pious vow is made, it must be fulfilled and breaking it – without a justifiable reason – would be considered a sin. *Nazr* can be vowed in the form of good deeds, prayers, charity, food, clothes for the poor and more. It is also possible to have a *nazr* of pilgrimage. A *nazr* can be taken up by the family, especially the children of a deceased person. In this case, both the deceased soul and the person who performs the pilgrimage is rewarded. As one of the participants explained, she performed *nazr* on behalf of her deceased mother who herself had a *nazr* of visiting Lady Masoumeh’s shrine but died before she could fulfil it.²⁰ Therefore, my interlocutor continued the *nazr* of her mother, and visited Lady Masoumeh on her behalf.

Ziyāra praying and remembrance

The trip from Tehran to the Shrine in Qom takes the women about two hours to drive. On the way, the women talk about different topics, from

food and marriage to good memories of past pilgrimages. They explained that if they ran out of things to talk about, they listened to *noubeh*, which are Shi'i incantations with religious content, sung to crowds on religious celebrations and mourning. They tell the stories of Shi'i saints and recite narratives of their martyrdom (Majd 2009). Martyrdom (*shahadat*) is a very important aspect of Shi'i identity. The lyrics work as catalysers to remind the audience of the duress and the oppression that important Shi'i figures – especially Imam Hosayn – endured. In public spaces in Iran, these incantations are only sung by men. While there are different interpretations regarding singing and women's voice in Islam, and although there are hadiths that indicate that the Prophet did not object to women's singing (Al-Qaradawi 2013), singing is mostly not allowed for women in Iran according to some local *mujtahid* (Khabaronline 2013); it is only allowed in choir if there is no doubt that the practice will not cause (sexual) pleasure (Parsine 2013).²¹ My interlocutors explained that one of them had a good voice and even sang in single-sex ceremonies. She also sometimes attempted to sing in the car on the journey to the shrine. The woman who sang explained playfully that her companions always worried that non-*mahram*²² men might hear her voice. While listening to the songs prepared the women spiritually, their trip towards the shrine was cheerful as they talked, joked and laughed on the way towards their destination. Their mood, however, gradually changed as they prepared to cleanse themselves by the grace of Lady Masoumeh and practice remembrance and mourning in the shrine.

The tradition of remembering and mourning the oppression, the resistance and the martyrdom of the Imams and *Imāmzādahs* throughout Shi'i history is an important collective and individual religious and social practice. As other studies have shown, Shi'i narratives and ritualistic mourning function as a means of not only commemoration and therapy but also connection among Shi'i Muslims themselves (Hassan al Khalifa Sharif 2005). The discourses of these narratives are built on stories of Shi'a uprisings and sacrifices, and political oppression that are commemorated by mourning and lamentation ceremonies. The practice of pilgrimage by the women implies that all these elements – listening to stories of sacrificial and spiritual suffering through the incantations – is used to evoke emotions. In the case of Lady Masoumeh, the unjust conditions of the time for Shi'i population and the fact that she died alone, far from her beloved brother – Imam Reza – are central to the general commemorative Shi'i narrative.

The commemorative discourses come in to play in the pilgrimage experience and the women's personal suffering as a form of reverence of the hardships and adversity of Shi'i people and, more specifically, prominent Shi'i figures. Similarly, commemorating the sorrow and loneliness of Lady Masoumeh was a crucial part of the ritual for the participants of this study. Remembrance was considered, however, not only relevant to the Lady, but also to the women's own personal stories. One participant expressed that after her husband's death she experienced a great deal of loneliness, and

often thought about the sufferings of Imams and *Imāmzādahs*. Through remembrance of the hardship that the Imams and *Imāmzādahs* had endured, especially the hardships of Lady Masoumeh, she found her own suffering more tolerable. She explained that if Lady Masoumeh – a young woman on her own, who had lost her guardians and was living under severe political oppression and had to travel in the hard mobility conditions of the time and then fell ill in the middle of the way, never getting to see her brother – could bear the pain, then so could she. The personal remembrance was also connected to objects, in this case a photograph of a deceased husband that the participant carried with her inside the shrine.

When they arrived in Qom, the women left the car in the parking lot a few minutes walking distance from the shrine and continued on foot. The shrine is a large complex, including multiple facilities, such as mosques, *riwāqs*²³ and *sahns*²⁴ as well as separate *zarih*²⁵ and attached prayer spaces for male and female pilgrims. Entering the *zarih* and the attached prayer areas is only possible without shoes, so women take their shoes off and put them in plastic bags and then perform the *ziyāra*. Participants expressed changes in their emotions and attitudes in the shrine; as soon as they enter the *zarih*, they no longer stay together but disperse. While keeping close to each other, they do not speak to each other and perform their prayers and rites individually. *Ziyāra* rites entail holding on to the *zarih* structure and kissing it, reciting *ziyaratnameh*²⁶ beside the *zarih* and praying in the prayer room in its vicinity using a *tasbīh*.²⁷ Women stand beside the *zarih*, or lean on it or sit around the floor of the prayer room attached to it reciting and reading prayers.

After praying, mourning and donating their *nazr* in the shrine, which takes them a few hours, the women regroup and start their journey back home. Like other religious pilgrims, the women either buy and personally use religious memorabilia or buy them as souvenirs for their loved ones. The shopping hubs around the shrine have been formed to attract the pilgrims and entice them to buy memorabilia. Even though these objects such as decorative stones with names of saints carved on them, hand-made baskets, carpets and sweets are not always directly connected to the act of worship or rituals for/in the shrine, by being used as pilgrimage souvenirs, they enter the sphere of pilgrimage. Other objects include religious books, chadors and different forms of veils, ornamented and framed Qur’anic verses or prayers, cloth and *tasbīh*. Some of these objects have great spiritual value. Some, for instance, had been placed in the *zarih* area before being sold, and this increased their value because of their vicinity and connection to the *zarih*.

The objects that the women bring back from the journey are not always produced as religious objects; however, as the women explained, they nonetheless had a blessing to them because they were purchased during the pilgrimage. These objects were produced as commodities, but once they enter the sphere of worship, they acquire specific sets of meanings that only make

sense within the given worldview of a particular religious tradition (Sinha 2011, 5). The ride back consisted of some touristic activities such as shopping and sometimes picnicking on the roadside with home-made snacks. On their way home from Qom, they usually shop for local sweets such as *sohan*.²⁸ The sweets are then gifted or offered to family members and friends as pilgrimage souvenirs.

The everyday in pilgrimage ritual

In this chapter, I looked into a group of Iranian women's intimate and collective experiences of pilgrimage to Lady Masoumeh's Shrine in Qom. The focus was on women's embodied preparations, journey and activities on the way to and from the shrine as well as on their dealing with objects and their interpretations of the different steps and dimensions of the journey. While the existing Shi'i religious frameworks shape normative, social and practical dimensions of both devout femininity and the practice of pilgrimage, this chapter showed that women's practices inform, reshape and personalize these discourses. The participants maintained their comfort and created intimate spaces throughout the journey. Choosing to practice their pilgrimage in mobile single-sex space using a private car, women could interact, laugh and pray without the limitations they would face in mixed-gender spaces. The usage of mobile private spaces however served more than the goal of comfort, and was also a way for them to circumvent gender norms to be able to perform their spiritual and religious duties optimally. By doing this, the ordinary and everyday space of their car was used as a means to a religious end.

This chapter also showed that women's ritual started in women's everyday spaces, namely their houses, when they performed ablution and cleansed their bodies, chose proper attire and prepared donations. Additionally, women interacted with a network of highly commercialized objects and spaces. They dealt with the materialities of their pilgrimage – the shrine and its spaces, consumer objects, their own bodies, pieces of clothing and more – without disconnecting them from the spiritual realm. The material preparations, usage of objects and practices of shopping were in no way disconnected from the realm of the sacred, but integrated to it. From those early rites until they ended up in shopping districts and bought souvenirs and sweets after leaving the shrine, women's pilgrimage was not only connected to familiar spaces that transformed through the rites, but also connected to different temporalities. Women's practices of thinking about Lady Masoumeh's hardships, their own life struggles and the hope to receive blessing to solve their issues in the future connected the three pillars of time – past, present and future – as different elements of history and life course were brought together.

Another significant finding was that while they practiced pilgrimage for an array of personal reasons and as a religious obligation, visiting Lady

Masoumeh was seen as a spiritual and political practice that simultaneously celebrated and mourned the consequences of the minority position of Shi'i people in the history of Islam. The participants were well informed about the significance of Qom as a political centre connected to the conservative political forces in Iran. They were knowledgeable of the conservative and reformist divide in Iranian politics. Simply put, the reformists represented by minority clerics, civil society and women's rights activist want to formulate a more egalitarian reading of Islamic law, while the conservative, who hold major positions of power, insist on keeping intact the ideological discourse of the Islamic Revolution (Mir-Hosseini 2002). The women of this study were outspoken advocates of the latter group. Their practices were consciously situated in the broader landscape of religious and political diversity and fragmentation in Iran. Their positioning in relation to discourses on state identity and religious policies as well as the negotiation of gender policies in public all helped them establish their own political locations. The pilgrimage and the rituals of remembrance and mourning reconnected the women to the Shi'i history of suffering and victimization, as well as to identities delineated by the Iranian state, as Shi'i faith is used as a state instrument by to attract the loyalty of the country's population.

This study aimed to contribute to this volume by portraying an ethnographic account of female Iranian non-hajj pilgrimage as well as by illustrating the interplay between women's movements and various socio-political structures and practices that shape or affect their rituals. The methodological and thematic focus did not allow for a broader exploration of social and political implications of Shi'i pilgrimage. The contribution of the study has thus been in adding to the narratives of Muslim women and new modes of mobility in pilgrimage, providing ethnographic insights on Iranian women's single-sex pilgrimage and the transformation of everyday life throughout the journey. I showed that throughout the pilgrimage journey the boundaries of leisure, tourism and religious practice were negotiated and blurred, and the ritualistic and marketized characteristics of object coexisted. As Badone and Roseman (2010) have discussed, the rigid dichotomies between pilgrimage and tourism, or pilgrims and tourists, no longer seem tenable in encountering marketized realm of religious objects. One can discuss that with the advancement of modes of mobility, religious identification could be invigorated, embraced, vitalized and reoriented with more agency for women – such as my interlocutors – who connect their rituals to political, religious and national identity in vibrant ways.

The study indicated that pilgrimage journey consisted of materialities and objects, spaces and practices that crossed the limits of personal and individual and entered the realm of ritual by virtue of their connection to religious rituals. The shrine of Lady was the object, the destination and the crossroad between geographies of worldly desires, multiple temporalities and spiritual demands as well as national and religious belongings. Women's single-sex pilgrimage enabled them to privatize their spaces and

terms of mobility, intimacy and emotions and to cross the boundaries of leisure, tourism and religious practice. The women's every day and seemingly mundane acts of driving, eating and talking to friends were ritualized, sacralised and then interpreted and redirected towards the goal of reaching a sacred destination.

Notes

- 1 I would like to thank the five amazing women who took part in this research.
- 2 *Mahrams* are persons with whom one can interact freely and without limitation such as abstaining from certain forms of physical contact (for categories and a list of *mahrams*, see, for example, Rahbari 2017, 3).
- 3 Twelver Shi'a or Twelvers are the largest branch in Shi'a Islam.
- 4 Shi'a was in fact the minority branch in Iran before the Safavids (Voll 1994), and the conversion of the country to Shi'a was a process that included violence and prosecution.
- 5 Najmeh Khatun, their mother – who had only these two children with Imam Kazem – was a former slave from North Africa who became very learned in Islamic teachings.
- 6 Imam Reza in especially important for Iranian Shi'a; this is partly because he is the only 1 of the 12 Imams whose shrine is located in today's Iran, in the city of Mashhad. The shrine of Fatemeh-Masoumeh, his sister, is the second most important religious site in the country (Naef 2017).
- 7 Majlesi's Bihar Al-Anwar series is estimated to have been edited between 1694 and 1698.
- 8 The Prophet Muhammad's daughter and first Twelver Imam's (Ali) wife.
- 9 Zeinab was Imam Ali and Fatima-Zahra's daughter and sister to the highly revered and martyred Imam Hosayn. Known as the Heroine of Karbala, Zeinab's Shrine is located in Damascus, Syria, and is an important site of pilgrimage to the Shi'i people.
- 10 Besides the connotations of the importance of marriage in the Qur'an, according to several hadith, marriage is considered the tradition of the Prophet and voluntary singledom is looked down upon in some Muslim contexts (Al-Islam n.d.-b).
- 11 Although they did not work outside of home, the women were responsible for their housework, from cleaning and cooking to taking care of financial matters (such as paying the bills). Two stay-at-home women also received a comfortable allowance after their husbands' death.
- 12 The nature of familiarity between the interlocutors and the researcher cannot be disclosed for privacy and anonymity reasons.
- 13 Shah Cheragh, which in Farsi translates to *the King of the Light*, is referred to a Shi'a figures as well as his shrine in the city of Shiraz in Iran. Shah Cheragh is the tomb of Amir Ahmad and Mir Muhammad, sons of the seventh Imam Musa al-Kadhim and the brothers of the eighth Imam Reza.
- 14 A holy mosque and site of Shi'i pilgrimage in Qom where the twelfth Imam was once sighted.
- 15 The shrine and mosque entomb the remains of *Imamzadeh* Saleh who was Imam Musa al-Kadhim's son. The shrine is one of the most popular shrines in Tehran.
- 16 Legally speaking, in Iran, married women are required to have permission from their spouses to travel; but in reality, many women make decision on their own mobility.

- 17 Ablution is a ritual that consists of washing and purifying the body or parts of it with water in a certain order. To see types and modes of practicing Shi'i ablution, see Rizvi (2013).
- 18 The word is borrowed from French and is used to refer to the overcoat-style garment that Iranian women wear in public. There are many different types of this attire, as it is an important part of women's fashion expressions in Iran.
- 19 By which they meant single-sex ceremonies where women come together for social and religious reasons.
- 20 The *nazr* is to pay respects to both Fatemeh-Masoumeh and Fatemeh-Zahra. Visiting Masoumeh is sometimes considered equivalent to visiting Fatima-Zahra. It is believed that Ayatollah Sayyid Mahmood Mar'ashi – father of the famous Grand Ayatollah Sayyid Shahab Al-Deen Marashi Najafi – was very interested in finding out the location where Fatima-Zahra was buried. He completed reciting the Qur'an for 40 days, hoping for a revelation guiding him to find the location. After the 40th day, he was visited by either Imam Baqer or Imam Sadegh in his dream. The Imam told him that since God wants the burial place of Fatima-Zahra to remain hidden, Lady Masoumeh's shrine reflects the burying place of Fatima-Zahra, and is to be considered as holy as Fatima-Zahra's shrine if it were revealed (Imrani n.d.).
- 21 This is only in the case of signing alone. Group practices such as choir are sometimes allowed. The attitudes of the Islamic Republic towards women singers depend on the ruling party and have been inconsistent.
- 22 According to Islamic guidelines, non-*mahrams* are people of the opposite sex with whom a person must abstain from certain forms of contact. The conditions and forms of contact differ among Muslim communities.
- 23 *Riwāq* is a space attached to the main building of a mosque/shrine from one side with a roof supported by columns on the other side that usually faces or is built around a courtyard.
- 24 *Sahn* is a yard, an outdoor space that a pilgrim enters before entering the *riwāq* and then the mosque.
- 25 A *zarih* is a construction – often made up of valuable metals, but also wood, stone and so forth – that marks the tomb of a religious figure. *Zarihs* are the most sacred places in a shrine and are built, ornated and decorated using donations.
- 26 *Ziaratnameh* is a text recited while practicing pilgrimage. It contains salutations and praise for the Prophet and tribute to the religious figure. Lady Masoumeh is – beside Lady Fatima Zahra – the only woman whose *ziaratnameh* is written by an Imam (Imam Reza) and not by other religious figures. This shows that her position is very high even among other revered Shi'i *Imamzadeh* women.
- 27 A string of beads made of wood, plastic or stone that is used for counting prayers and performing regular prayers. *Tasbīh* are sold in souvenir shops in many city markets in Iran, but the *tasbīh* that are purchased in shrines are commonly considered more valuable.
- 28 *Sohan* is a traditional Persian toffee containing pistachio and saffron. It is a famous delicacy made in Iran, in the city of Qom.

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5 Israeli Dead Sea cosmetics and charity for Palestinian children

Indonesian women's shopping activities while on pilgrimage to Jerusalem

Mirjam Lücking

Introduction

'Indonesians love to shop' – this is common wisdom among Palestinians and Israelis who work in the tourism sector in and around Jerusalem, and who evaluate their customers' preferences. In this regard, shopkeepers and tour guides consider Indonesians who travel to Jerusalem in guided religious package tours to be all the same – regardless of their religious affiliation. However, when it comes to the narratives that frame these shopping experiences, whether the customer is Muslim or Christian or to which affiliation in Islam and Christianity he or she – in most cases *she* – belongs, is relevant.

In his 'Theory of Shopping', Daniel Miller (1998) pinpoints a crucial similarity between shopping and ritual sacrifice. He argues that, in both cases, individuals construct social Others through material gifts. Thus, 'shopping is the construction of the other as the desiring subject' (Miller 1998, 148), fostering social relationships. In the example of Indonesians' experiences while on pilgrimage to Jerusalem, the social Other is not only the recipient of shopping items or a peer who reacts on new purchases – as in the example of Miller – but it is also the social Other behind the counter and the local population. Indonesians shop with the idea of engaging with Israeli and Palestinian Others. Furthermore, for Indonesian pilgrims shopping is also a form of accessing blessings, following a restorative and spiritual gain.

Thus, among Muslim and Christian Indonesian pilgrims, shopping is not only similar to ritual sacrifice, as argued by Miller, but, in fact, it constitutes part of the ritual process of pilgrimage performance. Leaving money at souvenir shops in the vicinity of holy places is a form of engagement with this place and charity is an integral part of journeys to Jerusalem. Indonesian Muslim pilgrims donate *zakat* and *ṣadaqa* alms to support Palestinians, and in every Christian service that is taking place during pilgrimage, the collection of money, which is usually donated to the hosting church, is crucial.

Next to the idea of engaging with the holy place and with the local population, Indonesian pilgrims shop with thoughts about home: choosing gifts for relatives and friends and souvenirs that represent their completion of spiritual gains, which they achieve through the pilgrimage. In these layers of maintaining relationships and spirituality through shopping, there are ambivalences between the choice of products and the narratives that frame shopping activities, or in Miller's (1998, 66) words, a discrepancy between 'shopping practices' and 'shopping discourses'. In his analysis, Miller distinguishes discourse from ideology, the latter of which he sees as an inner conviction that is often not articulated in discourse. I relate to this analytical mapping and analyze the discrepancy between shopping activities and shopping discourses in contemporary pilgrimage from Indonesia to Jerusalem with a focus on women's agency. The seemingly contradictory title of this chapter reflects that the agency of the women involved is ambivalent, coming to the fore in the simultaneity of discourses about charity for Palestinian people and the actual purchases of Israeli products and luxury goods from international brands. I argue that the popularity of certain products relies on (1) their presumed function of cleansing and healing (especially in the case of Dead Sea cosmetics), (2) group dynamics within the 'travelling microcosm' of package tourism and (3) the agreement on commissions between travel agents, tourist guides and shopkeepers.

The ethnographic data stems from ongoing research on Muslim and Christian package tourism from Indonesia to Israel and the West Bank (Occupied Palestinian Territory¹). Since December 2017, I accompany Indonesian travel groups in and around Jerusalem, speak with Indonesian pilgrims, clerics and tour leaders and interview Palestinian and Israeli tour guides, travel agents, shopkeepers and bus drivers. The research activities in Jerusalem were thus far complemented by two visits to Indonesia in July and August 2018 and August 2019, where I met Indonesian research participants in their home context. In addition, I relate to insights from previous research on Mecca returnees (see Lücking 2017, 2014). The chapter at hand foregrounds experiences of Muslim groups and relates to Christian groups in order to provide a comparative perspective and to tackle the history of Indonesians' pilgrimage to Jerusalem, which in fact started with Christian pilgrimage and only recently became popular in the Muslim tourism market in Indonesia.

Pilgrimage tourism from Indonesia to Jerusalem

Indonesia's Christian minority of 24 million people has been travelling in pilgrimage tours to Jerusalem since the 1980s. Some Christian research participants describe their Jerusalem pilgrimage as an equivalent to their Muslim compatriots' hajj to Mecca, which is a nation-wide highlight in celebrating Indonesians' presence at the holy sites, with pride of sending the largest national group of pilgrims to Mecca because of being the largest

Muslim society in the world. However, recently, tour packages to Jerusalem have also started to boom in the Muslim tourism market in Indonesia. Travel agencies advertise pilgrimage to Jerusalem with reference to a hadith² by al-Bukhari that mentions Al-Aqsa mosque in Jerusalem as a third pilgrimage destination, next to Mecca and Medina. Moreover, they promote the idea of supporting Palestine through tourism. 'After all, Jerusalem is a Muslim destination', an Indonesian Muslim travel agent stated (personal communication, 19 July 2018). Like him, many Muslim entrepreneurs in Indonesia who offer tours to the Middle East argue that visiting Jerusalem contributes to maintaining its Muslim character. With this argument, they compete not only with Christian Indonesians who see Jerusalem as a Christian destination, but even more so with fellow Muslims who demand that people abstain from visiting Jerusalem as long as it is under Israeli rule. Ideological competition and economic competition conflate in Indonesia's growing industry for Muslim tourism, which is also known as *wisata halal* (halal tourism).

In the wake of a boom in Mecca pilgrimage (Syarifah 2017; Feener 2004, 204), other destinations in the Middle East, such as Dubai, Istanbul, Cairo and Jerusalem, have become best-sellers (Lücking 2014). Waiting lists to participate in the hajj are long.³ Therefore, many Indonesian Muslims resort to undertaking the minor pilgrimage, the umra, and other religious travels. The number of documented Indonesian umra pilgrims jumped from approximately 500,000 in 2013 to more than one million participants per year since 2014 (*The Jakarta Post* 2017; *Saudi Gazette* 2017, 2018; *Indopos* 2018; *Arab News* 2019). In international comparison, Indonesia has a high female participation (approximately 50%) in hajj departures (Bianchi 2004, 69), and even more so in umra and local pilgrimages. Robert Bianchi explains this by pointing to Indonesian women's presence in commerce, land ownership and their position in customary law in rural areas (Bianchi 2015, 74).⁴ In almost all Indonesian pilgrimage groups that I have met between 2012 and 2019, I noticed a female majority.

Some package tours to the Middle East are advertised as umra-plus journeys (Lücking 2014, 137), combining the umra with visits of other destinations.⁵ Meanwhile there is also a wide range of Muslim tour packages to destinations all over the world that do not go via Mecca and Medina, as in the case of the Indonesians' pilgrimage to Jerusalem that usually go from Indonesia to Egypt, Israel, the West Bank and Jordan. Around 30,000 Indonesians visit Israel annually in guided package tours, despite the absence of diplomatic relations between Indonesia and Israel (Israeli Central Bureau of Statistics 2014, 2015, 2016; *The Times of Israel* 2019). The larger percentage (according to travel agencies, around 70%) are Christian Indonesians. However, Muslim travel agents state that they aim to reverse this division, to show more Muslim presence in Jerusalem.

As a matter of fact, Muslim package tours to Jerusalem resemble the Christian 'Holy Land Tours'. However, while Muslim and Christian

Indonesians' itineraries overlap, their travel narratives diverge. The idea of taking sides with the Palestinian people or with the Jewish people divides Indonesians along religious and denominational affiliations, in which the images of Palestinian and Jewish or Israeli Others are rather homogenising. As an example, many Indonesians assume that all Palestinians are Muslim and all Israelis are Jewish, while, in fact, the situation is much more complex (see Lücking 2019). However, when it comes to souvenir purchases, Indonesian women from all religious traditions appear to have similar tastes. Yet, even though they sometimes buy the exact same products, most prominently Israeli Dead Sea cosmetics, branded bags and jewellery, their expenditure, while on pilgrimage, is framed by polemics and differentiation from other religions or different affiliations within their own religion. Souvenir purchases as well as other financial transactions – like giving alms – are embedded in 'discourses of shopping' (cf. Miller 1998, 65). These discourses relate to globalized narratives of Islamophobia, Pan-Muslim solidarity and – among new religious movements in Christianity – prosperity gospel and ideas of the Hebrew roots' movement. Therefore, I juxtapose practices and discourses and emic and etic perspectives in this context. As major shoppers and as a majority in the travel group, women take a vital role in both practice and discourse. A short episode that I observed when I accompanied an Indonesian pilgrimage group in Jerusalem illustrates this.

Israeli Dead Sea cosmetics

Tuesday, 3 April 2018: After three days in Jerusalem, a group of around 30 Indonesian Al-Aqsa pilgrims is on the way to Allenby Bridge, the border crossing between the West Bank and Jordan. Jerusalem was the highlight of their ten-day pilgrimage package tour, which the Indonesian travel agency advertised as a 'trip in the prophets' footsteps'. They started their journey in Egypt, visiting the pyramids, Mount Sinai and memorial sites⁶ for the prophets Nabi⁷ Harun, Nabi Saleh and Nabi Samiri. In Jerusalem they spent most of their time at al-Ḥaram al-Sharīf, the 'sanctuary', known also as 'Temple Mount', on which the Dome of the Rock and Al-Aqsa mosque are located. According to Islamic teachings, Al-Aqsa mosque is the third holiest place after the Holy Mosque with the Ka'ba in Mecca (al-Masjid al-Ḥarām) and the Prophet's Mosque in Medina (al-Masjid al-Nabawī), and according to a hadith from al-Bukhari, the prophet Muhammad commanded his followers to pilgrimage to these three mosques. Besides Al-Aqsa, the tomb of Nabi Ibrahim in Hebron and a memorial site for Nabi Musa were part of the group's pilgrimage or *ziyāra*. Their journey continues in Jordan, with visits to memorial tombs of Nabi Shu'aib, Nabi Yosa and Nabi Ayub. Moreover, they will explore the Dead Sea and the archaeological sites in Petra, in Southern Jordan, before flying back to Jakarta.

I am sitting next to Indah,⁸ a young woman from Surabaya, who tells me that she decided to go on the pilgrimage with other women of her Qur'an

reading/prayer group (*kelompok pengajian*). She had been to Mecca twice for the minor pilgrimage, umra, with the same group and now she wanted to complete her pilgrimage duties by visiting Al-Aqsa. Our conversation is interrupted as the tour guide makes an announcement into the coach's microphone:

Ladies and gentlemen, this is the end of your visit to Palestine, we are on our way to the border. I hope that your pilgrimage to Al-Aqsa was full of blessings and wish you a smooth onward journey. When you leave Palestine, of course you can keep your money in your pockets and spend it in Jordan. But, if you wish, you have the chance to do something good for Palestinian children. Before we arrive at the border, we have one final stop. We will visit Jericho, the oldest city on earth and the centre for the production of high-quality Medjool dates. Ladies and gentlemen, in Jericho we still have time to visit two shops, where you have the opportunity to buy Medjool dates and Dead Sea cosmetics. The Dead Sea minerals in these cosmetics cure all skin diseases, clarify, brighten and nourish the skin, rejuvenating it. Again, you can keep your money and take it to Jordan, but if you buy here, you support the local Palestinian community in Jericho.

In Jericho the shopkeepers in the Dead Sea cosmetics store welcome the group with Indonesian greetings and invite us to see a demonstration of a mineral mud face mask. As a German anthropologist, I'm identified as an exotic group member, and I'm asked to be a volunteer to test the mud mask. In front of the curious eyes of the female group members, Rashid, who works in the shop, spreads the Dead Sea mud mask on my arm, explaining in Bahasa Indonesia how the mud purifies and brightens the skin. In order to prove that the mask contains minerals, he uses a magnet to remove it. He places the small magnet under a tissue and with one wipe the mud 'magically' flies off my arm into the tissue. The women cheer in surprise. Rashid smiles and continues his explanation:

If you are interested in this product you can buy our special offer package with the mud mask, day and night moisturizers and age-control eye cream, normally 250 dollars, today with a special discount for Indonesian Muslim groups: 170 dollars.

While the women enthusiastically begin to enquire about the other products in the package and discuss prices and discounts with Rashid, the men wait in front of the shop, smoking and drinking Arabic coffee. Some of them joke that their wives make them poor, others later join their wives in choosing cosmetics and small souvenirs that are also available for sale in the shop. Indah, who is not married, discusses what to buy with other female members of her Qur'an reading group while I talk to Rashid, who

tells me that Indonesians always want to buy the same products. If one person buys the mud mask – one of the most expensive products in the shop – the others will do the same.

Ambivalent agency

This episode in the Dead Sea cosmetics shop in Jericho reveals ambivalences in shopping activities. Coming back to Miller's argument that people shop with thoughts about social Others, it seems to be obvious that Indonesian women shop with caution of what Others will think about their purchases. According to reports of shopkeepers, they usually buy similar products, which affirms these products' value and a feeling of belonging to the group. Moreover, they think about social relationships back home in Indonesia, choosing souvenirs for friends and relatives and gifts for colleagues and neighbours. This does not only correspond with Miller's analysis of shopping in general but even more so with findings on souvenir purchases in tourism.⁹ However, the social Others are also those who research participants imagine as 'poor Palestinians', prominently represented through the image of Palestinian children and Indonesian women's motherly empathy. With this idea of Palestinian Others, an elderly female Indonesian pilgrim argued:

Even though the prices here are higher than in Jordan or Egypt, we have to buy stuff. In order to support the people here, apart from giving them food and money, we have to shop. To shop and to shop – no matter what the price is, we will buy it.

(personal communication, 3 April 2018)

She considered shopping to be an act of solidarity and reported that she and her husband had spent USD 3,000 on *sadaqa* (voluntarily giving alms) and shopping during their visit to Jerusalem. The amount of money the women spend ranges significantly. However, most of the pilgrims come from the urban middle classes and many even from the upper classes, who spend substantial sums of money (USD 1,000 up to 10,000, according to travel agencies and pilgrims) on jewellery and other luxury goods. The moralizing discourse of supporting the Palestinian economy legitimizes the purchases, including purchases of expensive luxury goods.

In his analysis of American Christian pilgrims' purchases of mass-produced souvenirs in commercial souvenir shops in Israel, Jackie Feldman (2015, 288) describes souvenirs as 'vehicles of religious and moral values'. He further shows how religious discourse and ritualized behaviour construct the meanings of souvenirs as signs of *communitas*. Like these Americans, Indonesian pilgrims make their shopping experiences meaningful through moralizing discourses and communal religious practices. However, it turns out that the practical dimension of shopping and its socio-cultural meanings often contradict the narrative dimension. The narratives relate

to solidarity with social Others in Palestine and Israel, marking differences in religious affiliation and political standpoints, while the shopping practices and preferences reveal commonalities among all Indonesians. Both – discourse and practice – constitute women's agency as major shoppers.

Through this agency social norms are enforced and redefined. In many cases, the way Indonesian women shop equals domestic pilgrimage shopping. Next to pilgrimage travels to Mecca and Jerusalem, which are respectively obligatory and recommended, a much higher number of Indonesians goes on local pilgrimages, or more precisely *ziyāra*, to the tombs of local Muslim saints, Javanese kings and famous politicians and religious leaders. While these forms of pilgrimage are rooted in Indonesian history, they are recently booming anew (see Quinn 2019; 2008; Slama 2014). Martin Slama (2014) shows that their commercialization is encouraged by the state and private actors who promote *wisata religi* (religious tourism) and expand it beyond the well-known tombs of the *wali songo* (nine saints) in Java to the *wali pitu* (seven saints) in Bali, whose graves were restored and marketed only recently. Today, *wisata halal* has become the new best-selling segment in tourism. Thus, commercialization and shopping activities are widespread in all forms of Indonesians' religious travels in and beyond Indonesia, or as George Quinn (2008, 64) puts it, 'money and pilgrimage go together'. Quinn shows that the commercial transactions while on pilgrimage are metaphorical actions that 'parallel devotional ritual and illuminate the relationship between believer and God' (Quinn 2008, 64). In the case of pilgrimage to the graves of local saints, donations and offerings are seen as a way of creating a relationship with the saint who acts as intercessor between pilgrim and God, and souvenir purchases are seen as supporting the local population as well as the pilgrims' spiritual aims (Quinn 2008, 67–70). Quinn further explains that pilgrims consider these spiritual aims in monetary exchange as a contract with God (Quinn 2008, 74), which corresponds with widespread understandings of *zakat* and *sadaqa* charity as being linked to the idea of securing one's place in paradise and acting upon Qur'anic commands (see also Bruijn and van Dijk 2009).

Thus, on the one hand, Indonesian women create a continuity with domestic practices, while on the other hand, their shopping activities in Jerusalem are politicized and mark demarcations from other Indonesians. The 'ambivalent agency' does not only concern the shopping discourses and practices abroad but also their meaning in the local context. In order to demonstrate how this works, in the following I give examples of continuity in shopping practices and frictions through politicized narratives and representations of social class.

New Muslim lifestyles and cultural continuities

A closer look at shopping practices reveals similarities among all Indonesian tourists. Tourist guides and participants jokingly state that Indonesian women are famous as '*tukang belanja*' (literally 'shopping artisans').

A Jakarta-based travel agent for halal tourism explained that women were her main customers, many of whom were widows or early pensioners whose husbands cannot take time off from work. Research participants explained the central role of women in Muslim pilgrimage in a pragmatic manner, the argument being that religious reasons enable women to leave their houses and travel. The women's independent travels mark a continuity of Indonesian women's engagement in neighbourhood associations, alumni unions and charity organizations – activities in which Indonesian women play active roles and that are seen as legitimate leisure activities.

Like Indah, many pilgrims that I met in Jerusalem are part of a group that meets for religious and charitable activities. Besides *pengajian* (Qur'an study), they sometimes join savings unions (*arisan*), where members meet routinely, putting money together and alternately receiving the sum of all savings. Furthermore, they recounted that they would often go on trips together (*jalan jalan*), especially to visit religious sites (*ziyāra*) but also to reunite with friends (*silaturahmi*). During my visits to Indonesia in 2018 and 2019, I was able to join such reunion meetings. Interestingly, the activities resembled those that had characterized the Al-Aqsa pilgrimage. Besides praying together and eating together, the women filled the time with taking pictures and shopping. The same holds true for Christian pilgrims. Shopping for religious souvenirs was obviously not only important while on pilgrimage to Jerusalem but also during reunion meetings in Indonesia.

Women constitute the majority in travel groups and some groups consist of women only. Also if there are male participants, it is the women who make the financial transactions. This is another continuity of local norms. In Javanese gender roles women have an influential connection to money (see Brenner 1995). Financial elements in community meetings and leisure activities have historically been dominated by women (see Hospes 1992), which some Indonesians explain with the belief that money is impure. Suzanne Brenner (1995) offers a thought-provoking critique on this, revealing that from women's own perspectives, women are more gifted in controlling their *nafsu* (desires and passions) and are therefore better suited to administer finances and at the same time deal with spirituality. Men, who are officially responsible for the spiritual integrity of the family in the Javanese belief system, do not handle money openly (see Wolf 1990). Brenner (1995, 41) gives voice to women who express 'the opinion that most men have uncontrollable passions and childlike dispositions which prevent them from acting in the best interests of their families'. Among Indonesian women whom I met in Jerusalem and who belong to urban middle classes, there were many entrepreneurs who make money from small online retail businesses: for example selling clothes, food and cosmetics via social media. This means that their travel and shopping activities are not just a legitimate 'housewife activity' but that women deal with significant amounts of money in this context, often having the say of what money is spent on and making their own money. During travel, women often physically carry

money in their purses and spend it on donations and shopping. Like in the scene described above, male participants sometimes take a break while women explore shops, choosing souvenirs and only consulting their husbands before making their final shopping decisions.

Thus, today as in the past, Indonesian women are engaged in business and the administration of family finances. Women's agency in new spheres of halal business emerges from this continuity and shapes public religious cultures in Indonesia. While being rooted in continuity in terms of gender roles, women's activities also represent something new: pious economic success and modernity. Expensive accessories and fashionable clothing mark the social status of female Muslim entrepreneurs and consumers.

Travel agencies relate to women's role in shopping activities, as can be seen by one of the Muslim agencies' adverts for cosmetics shops displaying the statement: 'Dead Sea mud has its own benefits for women, functioning as a skin smoothing scrub' (Cheria Holiday 2018).¹⁰ A clear and bright skin is a beauty ideal in Indonesia, as can be seen in the omnipresence of white skin colour in cosmetics advertisements in Indonesia (Yulianto 2007). Among Indonesians, Dead Sea cosmetics are promoted through claims of the cosmetics' brightening function, which is popular among Christian and Muslim women alike. Furthermore, substances that are considered to carry curing and miraculous qualities are generally popular among Indonesians, and shopkeepers and tourist guides know how to promote this – in Bahasa Indonesia and often in a humoristic manner. In a similar vein, Indonesians love objects that are deemed to be powerful, like expensive jewellery with special stones. This is similar to domestic searches for magical objects and consultation with paranormal practitioners and healers (see Schlehe 2012). What makes all these shopping items special is the fact that they were bought in the Holy Land or the 'Land of the Prophets'. Even if they are mass-produced souvenirs made in China, the proximity to the Holy Place makes them special.¹¹

When measuring the time of pilgrims' activities, it turns out that pilgrims spend almost as much time in shops as they spend in churches or mosques. Pilgrims, guides and priests sometimes take a self-critical stance on this, referring to the allure of shopping as *pencobaan* (temptation), or joking that the participants' suitcases get children (*koper beranak*) because they buy so many souvenirs that they have to buy additional bags and suitcases. However, in interviews pilgrims also argue that shopping is not a hedonistic activity. They choose items that remind them of spiritual renewal and purchase souvenirs because they are thinking of relatives, colleagues and friends back home. Some of them also identify social pressure to bring lots of *oleh-oleh* (gifts) home to Indonesia. Thus, the shopping activities are characterized by a simultaneity of cultural continuity and new Muslim lifestyles among Indonesian women. The following analytical differentiation of shopping items suggests that small gifts and souvenirs mark cultural continuity, while luxury goods represent modern Muslim lifestyles.

Communal gifts, souvenirs and luxury goods

Based on the categorization of my Indonesian interlocutors and my own observations when accompanying them, three different types of shopping items reveal how shopping marks continuities and frictions: (1) (religious) souvenirs, (2) gifts and (3) luxury goods. In Bahasa Indonesia and in emic conceptions there is a differentiation between *kenang-kenangan* (souvenirs) and *oleh-oleh* (gifts). For the items that I label as luxury goods here, there is no specific Indonesian vernacular term. As I mentioned above, souvenirs and gifts are also important in domestic travels in Indonesia. In these domestic travels, *oleh-oleh* often consist of culinary gifts (Quinn 2008, 71; 2019, 66). In every region in Indonesia there is a local speciality which serves as *oleh-oleh* and which can be purchased in *oleh-oleh* stores near tourist attractions, pilgrimage sites, train stations and airports. Frequently, Indonesians carry cardboard boxes from one city to another in order to share something from their travel experience.

While on pilgrimage to Jerusalem, many Indonesians purchase dates as *oleh-oleh*. The best dates in the region are said to be the Medjool Dates from Jericho. As dates are also a very typical *oleh-oleh* from Mecca and Medina, some Christian research participants shared their reflection that after their visit to Israel and Palestine they realized that dates were not a specifically Muslim speciality but a Middle Eastern one. An elderly Catholic woman from Central Java recounted that she had liked dates so much that she went looking for them once back in Indonesia. Her search for dates eventually led her to Muslim shops that she had never visited before. Other *oleh-oleh* are key chains, magnets, t-shirts, shawls, bags, hats and pens with slogans like ‘I love Jerusalem’ or Palestinian, Israeli, Muslim, Jewish or Christian symbols. Many of these small gifts are sold by flying vendors who wait for tourists in front of religious sites and parking lots. This means that there is not a lot of time to choose the gifts. Pilgrims buy them hastily on the way to the bus or entering the site they are visiting. While *oleh-oleh* are more or less the same for Muslim and Christian pilgrims, and in the case of the dates even inspire a cross-religious experience in the home context back in Indonesia, the choice of *kenang-kenangan* marks different religious affiliations.

Kenang-kenangan souvenirs are usually bought for personal use and for close friends and family members. Choosing the right souvenir takes much more time than choosing *oleh-oleh*. Travel groups spend around one hour in large, air-conditioned souvenir shops, sometimes more. Religious paraphernalia and local religious artworks are popular personal souvenirs. Examples of this include rosaries and Muslim prayer chains, olive wood carvings, holy water from the Jordan River, wedding wine from Canaan, oils and candles, icons and statues. Evangelical and Pentecostal Christian pilgrims have a liking for Jewish paraphernalia, like menorah and Chanukah candelabras, shofar horns and tallit prayer shawls, which are less

popular among Catholics or Lutheran and Calvinist Indonesian Christians.¹² For Muslim groups, pictures of Al-Aqsa mosque and the Dome of the Rock are highly popular. Moreover, they like souvenirs with the Palestinian national colours, like shawls, and the black-white chequered *kuffiyya* head dress. Some of these items are thought to contain *baraka* (blessings), and one of my Muslim research participants joked that a prayer chain from a holy place could become a *jimat*, a magic tool. That Indonesians consider souvenirs as vessels for blessings is another similarity with local pilgrimage in Java. Rizal Abdi (2017, 10) explains that pilgrims consider shopping to be a manifestation of *baraka* from the saints of God. Similarly, Quinn (2008, 75) shows that pilgrims invest in pilgrimage as a source of blessings, supernatural power and success. These hopes for good fortune and success are most evident in pilgrimage travels of Indonesian politicians. Both among Muslim and Christian groups, I met Indonesian politicians who saw their pilgrimage as a preparation for election campaigns and sought blessings and prayers for success. Therefore, even though the *kenang-kenangan* do mark different religious affiliations at first sight, the belief in blessings and magical means is yet another shared characteristic of Muslim and Christian souvenir purchases.

The quality of being filled with blessings depends not only on *what* the item is but also *where* it was bought. Christian pilgrims usually shop in souvenir shops in Bethlehem, Nazareth, at the Jordan River baptism site Yardenit or in church-run shops at pilgrimage destinations like the Garden Tomb (which is popular among Protestant Indonesians) or the Church of St. Peter in Gallicantu (with one of the favourite shops among Catholic Indonesians), while Muslim groups mostly shop in Jericho and Hebron. In pilgrims' and guides' discourses about shopping, the meaning of these places refers to biblical/Qur'anic and political significance. Interestingly, not only vendors compete but so do pilgrims by considering who has higher quality, purer and more authentic and powerful souvenirs.

Some of these religious items, especially small ones like rosaries, are also common as *oleh-oleh* for friends and relatives back home. Some pilgrims buy dozens of rosaries and prayer chains, saying that distributing them in prayer groups will help to strengthen their friends' faith and bring them closer to the blessings of the Holy Land. Again, even though these souvenirs appear to highlight the different religious affiliations, they also ultimately reveal commonalities in missionary activities.

The third category of shopping items – luxury consumer goods – includes the above-mentioned Dead Sea cosmetics. Different from *oleh-oleh* and *kenang-kenangan*, these luxury goods do not mark cultural continuity but rather new trends in Muslim lifestyles. Besides cosmetics, jewellery, perfume and branded handbags are popular luxury goods among Indonesian pilgrims – especially among female pilgrims from the upper middle classes. Here, shopping activities are connected to class affiliation – or aspired class affiliation – of the pilgrims, as mentioned above regarding the representation

of modernity and success. Some pilgrims are rich and highly interested in expensive luxury goods. Others do not have the same economic resources, but they might still buy luxury goods, using money that they saved for the trip. Literature on Indonesia's new middle classes indicates that the amount of money spent does not necessarily allow a conclusion of a person's economic affluence. In many cases, the purchase of consumer goods represents the longing to be part of the middle class rather than the actual economic situation of a person (see Berenschot and van Klinken 2014). Thus, souvenirs are not only a personal reminder of having completed the journey but also physical proof of pilgrims' social status – especially in the case of prestigious pilgrimage journeys and high-priced consumer goods (Abdi 2017, 9). The practical act of purchasing something from the holy site contributes to the realization of having been there. One Indonesian tour leader explained to me, 'if we haven't bought anything, it's like we haven't been here' (personal communication, 3 April 2018). Regarding the discourses that frame these shopping experiences, many pilgrims were proud of 'having left' lots of money 'in the Holy Land' or 'in Palestine'.

Framing shopping experiences

In order to make the shopping experience meaningful and legitimate, the right discursive framing is important. Guides and shopkeepers know about Indonesian tourists' tastes. They are experts in their business and like Rashid, the shop keeper in the Dead Sea cosmetics store, they report that all Indonesian groups share some similar shopping practices, such as buying the same products and brands, wanting discounts or looking for stories about the souvenirs. Many shops invite pilgrims to listen to their promotions in Indonesian language, including jokes and quizzes. This interest in humoristic, entertaining shopping experiences and Indonesians' humorous self-reflections are another element that reveals practical commonalities among Muslim and Christian Indonesians, even though the narratives suggest divisions. Interestingly, shopkeepers are talented in using the 'right' narrative for different target groups. One of the staff members in a big Bethlehem souvenir shop joked that products sold better when accompanied by a story. If he advertised body oil as 'the oil of Mary' or the 'oil of St. Anna' it sold much better, and even more so if he claimed that it has a curing function. So, Israelis and Palestinians who work in the tourism sector saw less differences between Christian and Muslim Indonesians than commonalities in their taste and the way they want to shop.

The predominantly male Palestinian vendors know how to create a comfortable atmosphere in which pilgrims enjoy their shopping experiences and feel that it supports their ideological and religious sentiments. Rashid labelled the discount for the Dead Sea cosmetics package as a special price for 'Muslim groups', stressing solidarity as Muslim brothers and sisters. However, this framing is exchangeable with other narratives, as I realized

when I came back to the same shop with a Christian group. Shopkeepers are professional in adjusting their promotions, relating to pilgrims' emotions. Some of them impressed Indonesian Christian groups with their knowledge of domestic Indonesian politics, telling a Catholic group that they would pray for Ahok – the former governor of Jakarta who is a member of the Chinese Christian minority and who was imprisoned because of accusations of blasphemy. However, my observations reveal that which shops are visited does not so much depend on religious affiliation but more on connections between shop owners, travel agents and guides who agree on commissions.

While Palestinian and Israeli shopkeepers are flexible in adjusting their narratives, the mostly female customers with whom they interact find it important to feel reassured in buying in the 'right' shops. This is especially clear among Muslim pilgrims who wish to boycott Israel and show their solidarity with Palestine. These nuances reveal that besides boundaries between Muslim and Christian Indonesians, there are also intra-Muslim and intra-Christian tensions. For Christians, this emerges especially in the divide between new religious movements, like Pentecostalism, and the large mainline churches (see Hoon 2018). Among Indonesian Muslims, there is controversy regarding the appropriate position to take towards the Israeli occupation of Palestinian territory. In 2012 Sheikh Yusuf al-Qaradawi, one of the world's leading Muslim preachers (from the Muslim Brotherhood), issued a fatwa (legal opinion) against non-Israeli or non-Palestinian Muslims visiting Jerusalem. However, Palestinian authorities and travel agencies argue that visiting Al-Aqsa contributes to securing its status as a Muslim pilgrimage site. They argue that showing this Muslim presence is particularly important as more and more Jews try to enter the Al-Aqsa complex to pray there, which in fact conflicts with the Israeli law that forbids Jews from visiting it. Muslim Indonesians explained that through their visits they want to safeguard the Muslim character of the site. When Indonesian participants doubt if their visit really supports Palestine, because from their point of view visiting the region means indirectly financing the current Israeli government and its oppression of Palestinians, through payments for visas, hotel taxes and exit taxes, travel agents advise them to balance this through giving alms and doing 'solidarity shopping'. Concerning this example, the intra-Muslim controversy about visits to Jerusalem inspires what I call 'narratives of separation' (Lücking 2019): narratives, images and discourses that draw on dichotomous categories of Self and Other and promote ideas of bipolarity and of competing sides. In the vein of legitimizing the travel to Jerusalem, Indonesian travel agents outperform their critics by saying that their visits to Jerusalem support the Palestinians through their presence as Muslim brothers and sisters, through shopping and alms giving. In order to underline their pro-Palestinian intention, the narrative sometimes becomes anti-Israeli and anti-Jewish, and in some cases also anti-Christian, suggesting a global divide between those who are perceived as 'threatening Islam'

and Muslim brothers and sisters. It does not come as a surprise that some travel agencies promote demonstrations of the *Aksi Bela Islam* movement (Islam Defence Action) in Jakarta among their customers, giving discounts to those who join the demonstrations.

These discourses create the impression of oppositional blocks. However, considering the underlying intra-Muslim tensions and Indonesian pilgrims' self-reflection about commonalities, on a practical level it seems that while the tourism industry and shopping experiences are arenas in which to engage in boundary-making, they can also inspire reflection and togetherness.

Mobility and reflection

Dead Sea cosmetics are the most vivid example of the contradictory nature of homogenising shopping discourses – in spite of similarities in taste and shopping practices. Even though many Indonesian Muslim pilgrims claim that they want to boycott Israel, and tourist guides as well as participants stress the importance of staying in hotels in East Jerusalem and buying from Palestinian shops, when it comes to Dead Sea cosmetics and other luxury goods, there is little interest in knowing where the products come from. The only difference between Muslim and Christian groups is that Christian groups mostly buy these cosmetics in souvenir shops in Qumran, next to the Qumran scrolls archaeological site, where the shops are run by Israelis, while Muslim groups buy in the Palestinian shops in Jericho. However, all Dead Sea products come from Israeli companies and are in fact highly controversial regarding the political implications of their production in occupied West Bank territory and the environmental damage that the cosmetics industry is causing in the Dead Sea area (see *The Jerusalem Post* 2011). Obviously, Indonesian customers are unaware of these controversies and of the shopkeepers' positions on questions of boycotting.

When I asked Rashid – and other shopkeepers – about this, he told me that he, as a Palestinian who works in tourism, does not agree with a complete boycott of Israeli products. He differentiated between products from settlements – like Ahava, the most famous Israeli Dead Sea cosmetics brand – and those that have their factories within the internationally recognized borders of Israeli territory, like Premier. Rashid was happy that, under the pressure of boycott of settlement products, Ahava had in fact moved out of the West Bank, which would mean that soon he would start to sell Ahava products, which have a well-established reputation among Indonesian tourists.

The female pilgrim Indah was surprised when she heard me and Rashid talking about Dead Sea cosmetics' production in Jewish settlements in the West Bank, not really knowing what a settlement is and expressing her confusion about our talk on the differences between products from settlements and others – she had not known at all that the products come from Israeli companies. Apparently, for package tour pilgrims like Indah, the 'microcosm' or what Cohen (1972) calls an 'environmental bubble'

of the group experience of praying, shopping and travelling together and engaging in the 'right' narrative weighs more than actual engagement in political questions on the ground. The pilgrims emotionally relate to the Palestinian cause and consider their shopping as being an act of charity, yet their knowledge about the highly complex political situation is restricted to stereotypical ideas of suffering Palestinian children, whom they see in the advertisements of charity organizations in Indonesia and whom they deem would profit from 'solidarity shopping'. Interestingly, the more expensive the products are, the less important their actual origin appears to be, which hints at the fact that in this case, the reaction of social Others at home appears to be more important than knowledge about the social Others in the pilgrimage destination. This is true for luxury goods like Dead Sea cosmetics, and even more so for diamonds from the national Israeli diamond manufacturer Caprice Diamonds, which are prestigious souvenirs that show the social status of a pilgrim.

Indonesian women shop with the idea of clearly identifiable, homogeneous, opposed camps – Jewish Israel and Muslim Palestine. To a certain extent, their travels raise awareness of the complexities and in some cases even cross-religious experiences. However, their relations to various social Others in this context appear to be more relevant for the local Indonesian context than the Middle Eastern one. Shopping discourses relate to ideas of the Israel-Palestine conflict, while shopping practices connect to social relationships back home in Indonesia and within the travel group.

Conclusion

The discrepancy between shopping discourses and shopping practices corresponds with general patterns of shopping and souvenir purchases, as described by Feldman (2015) and Miller (1998) for Western contexts. Different from the Western contexts, the example at hand and observations from domestic pilgrimages, made by Slama (2014) and Quinn (2008) show that the Indonesian shopping preferences and souvenir exchanges are grounded in local customs and historical social structures, in which Indonesians relate to several social Others and to the spiritual dimension of seeing souvenirs as means of connecting to God and accessing the power of blessings. Furthermore, women maintain their say over money (Brenner 1995) and through their purchase decisions actively engage in the construction of social realities.

Shopping might appear like a merely entertaining activity. However, my observations allow the conclusion that Indonesian women exert meaningful agency through shopping activities on their pilgrimage to Jerusalem. Their agency defines the continuity of certain norms, like gender roles and social obligations as well as the access to *baraka* as presented through the differentiation between *oleh-oleh* and *kenang-kenangan*. Through the purchases of other shopping items, like luxury goods and framing discourses, new norms of what it means in today's Indonesia to be a 'modern Muslim

woman' are introduced. Indonesian women like to shop in groups and often buy similar products, they love entertaining promotions of products and stories of healing, blessings and Asian beauty ideals, which makes Dead Sea cosmetics so popular among Indonesian women. In this regard their transactions relate to ideas of modernity as well as restorative and spiritual aims, which are rooted in historical experience.

Indonesian women's agency in shopping activities is thus ambivalent on the transnational and local Indonesian levels. It has an impact on the Indonesian social reality and on tourist spaces abroad. Yet, in spite of discourses that suggest frictions, the data reveal that practical shopping activities of Indonesians of different religious affiliation share numerous common elements, thus pointing to cultural continuity and unity, which is apparently particularly crucial when travelling abroad. Apparently, these commonalities among Muslim and Christian Indonesians are more evident from an outsiders' perspective – like that of the German anthropologist or the Palestinian shopkeeper – even if the experiences of mobility enhance self-reflection in some cases, as the humoristic statements show.

Miller differentiates ideology, as being implicit, from discourse, being explicit. Thus, in the analytical categories of Miller, Indonesian women's discourses relate to globalized issues of Muslim solidarity, Islamophobia and the Israel-Palestine conflict. Apparently increasing commercialization and competition in the field of religious tourism foster these discourses and new Muslim lifestyles, as can be seen in travel agencies' marketing narratives. Yet the underlying ideology, which is often not verbally articulated and inspires shopping practices, is deeply ingrained in historically grown Indonesian – and in many cases Javanese – conceptions of the world and contemporary middle-class lifestyles. The discourses appear to divide Muslim and Christian Indonesians of different denominational affiliations and members of different social classes, while the ideologies 'which remain implicit in practice' (Miller 1998, 72), unite Indonesians in their preference for magic items, collectivism in souvenir purchases, beauty ideals, humour and gender roles. During pilgrimage to Jerusalem, Indonesian participants see the area through the lens of holy scriptures, through the lenses of their smartphone cameras and with a homeward perspective – thinking of social Others at home and their relation to God. This is reflected in their approach to shopping. Ideas of charity and of political solidarity remain on the surface and function within the competition with other groups, including other groups within one's own religious tradition, in Indonesia. Thus, the contradiction between shopping practices and shopping discourses shows that Indonesian women's agency lastly relates more to the Indonesian domestic context rather than to the Middle Eastern one.

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Notes

- 1 With reference to the common terminology and legal definition of the United Nations, the International Court of Justice and the European Union, the Palestinian territories that have been under Israeli occupation since 1967, namely the West Bank (including East Jerusalem) and the Gaza Strip, are defined as Occupied Palestinian Territory.
- 2 A hadith is a transmission or report about the teachings of the Prophet Mohammad. Sahih al-Bukhari is one of the most well-known authors of canonical hadith collections.
- 3 The Saudi Arabian administration regulates the number of hajj pilgrims from all over the world, and Indonesia is currently allocated a quota of around 200,000 participants per year (Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affairs 2013, 2016).
- 4 Technically, the female majority in hajj and umra pilgrimage is enabled through an alternative *muhrim* system in Indonesia (Salaam Gateway 2017). Single female travellers to Mecca who are aged under 45 need to be accompanied by a male family member. According to the news agency Salaam Gateway (2017), Indonesia has a special agreement with Saudi Arabia allowing Indonesia's female pilgrims without male guardians (*mahram*) to be placed in a convoy with other single females and act as each other's *mahram*.
- 5 For similar trends in Malaysia see Thimm 2018.
- 6 These memorial sites for the prophets of Islam (many of whom are also known as patriarchs or prophets in Judaism and Christianity) look like grave sites and are referred to as *maqām* (Arabic for grave/tomb). However, as there is no proof of actual burial sites, they are not considered as the actual tombs but as memorial sites.

- 7 The Arabic term ‘nabi’ means ‘prophet’.
- 8 All names are pseudonyms.
- 9 For more general studies on souvenir purchases in religious travels see Gordon 1986 and Hitchcock 2000.
- 10 ‘*Lumpur di laut mati mempunyai khasiat tersendiri bagi kaum wanita yaitu berfungsi sebagai lulur penghalus kulit*’ (Cheria Holiday 2018).
- 11 Among some Christian pilgrims it is common that the priest or minister blesses all souvenirs (for similarities with Russian Orthodox pilgrims; see Feldman 2015, 298).
- 12 Menorah, shofar and tallit are Jewish paraphernalia. A menorah is a seven-armed chandelier, which is a symbol of Judaism and of the state of Israel. The shofar is a horn that is blown during religious ceremonies, most famously on the Jewish New Year, Rosh Hashana. Tallit is usually a white piece of cloth with fringes that is used to cover the body during prayer.

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6 ‘Clothing cannot improve moral behaviour’

Pilgrimage, fashion, and entrepreneurship in a West African market

Erin Kenny

Introduction

Adja M’Ballou sits on a low stool in the lengthening shadows of the Friday evening market in Kankan, Guinea. Spread out in front of her is a wide assortment of fancy dresses and shoes for children. Women dressed in bright skirts and head wraps bend over the clothes, holding them up for closer inspection, occasionally beginning negotiations for a good price. While she attends to her clients, I scroll through the photographs on Adja M’Ballou’s phone taken during her pilgrimage to Mecca in 2014. Many of the images are already familiar to me from their debut on Facebook. I hold up pictures of well-dressed women wearing carefully applied make-up and show them to her. I ask about hijab, I ask about niqab, I ask about other clothing designs I see in the pictures. We are discussing the clothing people purchase for the hajj. I ask, ‘What is the best way for a Guinean woman to dress in Mecca?’ Adja M’Ballou laughs at my naïve question and tells me, ‘Clothing cannot improve moral behaviour. But if Allah wills it, people will see something in Mecca that can change their lives.’

Opting to wear hijab each day, Adja M’Ballou’s personal clothing style visibly identifies her as a pious woman. Her choice is slightly unusual for Guinea, where most Muslim women choose not to veil despite a general rise in Islamic clothing conventions across Africa (Ajakaye and Wasike 2019). I first met Adja M’Ballou when she was 15 years old and I arrived in her family’s household to interview her father, an important *Hajji* at the local mosque. Given that her profession involved selling religious clothing to members of her community, her wry comment that clothing has little to do with the moral character of the wearer struck me as insightful. She identifies the desire on the part of some customers to create impression through clothing but also recognizes that demonstrated behaviours carry far more weight than an appearance of piety. Adja M’Ballou’s experience of pilgrimage enhanced not only her personal insights about what customers might desire in the marketplace, but also her capacity to create a pious persona for herself that is relevant to her ability to be successful in business within her

community (see Buggenhagen 2012, 102). Her status as a *Hajja* enhances how others come to respect and patronize her business. Her livelihood as a merchant of imported clothing relies on actively cultivating pious personhood and developing social relationships with pious women clients.

Building upon previous ethnographic research and relying on continued communications via social media networks, this chapter examines the lived experiences of Guinean *Hajjas* who leverage their pilgrimage as an opportunity to start a business. This research pays particular attention to how participating in the hajj intersects with experiences of marriage and widowhood and allows certain Malinké¹ women to craft a culturally appropriate version of personhood that enhances their business ambitions. Qualities of ideal Malinké personhood, including impressions of ideal womanhood and piety, are continually evaluated by the community, especially how the female body is presented and displayed through conscious cultivation of clothing (Schulz 2008). In the case of Adja M'Ballou, projecting an image of piety in her role as a clothing merchant allows her to earn a living.

Wardrobe choice may reflect piety, discernment, and economic prosperity, but the wrong choices also may allude to potential problems with debt. Personal styling, especially during highly anticipated religious events like the hajj to Mecca, often merges the voices of Conakry's urban elite and the Muslim clergy to fuse economic success and moral respectability of a person with middle-class aspirations. Wardrobes can reveal tensions and alliances in cultural meanings about gender and class. Each day, as women in Muslim communities select their clothing for their lives, they weigh questions of personhood, social relationships, and self-presentation. The role of the *Hajja* as entrepreneur in a Guinean community may intertwine in complex ways as various discourses about power, legitimacy, status, and identity are carried out through the media of Islam and of gender and as women and men manipulate the material and symbolic resources at their disposal (Bernal 1994, 56).

Through both their experiences of pilgrimage and their access to economic resources, daily arbitrations of taste and piety by Guinean *Hajjas* underscore issues of contestation and connection to global flows of fashion, trends, and the cultivation of respectable piety for women in Guinea.

In this chapter, I introduce the stories of four Guinean *Hajjas* whose lives capture some of the themes and nuances of how the projection of feminine piety, combined with kin and community-based relationships, not only give meaning to their lives but also provide them with successful businesses and a material basis for living. Following conventions of feminist ethnography (Mountz and Hyndman 2006), I argue that these practices provide insight into how global networks of business and enterprise overlap with intimate, embodied, everyday practices of self-presentation, revealing pragmatic spaces where religious notions of gender and class are shaped, reproduced, and contested. I conducted 15 months of ethnographic fieldwork in Guinea during 2003–2004, and 15 years later, in the summer of 2019, I returned

to the community for three months of follow-up work. I also conducted interviews via Facebook Messenger and Skype during 2019 with six women living in Saudi Arabia.² Interviews and conversations were conducted with linguistic flexibility, as informants and I switched back and forth between Malinké, French, and English, according to our abilities.

In the rest of this chapter, I review historical connections between Islamic West Africa and Mecca to recount the ongoing importance of pilgrimage to processes of cultural identity. Next, I briefly discuss Mande culture to highlight a few key themes about gender, marriage, and the expected economic of women within the household. I then introduce readers to four Guinean *Hajja* women entrepreneurs and examine the social significance of marital status and appropriate couture associated with an Islamic lifestyle in the lives of an aspiring middle class in urban Guinea. Ultimately, this analysis focuses on how women's involvement in entrepreneurship connected to Mecca reveals and reinforces emergent patterns of consumption, reconfigured notions of respectability and piety, and transformed family dynamics.

Networks of piety, networks of trade

Islam arrived in Guinea more than 1,000 years ago as part of a trade route leading from Sijilmasa in southern Morocco through the Sahara Desert to the central Niger River Valley. Within this diverse region, Islam generated its own distinctive scholarly conventions and institutions in the 1100s, spreading through the savannah grasslands until it reached the rainforest (Levtzion 1968). Accordingly, Islam and commercial activity have a long history of mutual support in West Africa (Akyeampong 2010). Islam universalized cultural standards across many distinct regions by forging an umma, a global Muslim community, which was the economic and moral foundation that connected merchants in West Africa to Muslim communities elsewhere and differentiated believers from animists (cf. Şaul 2006).

Oral tradition in Guinea recounts the legendary pilgrimage of 1324 to Mecca by Mansa (or Emperor) Musa, ruler of the Mali Empire who united the Mande people and built a wealthy empire based on salt and gold. Legend holds that during the 5,000-mile pilgrimage across the Sahara Desert, Mansa Musa dispensed monies for the construction of a mosque wherever his caravan stopped on a Friday. The much-loved story also contends that Mansa Musa amazed the population of Cairo with the opulence of his pilgrimage caravan, spending so much money in Egypt that he caused a global recession felt all the way to Europe. While scholars may debate the specific details of the trip, they do agree that Mansa Musa was a real person who had an enormous impact on the Muslim world of the day. However, Mansa Musa was hardly the only West African leader to journey to Mecca. Despite his notoriety, Mansa Musa was just one of six rulers of West African empires who performed the pilgrimage within three centuries. Until the eighteenth century, towns throughout the Sahel organized caravans of

pilgrims, who typically took from five to eight years to accomplish the journey because of large detours to avoid the desert (Şaul 2006). Mansa Musa returned from his pilgrimage with fresh knowledge, contacts, objects, and people. He brought with him a field of jurists and scholars, including the Andalusian poet and architect Abu Ishaq al-Sahili, who built both a palace and the Great Djingereyber Mosque at Timbuktu (Şaul 2006).

The social, economic and historic relationships originally forged hundreds of years ago are still closely intertwined in the social imagination of Guineans today, as they continue to value and prize items that come from Mecca, which act as contagious items, carrying symbolic capital from the religious holy city as markers of piety and religious authenticity (Kenny 2007; Vukonic 2002).

According to tourism data, Mande speakers from Guinea and Mali continue to plan and undertake pilgrimages at a very high percentage, especially given the relatively high cost of the voyage for members of this mostly under-resourced region. Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, the government of Guinea waged a popular campaign to promote Islam as an index of ‘modernity,’ banning all ceremonial rituals of traditionally polytheistic communities of the south-eastern rainforest region (McGovern 2012). Today, Islamist policies and transformations characterize many regions of West Africa. In part as a response to Western imperialist practices of neoliberalism, formerly ‘tolerant’ communities in the region are undergoing conversion to Wahhabism (Amselle 1985; Warms 1992). Although I do not have any specific data on the topic, I could imagine that Saudi funds have contributed to this trend. Returning to Guinea in the summer of 2019, I noted that many new mosques funded by Saudi Arabian money have been built in Guinea in the 15 years since my previous period of fieldwork.

Increased access to pilgrimage to Mecca for West Africans accounts for the transformation in local attitudes about piety (Soares 2005). In Guinea, returning home as a *Hajji* or a *Hajja* elevates the status of not only one individual, but also of their family (Ferre 1994). In many parts of the world, women are leading Islamist cultural revivals through the uniquely gendered strategies of the ‘politics of piety’ (Schulz 2007; Mahmood 2005), especially in the ways that mature, respectable women offer highly feminized models of new urban middle-class family dynamics and consumption (Thimm 2018; Buggenhagen 2012). Another significant factor influencing the ways that West Africans think about Mecca comes from the high rates of migration to the region for work contracts. In the 1980s and 1990s, many hopeful West African men and women left the continent for Saudi Arabia. As neoliberal policies took hold and economic prospects dipped for many families in Guinea during the 1990s and early 2000s, households increasingly sent their best and brightest members abroad to seek their fortunes. Remittances were sent to households back home.

Since the era of neoliberal policies began in the 1980s, many West African economies have struggled with currency devaluation and high rates

of unemployment. Many West African men have sought employment through transnational migration. West African migrants frequently seek out opportunities for investments designed to secure their futures (Kenny 2005), including starting or maintaining small businesses, for which they import merchandise with the assistance of family members. However, individual traders, especially African women, are rendered invisible in economic studies of transnational corporate trade. Although some estimate African women's undocumented contributions to informal trade to be staggering (Ellis and MacGaffrey 1996), most trade is still measured via macro-processes, including the volume of trade, the balance of trade between countries, how most trade is between subsidiaries of transnational corporation, and how trade benefits economic growth. When women do appear, it is often as low-paid, exploited workers or as caregivers who care for managers' families (Desai 2009). Occasionally, female entrepreneurs may appear in the economic literature as recipients of microloans. While women throughout Africa continue to be disadvantaged by poor access to education, low incomes, and patriarchal restrictions on their ability to work outside the home, the social transformations of the neoliberal era have made it increasingly difficult for West African men to find work, creating additional strain on resource-poor households (Kringelbach 2016; Buggenhagen 2012). Women often manage household incomes in the absence of male household-heads, sometimes by relying on social ties, reciprocity, sharing, or collaboration (Kinyanjui 2014; Langevange and Gough 2012).

Being a *Hajja* in Guinea

Culturally appropriate qualities of personhood can be judged by how the body is presented and displayed through conscious cultivation, especially clothing choices (Gökariksel and McLarney 2010). Traditionally, West African women gave each other cloth as gifts to mark important life cycle events like marriage or the birth of a child (Sylvanus 2016). While the quality of fabric given depended on the means of the woman who presented the gift, bonds of mutual reciprocity demanded that the best quality damask cloth be exchanged. As prospective grooms, men may also give women gifts of cloth, which she may make into a *complét* ensemble, which, in turn, indexes the wealth and generosity of the male partner, much as the quality and carat of a diamond ring may do for Western women. However, women's clothing always belongs to her alone, although she may choose to share it with others. Purchased in part by her own wealth, clothing becomes one of a woman's most significant investments. West African women exercise considerable economic independence, which may be enhanced and reinforced by reciprocal aid within carefully cultivated networks of female relatives and friends throughout her life (Buggenhagen 2012; Heath 1992).

While transnational commodity circuits paired with the processes of economic liberalization have reconfigured traditional patterns of personhood

in West Africa and elsewhere (Kopytoff 1986), most women in Kankan still aspire to model feminine respectability within their local communities through their social relationships and their displays of Islamic piety. With nearly 80% of Guineans practicing Islam, each week takes shape around Friday prayers and the year is shaped by observance of religious holidays. Regardless of the financial status of the family, efforts are made to save the 'best' clothing for the mosque. Personal styling, especially during highly anticipated religious events, can often reveal the qualities of personhood that a person wishes to convey to others; clothing choice may also reveal tensions present within the status quo. Guinean women carefully calibrate their consumption with their presentation of selfhood in a way that signals respectable feminine piety. The female traders who are the focus of this chapter tap into these sartorial practices. Their connection to Mecca increases their business options for pious clothing available for women in Guinea. To demonstrate commonalities and differences in how women may operate, I will sketch the life stories and activities of four female traders who occupy different positions in the clothing trade business between Saudi Arabia and Guinea.

Hadjasaran: second-hand clothing from the Holy Land

After the discovery of oil in Saudi Arabia, outsiders were welcomed to the Kingdom under the *kafāla* system, which requires a sponsor for each foreign worker. A *kafāla* resident of Riyadh for the past 30 years, Hadjasaran³ is a widowed mother of eight children and a supplier of second-hand clothes to Guinea's capital Conakry, specializing in affordable, high-quality, modest outfits for weddings and Islamic occasions. Following her marriage to Musa Kallo in 1986, Hadjasaran and her husband travelled to Riyadh for lucrative service work under the booming reign of King Fahd. While Musa did construction work on apartment buildings and shopping malls, Hadjasaran worked as a domestic who shopped, cleaned, and cared for the elderly mother of her employer. In their third year in Saudi Arabia, she and her husband performed the hajj, something they had wanted to do since their arrival, but had not managed to do earlier because of the birth of their first child soon after their arrival in the Kingdom. Over the next 15 years, Musa and Hadjasaran's family grew to include five boys and three girls. Her youngest child was born in 2004. Musa died in 2006, leaving Hadjasaran a 37-year-old widowed mother. Her reputation for good moral character and religious piety allowed Hadjasaran to continue working to provide for her children, but making ends meet and providing childcare was challenging. She had some assistance from the Guinean community around her, but she was eager to supplement her earnings as a housekeeper.

Hadjasaran's second-hand clothing business began with some small efforts about 25 years ago. She loaded suitcases with used clothes, some of it worn by her own children, to take with her when she returned home to Guinea, and she asked Guinean pilgrims to take home extra suitcases

with items she asked them to sell or give away as gifts. Gift-giving among women, especially of cloth or clothes, is at the heart of feminine sociality in many West African cultures (see Guyer 1981, 26). Gradually, Hadjasaran came to realize that she could turn a tidy profit by selling used clothes she collected from second-hand shops in Riyadh.⁴ There is a hungry Guinean market for second-hand clothes imported from the Arabian Peninsula that comply with notions of religious modesty. Nearly every day, Hadjasaran looks for sales, buys used clothes, and maintains and expands her networks with vendors through connections at her mosque. When negotiating to buy in bulk, she insists that she be allowed to see each item that she buys, as she says that sometimes sellers try to get rid of less desirable pieces by bundling them with better-quality clothing. To make decisions about what to buy and what to pass on, she relies on her instincts and her years of experience in buying clothes for her family.

This familiarity and intimacy that Hadjasaran lavishes on each article of clothing sold through her export business is emblematic of women's small business and makes visible how relationships of power are reshaped and reproduced daily through ordinary moments and pragmatic connections (Whitesell and Faria 2019). Each individual decision about what to export is an arbitration of taste that influences Hadjasaran's financial success and the clothing choices of another person in a Guinean market who does not have access to the variety afforded to Hadjasaran.

Hadjasaran exercises extreme prejudice when selecting clothing for her inventory, mirroring the notoriously 'picky' attitude of her customers in Guinea. She specializes in clothes that attract affluent Muslim women, so she looks for *abāyas*, caftans, headscarves, and niqabs (a type of veil that covers the face but leaves the eyes visible). Hadjasaran also buys children's clothes, but the profit margin for well-maintained women's clothes suitable for special occasions is the highest and most reliable commodity of all her inventory. She sells her merchandise through her children and nieces in Guinea. In Guinean marketplaces, second-hand clothing may be sold without much discernment, Hadjasaran's proxy sellers try to place her clothing at 'higher end' clothing stalls by telling customers that the selection provided by their mother is hand-curated by their mother who is a highly respected local *Hajja* living abroad. The value of the clothes is thus increased by being displayed and sold with explicit reference to Hadjasaran's *Hajja* status.

When her husband was still alive, Hadjasaran's children attended school in Saudi Arabia. As they grew older, several returned to Guinea to live with extended family households and to seek business opportunities. The eldest daughter now attends university in Conakry, while her brothers help to manage the family clothing import business. The issue of foreign workers in Saudi Arabia raises concerns for the well-being of the nation as an estimated 66% of jobs are filled by foreign workers sending out approximately \$38 billion in remittances each year (Arabian Business 2018). In 2017, Saudi Arabian policy for guest workers was tightened, including the

implementation of an annual tax for children who reside with their guest worker parents, prompting Hadjasaran to send her two youngest children back to Guinea. Only one son, the second-to-eldest, aged 30, still lives with her, although Hadjasaran confides that he is eager to return to Guinea to find a wife and she expects he will leave her home within the year. She misses her youngest children very much and has considered returning to Guinea to be with her extended family when her eldest son takes a wife, but at a relatively young age of 50, she is ambivalent about leaving her business.

As a widow, she has complete discretion about how to invest her profits, though she typically invests first in additional inventory and second in educational opportunities for her children and grandchildren. For every \$1,000 investment in used clothes, Hadjasaran doubles her money. She makes much more money as an independent entrepreneur than she did as a domestic worker. Sceptical of banks, she has never borrowed money to build her business. Most money is transported through family and friends, and Hadjasaran feels more comfortable sending money back and forth through trusted members of her community than through official channels. She has an incentive to ‘stay off the grid’ to avoid taxation, but she says that she also appreciates the ease of working with people with whom she can speak her native language. A portion of the profits that are made through the sale of her inventory in Guinean markets are returned to her after accounting by her sons. Hadjasaran also relies on two of her adult children and two nieces to run her imported clothing business in Conakry. As noted earlier, Guinean women traditionally gave each other fabrics as gifts to mark important life cycle events like marriage or the birth of a child. For a Malinké woman, entrepreneurship through the clothing trade provides a culturally respectable and defensible business. Being a *Hajja* with access to high standard and fashionable but still ‘modest’ clothes associated with the Holy City of Mecca adds to Hadjasaran’s reputation as a respectable tradeswoman.

Hadjasaran admits to increasingly missing home. She could hardly ever afford the trip home when her children were small, and still is not able to visit Guinea as frequently as she would wish. As an active widow in her local mosque in Riyadh, Hadjasaran is particularly keen to host extended family members who come to complete the pilgrimage to Mecca. Often, pilgrims arrive with elderly parents, who Hadjasaran enjoys entertaining and cooking for. She also offers services as a matchmaker. In fact, this is how she came to work with her niece Adja M’Ballou, the woman introduced at the beginning of this chapter.

Adja M’Ballou: a marriage to a religious scholar

Hadjasaran’s mosque includes a core group of West African workers who came from Mali, Senegal, and Burkina Faso. Although they came from different countries, many of these workers share a common culture, including

Mande language, cuisine, and kinship ties. In the early 2000s, many West African families who were able to secure *kafāla* sponsorships from their employers invited relatives from their home communities to come live and work, although it is also reported that some arrived for pilgrimage and overstayed their visas. Many of the men in these families work as drivers; they also arranged for contracts with West African tour operators to transport pilgrims to Mecca during the season of pilgrimage.

Hadjasaran's niece Adja M'Ballou went to live with her aunt shortly after the death of her uncle in 2006. As a young widow, Hadjasaran struggled with childcare, and at the age of 18, M'Ballou was invited to come live with her aunt and to provide necessary assistance with raising the family. Despite changing sponsors and moving a number of times, finally a visa was arranged with the assistance of one of Hadjasaran's Saudi sponsors. Living in Riyadh, M'Ballou enthusiastically embraced wearing a hijab and began to learn some tailoring skills from a member of the West African community. She worked long hours as an informal tailor's apprentice, preparing custom-made white garments for the large amounts of West African pilgrims who arrived each year. However, as an unmarried woman, M'Ballou was unable to complete the pilgrimage to Mecca by herself.

At the same time, some of Riyadh's religious training programs for the next generation of imams offered scholarships to young men from African countries. Through a complicated community of kin relationships, M'Ballou met her future husband Sekouba at a Mande wedding party in Riyadh in 2009. A Malian, Sekouba first approached M'Ballou's aunt to arrange for a bride wealth. Hadjasaran redirected Sekouba to some distantly related men who were present in the mosque community, who, in turn, contacted M'Ballou's family in Kankan to arrange the marriage. Initially, M'Ballou's family was very sceptical of a young man who would approach their daughter in this way. Eventually, Sekouba persuaded his parents, who lived in western Mali, to visit M'Ballou's father in a village outside of Kankan where details of the marriage were ironed out and the bride wealth was exchanged. The wedding took place in Riyadh, celebrated by the West African community.

Adja M'Ballou earned her honorific title of *Hajja* in 2011, when she finally participated in the pilgrimage to Mecca with Sekouba. She described that time to me as the happiest occasion of her life. She stated that despite traveling with a primarily West African group of pilgrims into the Holy City, during the pilgrimage she witnessed the kindness and solidarity of people from all over the world. Her first child was born a year later, and three other children quickly followed. In 2014, after five years of marriage and with Sekouba's religious schooling complete, the family returned to Kankan to find work. Sekouba began his term as an imam at a small mosque in the city, while Adja M'Ballou began to receive shipments of clothing from her aunt for resale purposes.

Adja M'Ballou continued to capitalize on the lessons she learned those years she was in contact with pilgrims and during her own hajj journey. In addition to selling used clothes, she partners with a local tailor to design and offer bright, white clothing suitable for hajj or for celebrating religious festivals. In general, such clothes are intended to be worn only once, and can be out of the price range of many customers in the Kankan market. The preferred fabric locally for such couture is rich *bazin*, hand-dyed polished cotton, but for those who cannot afford such expense, Adja M'Ballou offers similar styles in plain cotton fabric. She told me this attention to the needs of pious customers regardless of their ability to pay was an insight she gained during her own pilgrimage.

When her inventory stagnates and pieces of clothing are no longer saleable, Adja M'Ballou rounds up the unwanted dresses and scarves and gives them to her sisters' children, her neighbours, her friends, and to those in Kankan who are in need. Through her active gift-giving, she reinforces her reputation as a generous *Hajja* who recognizes the moral obligations of her own position and the privilege of her mobility. She also invites women who lack means, especially those who have absent or underemployed husbands, to come to her shop and sell clothes for a share of the profits and as an opportunity to access 'new' used clothing. Each time I visited Adja M'Ballou's shop, I found a different woman from the neighbourhood working there, all of whom praised the generosity of their pious friend.

Muna: tapping into middle-class desires

Muna is a 38-year-old *Hajja* and trader of high-end Islamic fashion in one of Conakry's new neighbourhoods which attracts professional elites. Her much older husband, a teacher, died about five years ago, leaving her with three children: a 14-year-old and 12-year-old twins. As a young widow, having no husband or small children gives Muna more mobility in comparison to other *Hajjas*. She did not consider remarriage, nor does she have living male relatives who would insist upon a remarriage. Muna considers her work seriously because it provides for her children and allows them to attend an international school in Conakry. She has no desire to create romantic entanglements either in Guinea or in Saudi Arabia that might make it more difficult to do her job well. While she herself is not especially religious, she recognizes the potential for her business to succeed since she has access to a niche market that is in high demand at home.

Just as Muna's business runs on formal as well as informal transactions (Verne 2018), so too does her history of the hajj. Until recently, Muna travelled to Saudi Arabia every other year on a coveted hajj visa rather than a business visa. Because of her familiarity with several languages and her international travel experience, her 'side business' involves accompanying older women pilgrims during the season of hajj. Only 300 hajj visas are released to the general public in Guinea each year, but because of Muna's

pre-existing informal network of reciprocity and exchange based on kinship, she has enjoyed good luck with the visa system, often by paying a 'premium' of \$600 on top of the travel fees to a pilgrimage tour operator to participate in pilgrimage more frequently than every five years. However, with recent policy changes to the visa allocation system in Guinea and a closer monitoring system of the procedure criticized for nepotism and favouritism, Muna fears that she may not be able to travel to Saudi Arabia to maintain her business as easily as before and that she might need to find the money to apply for a business visa.

Upon arrival in Saudi Arabia, Muna stays with extended kin while she conducts her business transactions. Relying upon networks of mutual reciprocal exchange reinforces ties of friendship and familial identity. But these ties may also reproduce social asymmetry as most pilgrims from Guinea do not have equal resources to buoy them through the expense of a merchandising trip. Describing new biometric measures used by the Saudi Arabian immigration service, Muna lamented the challenge of overstaying visas or using the name of her sister to qualify for a visa, a ruse she apparently was able to successfully use in the past.

Muna tries to significantly increase her inventory prior to the month of Ramadan, as most aspiring Guineans invest in several new outfits for 'Īd al-Fiṭr, the feast at the end of the Holy Month of fasting. Increasing practices of consumption and materialism are markers of an emerging middle class (Scheld 2007), as displays of consumer discernment regarding pious couture index locally held understandings about respectability and success. Muna has forged professional relationships over several trips in the last eight years to increase shipments at critical times of the calendar year, working with Saudi merchants she trusts in the wholesale market. She haggles in English whenever possible to buy in bulk, using the calculator function on her telephone to convert currencies and convey her bottom line. She operates with limited amounts of capital and prefers to pay in cash upfront to minimize any ambiguity about quality or price.

Muna does not wear hijab when she is at home in Guinea. However, when she is traveling and buying inventory for her shop, she adheres to local standards of Muslim piety to get a feel for the new merchandise she is looking to buy for her shop. She observes that Guinean women will wear pious couture to augment their reputation as respectable women, but also laughingly states that Guinean women do not suffer discomfort easily. In her choices for inventory in her shop, Muna must strike a balance between representing the fashionable new developments of Arab women in the Gulf States with tried-and-true styles that she knows local women will respond to. Muna prides herself on knowing what her Guinean customers will wear and what clothing they would reject as too cumbersome or restrictive. She relies heavily on her reputation as a stylish insider with a loyal customer base. Customers are alerted to new merchandise through a very active Facebook page (see Lewis 2010). The clothes she offers are very expensive

in local terms, from US\$65 to \$300. Although Muna's relatively affluent Guinean customers have a bit more money to spend, they remain critical about the quality and value of the clothing they consume and will not buy unless they are confident that the effect of their new clothing will enhance their personal status as successful, respectful, modern Muslim women.

Fatime: tourism and the West African importer

Born in Saudi Arabia in the 1980s when her parents worked there as oil-boom labourers, Fatime's family returned to Guinea when she was a teenager. When she was 20, her father arranged for her to marry Ibrahim Kaba, a 50-year-old friend who organized logistics for pilgrims en route to Mecca. His tour operator license allowed him early access to the 300 pilgrimage visas distributed by the Guinean government, which he included as part of a pilgrimage tour package that included airfare, lodging, and transportation within the country. Because of her fluency in Arabic acquired during childhood in Riyadh, Ibrahim took his young wife along to Mecca with him every few years. Facilitated by her husband's pilgrimage tour business, Fatime set up her own business. Unlike the women introduced above, who import items for resale in Guinea, she exports coveted West African items for the expatriate community living in Saudi Arabia.

Fatime recounts many changes to the regulations around pilgrimage from Guinea in the last 15 years. Primarily, it is much more difficult to get a visa to go on hajj. Many years ago, the market for specialty products from home yielded a three-to-one return on investment. Fatime invested in palm oil, honey, karité oil and shea, and shea butter (used as skin moisturizers), *soumbara* (a local spice), kola nuts, and *bazin* fabric (favoured for West African ceremonial clothing) to sell to West African residents in Saudi Arabia. The items were selected based on requests that were sent from family members and things that Fatime remembered as special during her childhood. Fatime preferred to carry the items for sale in her luggage, buying a new wardrobe while abroad, with plans to sell it upon her return. Operating under the radar to avoid paying tariffs, Fatime never formalized her business and claimed on customs forms that the contents of her luggage were for gifts and personal use.

Fatime's frequent ability to travel to Mecca for pilgrimage and business rests solely on the accommodation of her husband's business. In the past, it was relatively easy for Fatime to get a special visa for the pilgrimage because of her husband's business and she looked forward to the opportunity to grow her capital. However, pilgrimage visas have become increasingly hard to get, and the Guinean government prioritizes travellers who have not made the trip in the last five years (discounting, of course, those who are able to pay high fees, including Muna, mentioned above). In recent years, Fatime's husband has scaled back his tour offerings, taking fewer and fewer pilgrims each time. Fatime notes that it has also become harder to resell

items because customs agents have begun restricting the amount of luggage brought into the Kingdom, probably in efforts to stop illicit smuggling. She herself was stopped several times by customs agents who questioned her about the spices and cooking ingredients she transported.

Just before her third pilgrimage in 2011, Fatime realized she was pregnant with her third child. Pregnant women do not typically participate in pilgrimage, so with the blessing of her husband, she hid her pregnancy, overstayed her pilgrimage visa, and gave birth to her son in a hospital in Saudi Arabia. She lived with a distant relative in Riyadh for a few months after the baby was born while her husband returned to Guinea. Anxious, she feared she would be fined at the airport when she left the country with the baby, but no such problem arose. She feels like her son's life was blessed by the pilgrimage she performed. She hopes to continue regular pilgrimages as she enjoys visiting friends and family who live in Riyadh, and she also welcomes the chance to grow her business, even considering the possibility of applying for a legitimate business visa.

Conclusion

The Guinean women in this chapter use their experiences of the pilgrimage to Mecca to capitalize on locally understood configurations of respectable feminine piety and to make daily arbitrations of taste and piety, underscoring a connection to global flows of fashion to Guinea. Understanding these practices allows us to link global, power-laden networks of business and enterprise with intimate, embodied, everyday practices of self-presentation (Mountz and Hyndman 2006). This chapter has been a preliminary investigation, posing questions to interrogate the everyday and overlooked places where identity is shaped, reproduced, and contested.

Importantly, the cultural mobility to engage in pilgrimage and to operate a business remains strongly influenced by the marital status of the entrepreneur. Marriage and widowhood matters for these entrepreneurs, in part because their potential mobility challenges economic, religious, and cultural conventions about femininity, both at home and abroad. This paper has shown the challenges surrounding pilgrimage for widows, young women, pregnant women, and newly delivered mothers. The two widows Hadjasaran and Muna, whose trade activities were discussed above, have been able to combine the necessity to earn a living with their mobility as single women with an outstanding reputation as pious *Hajjas* to navigate the market, negotiate prices, and import clothes that are associated with the holy places in Saudi Arabia. The young wives Adja M'Ballou and Fatime both work on the periphery of the businesses available to West African pilgrims, especially busy during the season of the hajj. Each woman cultivates a network of individuals who can share the work with her, and each relies on a kin network to support her during times of pregnancy and new motherhood.

As shown, the experience of pilgrimage increases the opportunities and sharpens the insights of these individual women of what may sell well. In particular, they capitalize on their own experiences to make sales to other would-be pilgrims. As Adja M'Ballou observed, 'Clothing cannot improve moral behaviour.' She, however, will remain at her stall in the Kankan market, selling clothing imported from Mecca and taking orders for the next season of pilgrims. Her hope is that the women who buy her clothes to travel there will find the type of respectability they desire.

Notes

- 1 This chapter deals specifically with practices observed and recorded among Manké families residing in Kankan and Conakry, Guinea. The term Mande refers to a larger linguistic category of people living throughout West Africa, sharing a number of cultural practices. Mande culture was traditionally horticultural, with well-developed endogamous castes based on occupational specialization. Most Mande peoples practice a form of syncretic Islam, though among the elite lineages, more attention is paid to the politics of piety; see Kenny 2007.
- 2 This is admittedly an extremely small sample size. I frame this research as exploratory to denote the possibility for observation of emerging themes but am unable at this time to extrapolate data to a larger population based on this sample. It is also important to note that all names and some details of residency are disguised because some of the residency circumstances within this paper do not conform to sanctioned immigration policies of Saudi Arabia. I collected a large number of stories from informants outlining stressful working conditions, racism, and experiences of deportation.
- 3 All names in this paper have been changed to disguise those women who shared their stories with me. I have altered some details and collapsed identities of informants to protect their anonymity.
- 4 Second-hand clothing represents an informal and small-scale business enterprise which largely operates through barely legal transborder trade (Hansen 2000). Technically, goods being imported for sale are supposed to be taxed, but second-hand clothing are imported by container and suitcases, making it more difficult for them to be accurately counted or taxed at the ports or borders (Scheld 2007).

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7 Considering the silences

Understanding historical narratives of women's Indian Ocean hajj mobility

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The first documented Indian ruler to complete the hajj travelled with fanfare, accompanied by a retinue of over 1,000 companions, yet later wrote a very simple personal account of arrival in Mecca, recalling:

[t]he hour of my arrival at Mecca was the 'Ishá [first watch of the night], and the call to evening prayers was sounding from the different mosques. I entered within the holy precincts by the Báb-us-Salám [gate of peace], and, arriving at the house of Abraham, I stood and read the prescribed prayers. After that I performed the ceremonies of the Toáf-ul-Kudúm, and of running at the Safá and the Marwáh.

(Begum 1870, 53)

While some readers may start to envision Emperor Akbar¹ or another male leader as the author of this hajj narrative, it was written by Nawab Sikander Begum, ruler of Bhopal, about her pilgrimage from 1863–1864 CE. Nawab Sikander Begum's work provides a glimpse at one moment in the long history of women's hajj journeys in Asia.²

As I will demonstrate later in this chapter, historical documents provide ample evidence that numerous Muslim women from both Arabia and Asia travelled through the Indian Ocean for trade, marriage, pilgrimage, and other reasons between the 14th and 19th centuries. Yet, notwithstanding evidence such as Nawab Sikander Begum's translated and published autobiography (Begum 1870) and other published accounts of women's hajj journeys, narratives of women's historical Indian Ocean hajj travel are rarely gathered together and considered by scholars as part of larger patterns of gendered religious movement in the region. Women's roles as travellers within the Indian Ocean have been considerably overlooked in academic works, as has the better documented history of Muslim women travellers in general (see for example Tolmacheva 1993).

I originally became interested in this topic—women's histories of mobility in the Indian Ocean—while studying contemporary women's mosque sites³ in the Maldives (Fewkes 2019). Common historical narratives about the Indian Ocean rarely feature women as travellers in this arena,

representing women as largely stationary in the past trading networks of the Indian Ocean, whether working within their own cultural settings as the producers of local goods, seafarer's wives left at home, traders for port-based family businesses, or investors financing expeditions (see for example Sheriff 2010; Andaya 2001). Even studies of kinship-based religious networks—which, formed by heterosexual marriages, necessarily involve women — support the notion of a 'brotherhood' of male travellers (see for example Bang 2004). Attention solely to these versions of Indian Ocean history supports androcentric understandings of Muslim community in the Indian Ocean that relegate contemporary women's practices to the local and interpret women's sites of religious practice as spaces of solely local significance, contributing to conceptual frameworks of 'the Muslim world' that consign women to the periphery.⁴ I was therefore initially interested in collecting historical accounts of women's travel for hajj to compile an expanded history that theorized women's religious activity in the historical Indian Ocean as central to global religious histories. What I found upon investigation, however, was that there are large gaps in such historical knowledge.

The gaps in knowledge about women's past Indian Ocean hajj journeys—as well as those between what is known and what scholars conventionally consider—are worth investigating more closely. In *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* Michel-Rolph Trouillot focuses on meaning construction in history, demonstrating how silences in the historical record can be read not as an absence of information, but as a product of processes that include both unconscious and deliberately enforced silences (1995). Trouillot observes:

Silences are inherent in history because any single event enters history with some of its constituting parts missing. Something is always left out while something else is recorded. There is no perfect closure of any event, however one chooses to define the boundaries of that event. Thus, whatever becomes fact does so with its own inborn absences, specific to its productions. In other words, the very mechanism that make any historical recording possible also ensure that historical facts are not created equal. They reflect differential control of the means of historical production at the very first graving that transforms an event into a fact

(Trouillot 1995, 49)

Thus, historical silences are meaningful, multi-faceted, and, as we shall see, reflect not simply one-sided discourses ('history is always written by the winners'), but also the processes by which we recognize 'facts' about the past. Trouillot's discussion of silences therefore helps to focus our understanding of how exclusionary histories are produced and maintained.

In this chapter I focus on the construction of silences in and about narratives of women's historical hajj travel in the Indian Ocean from the 14th to the 19th centuries. Guided by Trouillot's insights I consider how the various dimensions of historical silences, including narrative omissions, distortions, valuations, biases, predilections, and circumscriptions, have contributed to common scholarly misperceptions of the gendered histories of Muslim practice in the Indian Ocean. Bringing together fragments of over 500 years' worth of accounts of women travelling for hajj in the region, I organize evidence to help us better understand not only how histories of women's hajj have been shaped but also—through recognition of the entanglement of historical mobilities and the Indian Ocean spaces for Muslim women—how this narrative process has potentially contorted our conceptualizations of contemporary spaces and practices.

Recognizing women's hajj histories of the Indian Ocean

The Indian Ocean is a significant arena for Islamic history. Geographically it is vast—spanning from the eastern coast of Africa to the western shores of Indonesia and Australia, linking through religious travel and trade these areas with the Middle East and South Asia in the Arabian Sea as well as South-East Asia through the Bay of Bengal and the Andaman Sea. While possible to define geographically, for the purposes of this chapter the historical Indian Ocean region is better conceptualized as an arena of human movement and mobility rather than a fixed geographic location.

This mobility-based perspective follows the growing body of works that shift our analytical focus from regional boundaries to instead consider how areas such as South Asia, Africa, and the Middle East are interactive and mutually co-constitutive. Through such an approach, colonial South Asia—commonly constructed geographically—may be better understood more broadly in relation to Portuguese maritime movements, or the Gulfstream waterways that served as conduits for commodities from the Americas (see for example Fewkes 2017). Similarly, historian Nile Green has suggested that an Indian Ocean approach to Middle Eastern studies 'leads us to liminal spaces away from the standardizing pressures of political power and cultural hegemony to maritime frontiers that are porous and creole' (Green 2016, 747). A focus on the Indian Ocean as an arena for movement and mobility thus destabilizes hegemonic narratives of nations and centres of political power, calling to attention the roles of fluid cultural identities that cross geographic and temporal boundaries, transcending normative categorization and periodization.

A mobility-centred discussion of the Indian Ocean helps us to contextualize women's hajj journeys in a larger history of movement within the region, as the Indian Ocean commerce involved some of the earliest documented global cosmopolitan networks, linking Asian trading networks to

4th century CE Roman Empire, and bringing together the economic interests of African and Middle Eastern communities with those of the Tang Dynasty in the mid-7th century CE. As I shall address later, these histories of trade and diplomacy provide an important context for understanding hajj journeys in the Indian Ocean.

Conceptualizing the Indian Ocean region as an arena for mobility provides an alternative to frequently androcentric historical models of religious transmission, models that typically focus on the spread of Islam as occurring with the movement of men between regions. Cross-border histories of Indian Ocean travel and trade that omit women's travel narratives have contributed to false contemporary perceptions that women's experiences of being Muslim in the Indian Ocean region in the past were predominantly informed by local ritual traditions and social structures such as class, in opposition to idealized universalist and more cosmopolitan Islamic practices of men. A mobility-centred view of the Indian Ocean past has the potential to be more inclusive, expanding the lens through which Muslim women's religious practices and sites in the region are viewed academically, and illuminating previously obscured historical patterns.

Omissions and 'simple' silences

Hajj accounts from the medieval period to the present frequently omit women altogether (see examples in Tolmacheva 2013; 1998; 1993). These omissions of women and their hajj journeys in history are not neutral gaps in knowledge; as Trouillot observed, historical silences are the product of mechanisms of historical production. The exclusion of women from many medieval Muslim works on hajj and travel reflected particular social attitudes about gender in the cultural contexts of the narratives' production. Maria Tolmacheva, a historian who has produced the most extensive work on this topic to date, argues that mentions of women in the earliest texts were anomalous not because women on hajj were an anomaly, but because of conventional textual expectations. She writes:

(...) it was generally not considered good manners to discuss women-folk or specific ladies, so medieval, and even early modern, Muslim books rarely describe living women unless it is to praise them. Historical chronicles may glorify queens, discuss important marriages made by princesses, or praise pious or learned Muslim women, but some travel books — for example, "The Book of Travels" (Safar-Nama) by the Persian traveller Nasir-i Khusraw (1004–1088) — do not speak of women at all.

(Tolmacheva 2013, para. 1)

Medieval Muslim writers conceptualized 'women as public figures' as a different subject than both women in general and specific individual women in particular, leading to the selective versions of the past presented in the narratives above. These historical omissions have been, in turn, reproduced

in subsequent academic works; therefore, while the original social contexts for mechanisms of historical production may have changed, the original narratives continue to shape knowledge as they are reproduced.

Yet alternative voices exist. The most prominent exception to this rule is found in the writings of one of the most famous Muslim travellers of the time, Ibn Battuta, whose narratives have provided key evidence associated with women's hajj journeys in the 14th-century Indian Ocean. Ibn Battuta was originally from Tangier and embarked upon his travels in 1325 when he was only 20 years old; over the next 29 years he would eventually travel throughout *Dār al-Islām* (the House of Islam or the Islamic world), covering parts of Africa, the Middle East, South Asia, Southeast Asia, Central Asia, and East Asia along this journey.⁵ As Remke Kruk notes, Ibn Battuta's willingness to mention a variety of women in his life—particularly those close to him and of a certain social status that would have been considered part of the 'private'—was rare among medieval male Muslim writers, who only wrote about women in the public sphere (1995, 370).⁶

Battuta wrote about non-mobile women living in ports, who did not leave their local areas; for example, in the Maldives he claims that when men left the islands, they would divorce their wives as 'women do not leave the country' (Battuta 1976 [1355], 200). He also, however, mentioned occasions of women's mobility in several sections of his writings. One of the most striking was his account of travelling with the Khatun Bayalun of the Mongol court, who travelled in state with her own guards and retinue that included hundreds of women (Gibb 1929, 147–149). Battuta recorded women's presence as travellers in the Indian Ocean (as in Battuta 1976 [1355], 189), and his accounts from other parts of Asia suggest women frequently travelled for hajj, doing so in a manner that created new spaces for women's religious practices, such as the use of a large tent dedicated for women's prayers (Gibb 1929, 148–500).⁷

David Waines argues that Ibn Battuta discusses women in his text as an 'other' through scrutiny of particular details such as their clothing, sexual behaviour, and conduct in society (2015, 158–175). Waines demonstrates that Ibn Battuta was fascinated, and frequently at times exasperated, by the wide variation of women's roles in medieval Muslim societies, and frequently resorted to making sense of this variation by representing women as one-dimensional characters that were alternately beautiful, pious, chaste, loyal, and such, rather than as a nuanced and complex individual. Thus, while Ibn Battuta's narrative allows us to understand that women's hajj travel would have existed in the 14th-century Indian Ocean, his account does not provide any specifics for conceptualizing such pilgrimages and his portrayal of women was limited.

Distortions and the stories that 'matter'

Women's travel may be omitted or simplified in many historical Indian Ocean hajj histories; however, as noted earlier, detailed accounts written by women themselves do exist. Frequently documented women's historical hajj

accounts were primarily of journeys by elite women, for, as Trouillot suggested above, ‘historical facts are not created equal’, and for each omission there exists ‘something else [that] is not recorded’ (Trouillot 1995, 49). Elite women were public figures (part of the public record, as per Tolmacheva’s points earlier), with access to the means of production of history: wealth, socio-political influence, and language skills.

Numerous histories document that in approximately 1575⁸ the royal Gulbadan Begum went on hajj in a pomp-filled journey. Gulbadan Begum—daughter of Babur, half-sister of Mughal Emperor Humayun, and aunt of Emperor Akbar—was born approximately in 1523 in Kabul (Afghanistan) and had moved to Agra (India) as a child. She was reportedly literate in multiple languages, including Persian, and wrote a memoir of her experiences (Gulbadan and Beveridge 1902 [1587]). Her hajj journey was documented by the Mughal court historian Abul Fazl (1551–1602) as well in his *Akbar Nama* (*The History of Akbar*) (Abu and Beveridge 1907). Fazl wrote:

That veil of chastity, etc., Gulbadan Begum the paternal aunt of H.M. the Shahinshah had long ago made a vow to visit the holy places, but on account of the insecurity of the ways, and of the affairs of the world, she had not been able to accomplish her intention. At this time when the delightful country of India was an abode of peace, and the vagabonds’ abode of Gujrat had become inhabited by right-thinking lovers of justice, and the masters of the European islands, who were a stumbling-block in the way of travellers to the Hijaz, had become submissive and obedient. (...) the luminary of longing arose in the orient of the heart of that shining chaste one and broke the repose of her noble mind. As the rays of truth impinged upon the antechamber of the celestial soul (of Akbar), he, in spite of his close union with her, did not prefer his wishes to hers. Moreover all his desire is that every class of mankind may become religious and worship God in accordance with the measure of their faith. He sent with her a large amount of money and goods and gave her permission to depart. In connection with this opportunity a number of inmates of the harem of fortune were also excited by the same longing, and the sovereign poured into the lap of each the money that they wanted and so made the burden of their desires light. (...) this auspicious party fastened the litters on the camels of joy, and a great number of men who had received food and travelling expenses followed in their wake.

(Abu and Beveridge 1907, 205–206)

There are several details in this account of the beginning of Gulbadan Begum’s hajj journey that are of interest here. First, while the journey is frequently referred to as Gulbadan Begum’s hajj in contemporary accounts, it was in fact undertaken by a group of elite women—referred to here as ‘a number of inmates in the harem’ and named individually later in the

passage—most of whom were older. The journey was conducted with a great deal of pomp and circumstance due to the women's status and was supported financially by Emperor Akbar. While the journey is frequently discussed in relation to Emperor Akbar's interests and regional power, Ruby Lal points out that the motivation for the hajj journey was Gulbadan Begum's religious intention and by her own wish (see Lal 2005; 2004); as such the royal women's hajj 'maps the desires and agency of imperial women', and suggests forms of feminine authority as a journey 'largely initiated and planned by the elder women' (Lal 2004, 611). Curiously, while Fazl claims the time period was one of peace, allowing for travel, he also later notes that Gulbadan Begum's family was concerned about Portuguese aggression during the time period and in advance of her journey used their elite status to negotiate a safe passage with Portuguese officials in Surat (Kooria 2017, 23).

Thus while privileged by her elite status, Gulbadan Begum's hajj experience was part of a larger historical trend; in the 16th century many hajj pilgrims travelling in the Indian Ocean faced Portuguese control and persecution (Subrahmanyam 1997; 1988; Pearson 1994).⁹ The Portuguese required merchant ships in the region to have a *cartaz* (pass) in order to sail unmolested; since trade and pilgrimage were intertwined, ships of pilgrims without the *cartaz* were targeted and attacked as if they were hostile vessels. Accounts of Portuguese hostilities against vessels carrying hajj travellers in the Indian Ocean contain several mentions of female passengers among those engaged in hajj travel. However, these non-elite women were discussed in groups, often in rather general terms rather than as individuals with personal accounts. For example, an anonymous Dutch author in the 16th century who recorded details about Vasco da Gama's seizure of a ship called the *Meri* that was travelling to Mecca laden with pilgrims, wrote:

(...) we took a Meccha ship, on board of which were 380 men and many women and children, and we took from it at least 12,000 ducats and at least 10,000 more worth of goods; and we burnt the ship and all the people on board with gun powder, on the first day of October.

(as quoted in Kooria 2017, 24)

The presence of women and children, and their subsequent deaths upon the attack of the *Meri*, were clearly not surprising or of great significance to the author of the account, suggesting that women's hajj travel was viewed as fairly commonplace.

Gulbadan Begum was not the only elite woman whose Indian Ocean arena hajj was chronicled by writers who thought the journey noteworthy. A 17th-century account by Jean de Thévenot, a French traveller, makes mention of another royal Indian woman travelling for hajj. Thévenot writes of the escapades of a Dutch pirate, Lambert Hugo, explaining:

(...) that which offended most, was the story of the Ship that carried the Goods of the Queen of Visiapour [Bijapur, JF], and was stranded about an Isle lying in Degrees forty Minutes Latitude, at the entry of the Red-Sea. Socotra [an island off the coast of Yemen in the northern Indian Ocean, JF]. That Queen who was going to Mecha, was out of the reach of the Corsar [sic], for luckily she had gone on Board of Dutch Ship but being satisfied with a Ship belonging to herself for transporting her Equipage; Hugo met that Ship, and pursued her so briskly, that the Master was forced to run aground. [He found on board, JF] (...) the Queen's Treasure was, (for she had carried with her a great deal of Money, Jewels, and rich Stuffs to make Presents at Mecha, Medina Grand Cheik, and other places) resolving to be very magnificent...

(Sen, Thévenot, and Gemelli Careri 1949, 29–30)

Notes in Surendranath Sen's edited publication of Thévenot's travelogue clarify that this passage refers to the 1661 journey of Khadija Sultana, who was also known as Badi Sahiba (Sen, Thévenot and Gemelli Careri 1949, 295). Khadija Sultana (1600–1665) was a well-known figure as the daughter of Muhammad Qutub Shah, sultan of Golkonda, and wife (at the time of travel, widow) of Muhammad Adil Shah, ruler of Bijapur from 1627–1656 (Kruijtzter 2014). She was also an important political figure by her own rights, having acted as regent during the childhood of her husband's successor, Ali Adil Shah II. Khadija Sultana is credited with shaping the course of Bijapur's uncertain succession, and keeping the sultanate functioning after the death of her husband in 1656 (Kruijtzter 2014, para. 2).

While another instance of the recording of an elite women's hajj in the 17th-century Indian Ocean, this account of Khadija Sultana's journey also documents that women of many different statuses undertook the journey; in addition to 50–60 ladies-in-waiting, who would have been women of high status, it is clear that she was also accompanied by hundreds of serving women (Kruijtzter 2014, para. 6). Whether or not the serving women would have performed hajj while travelling with Khadija Sultana is unclear as their role is not central to the historical accounts that mention them. Thévenot was more interested in the exceptional circumstances of Khadija Sultana's hajj: the story that 'mattered' in this account was the 'Money, Jewels, and rich Stuffs' as indicators of Khadija Sultana's wealth and resolve to be 'very magnificent'. Beyond a concern for appearances, we may also consider these as indicators of Khadija Sultana's travel experience that shaped her understanding of what to bring; she had reportedly previously travelled extensively for religious purposes, going on hajj a total of four times (Sen, Thévenot and Gemelli 1949, 295; Manucci 1907, 300) as well visiting holy sites in Persia and Iraq (Kruijtzter 2014, para. 7). Thévenot also notes that the Sultana travelled on a Dutch ship; reportedly her conveyance on a Dutch East India Company (Verenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie or VOC) ship for this

hajj was not common in the time period and functioned as a sign of her political significance and good relations with the VOC (Kruijtzter 2014, para. 4–5).

From the 1860s we have the hajj account of yet another elite woman, Nawab Sikander Begum, mentioned at the beginning of this chapter. Nawab Sikander Begum travelled with hundreds of women, whose own roles and experiences are again not detailed, via steamship. She wrote about her own hajj journey in her book *A Pilgrimage to Mecca*, which was originally written in Urdu and later translated into English (Begum 1870). As demonstrated in the quote in the beginning of this chapter Nawab Sikander Begum wrote directly of her experiences, although she included little about the personal religious significance of her pilgrimage, focusing mostly on descriptions of her activities, events, and conversations during the journey. Nawab Sikander Begum's hajj is particularly well documented as it was also recorded by her daughter Shahjehan Begum in her book *Taj ul-Iqbal Tarikh Bhopal (A History of Bhopal)*, which offers a summary of Nawab Sikander Begum's account (Shah 1876).

There are few narrative sources on non-elite women who undertook historical hajj journeys through the Indian Ocean. Select late 19th-century European memoirs/travelogues briefly mention women on hajj—for example Dutch scholar and colonial advisor Snouck Hurgronje's book on Mecca includes a picture of an anonymous female pilgrim from Banten, Java (Ramadhini 2016, 4–5). Fictional narratives from the time period based on actual events, such as Joseph Conrad's *Lord Jim*, also provide a glimpse of ideas and attitudes about more varied 19th-century women's Indian hajj journeys (see Tagliacozzo 2013, 117–118). In his book Conrad wrote about the pilgrim passengers of the Patna:

They streamed aboard over three gangways, they streamed in urged by faith and the hope of paradise, they streamed in with a continuous tramp and shuffle of bare feet, without a word, a murmur, or a look back. (...) like water flowing into crevices and crannies, like water rising silently even with the rim. Eight hundred men and women with faith and hopes, with affections and memories, they had collected there. (...) They came covered with dust, with sweat, with grime, with rags — the strong men at the head of family parties, the lean old men pressing forward without hope of return; young boys with fearless eyes glancing curiously, shy little girls with tumbled long hair; the timid women muffled up and clasping to their breasts, wrapped in loose ends of soiled head-cloths, their sleeping babies, the unconscious pilgrims of an exacting belief. “Look at dese cattle”, said the German skipper to his new chief mate. An Arab, the leader of this pious voyage, came last. He walked slowly aboard, handsome and grave in his white gown and large turban.

(Conrad 1920, 14–15)

Women in Conrad's account were not elite individuals, but part of the masses of steerage class pilgrims from all over Asia who flocked to Mecca each year; he wrote of them as a wordless press of bodies compared to a force of nature, associated with dust, sweat, grime, and soiled clothing. As demonstrated in the above passage, non-elite Asian pilgrims were referenced as non-human animals and sharply contrasted with elite individuals in such European narratives.

Thus we can see how a selective approach to 'stories' that matter may have distorted our understandings of historical women's hajj experiences in the Indian Ocean arena. For several centuries elite women were written about in circumscribed ways that overlooked the full ramifications of their agency, distorting readers' understanding of these women's roles as public figures. Only some women's experiences were recorded in detailed historical terms; hierarchies of privilege meant that not only servants and common people were obscured but, as shown in Fazl's account of Gulbadan's journey, even 'less' elite women's stories were scarcely considered. While histories of elite women's experiences may hint at, and intersect with, the experiences of non-elites they do not offer the same depth of detail. Limited attention was paid to non-elite women whose presence was most clearly chronicled as the 'masses', and framed within European and Mughal discourses about gender, empire, agency, and power. These distortions of women's hajj narratives have limited the scope of these histories, and stunted scholarly concepts of the range of possibilities for women's mobilities in the historical Indian Ocean arena.

Narrative patterns and the stories that 'catch'

Although wealth, language, socio-political influence, colonial power structures, and other forms of privilege and domination have clearly meant that certain narratives were more likely to be published and shared than others, silences in narratives are not simply due to the direct forms of power. As Trouillot asks, 'If history is merely the story told by those who won, how did they win in the first place? And why don't all winners tell the same story?' (Trouillot 1995, 6). Trouillot proposes we consider that while there is an uneven production of historical narratives based on power imbalances, the unequal access to the 'means of such production' (1995, xix) includes not only material apparatuses (such as those that would make a history 'matter'), but also conceptual tools such as the rules that govern the production and valuation of certain types of narratives over others. The conceptual tools of historical production allow select writers to craft particular narratives in such a way as to 'catch' the attention of readers—by 'catch' I mean to say that the narrative is effective in being appealing, believable, and memorable. The point that 'catches' in a narrative may be thought of as similar to Roland Barthes's *punctum* (1981), although following Trouillot's points about uneven access to the conceptual means of

production I consider it as less of an accident; the term ‘catch’ is oriented towards the provenance, rather than moment (as in *punctum*), of interest to focus critical scrutiny on the source of the aesthetic arrest.

Conceptual means of production can take many forms. For example, Siobhan Lambert-Hurley (2008, 4–5), in the introduction of Nawab Sikander Begum’s hajj travelogue, suggests that contemporary inattention to medieval South Asian women’s hajj is due not to a lack of factual information, but rather the absence of reflexive first-person narratives from South Asians performing hajj prior to the late 19th century. She cites Barbara Metcalf’s argument that South Asian accounts of hajj as a spiritual journey are a relatively ‘modern phenomenon’ (Metcalf 1990, 86), to contextualize older accounts, such as Gulbadan Begum’s scant discussion of her pilgrimage as a religious experience in the 17th century and frame a reader’s understandings of Nawab Sikander Begum’s later hajj account as well (Lambert-Hurley 2008, 5–6). Lambert-Hurley notes that Nawab Sikander Begum’s account lacks any retrospective of the journey as a whole, and points to passages such as the one quoted in the beginning of this article as an example of the unsentimental writing style (Lambert-Hurley 2008, 9–10).

Yet contemporary readers—historians and non-historians alike—often engage with narratives based on contemporary conceptualizations. Consider, then, the value of the aforementioned women’s historical narratives for readers seeking narratives that follow contemporary notions of hajj that often focus on it as a concept or process of spiritual growth. For example, Dale Eickelman and James Piscatori write that hajj,

like all travel (...) is principally a journey of the mind. These obviously constitute physical movement from one place to another, but, owing to the power of the religious imagination, they involve spiritual or temporal movement at the same time.

(2013, xii)

Eickelman and Piscatori’s comprehensive explanation of hajj and other Muslim journeys here is powerful and useful for studying the wide range of multiplex Muslim religious travel experiences. It is less applicable, however, to historical hajj accounts that do not reflect personal spiritual journeys and/or offer readers little to consider in the way of the religious imagination. This concept of hajj—and the accompanying expectations for narrative styles in such a genre—mean that many of the earlier accounts of women’s hajj, texts written by both Muslim women and men, may be overlooked as such because they do not ‘count’ as spiritual narratives.¹⁰

Another form of historical narrative that is frequently reproduced is that which contains outlandish points to engage the readers’ interests. One such detail is found in accounts of Khadija Sultana’s 17th-century hajj journey in the work of an Italian traveller, Niccolao Manucci (1638–1717). According to his account Khadija Sultana was reportedly initially refused entry to

Mecca as a widow; Manucci claims that she declined to engage in a symbolic marriage with any of the many men and boys available at the gates for this purpose, saying they were all beneath her status, and instead agreed to marry symbolically to a cock that she carried under her arm as she entered (Manucci 1907 [1708], 300). William Irving, the 18th-century translator and editor of Manucci's account, observes in a footnote that this 'story must have been invented' as it is not based on any actual requirements for married state when entering Mecca,¹¹ suggesting that it most probably had grown out of the requirement that women on hajj be accompanied by their *mahram* (male kin who can accompany a woman in travel) (Manucci 1907 [1708], 300). While the sensationalistic nature of the story is immediately apparent, there are two significant facets of this anecdote for those interested in studying women's historical hajj: first, that women's hajj journeys were obviously the subject of some interest and speculation for European writers of multiple time periods, and second, the suggestion of a system in place in Mecca during the time period for women who arrived without *mahram*.¹² The latter circumstances must have been commonplace if many women were going on hajj during the time period; even if the *mahram* requirement were well-known throughout Asia, many *mahram* may have died during the arduous journey to Mecca.

The material and conceptual means of production of historical narratives overlap at times, as forms of the voices that 'matter' translate into stories that 'catch'. For example, while Gulbadan Begum's elite status provided the material means of production that would favour dissemination of the details of her hajj experience, public interest in elite Mughal women and the spaces associated with them—particularly the harem (women's domestic spaces in Muslim Mughal households) as a focal point of countless Orientalist studies—may confer conceptual advantages as well. This advantage may, in turn, give rise to valuable new understandings; Ruby Lal points out that Gulbadan Begum's writings about the hierarchical and complex social structures of the Mughal harem demonstrate a rarely shown view of harem life, which was most often written about by European authors of the time period as an exotic and sexualized setting (Lal 2004, 592–593). Gulbadan Begum's perspective on the harem therefore helps us to reconsider how women's agency is discussed in other texts of the time period.

The preferential selection of particular types of narratives in history, by both readers and scholars, has therefore contributed to further imbalances that may lead to silences in historical records. Recognizing that narrative forms are specific to particular time periods helps us to understand selective contemporary public and scholarly discourses about Indian Ocean hajj mobility. As demonstrated in the anecdote of Khadija Sultana's entrance to Mecca, these stories that catch readers' attention have the potential to replicate misinformation and further obscure comprehension of women's actual hajj experiences. However, this is not simply a line of inquiry for deconstruction; understanding the role of historically contextualized discourses

and narrative advantages in constructing women's histories of hajj in the Indian Ocean arena can prompt a new examination of the contexts surrounding the narratives that yields other types of insights on women's Indian Ocean hajj mobilities.

Expanding the boundaries of hajj narratives

An expansive conceptualization of pilgrimage can also help us to discern an additional feature of history contributing to the silences associated with these historical narratives. As Trouillot stated earlier, there is 'no perfect closure' to a historical event (Trouillot 1995, 49); hajj narrative accounts are by nature incomplete as they do not encapsulate the pilgrimage experience as the beginning and end of the journey, and a traveller's perspectives are not bookends for a hajj experience. Understanding hajj experiences as not just a particular type of journey but as a part of Indian Ocean mobility that as a whole can allow us to see how other forms of mobility—including trade, the movement of refugees, and adventure—in the region contribute to understanding women's hajj experiences as well.

Just as Annelies Moors has called into question Orientalist assumptions that Islamic law was 'monolithic, static, and rigidly patriarchal' through consideration of more varied documents—fatwas, court records, and property receipts—than classic law texts (1998, 26), so too can we expand our understandings of women's hajj mobilities in the Indian Ocean through an examination of a broader variety of documents. Personal accounts, ships' lists, public health records, village ledgers, contemporary sites linked to the past, and other sources all continue to stand testament to a range of women's historical hajj experiences and shape Muslim practice today. These sources offer insights into the hajj journeys of non-elite women in the Indian Ocean; for example, a plethora of late 19th-century European colonial administrative documents clearly demonstrate that Nawab Sikander Begum and her women were decidedly not the only women travelling for pilgrimage in the Indian Ocean during this time, evincing the regional movement of women from all socio-economic and ethnic backgrounds.

This is apparent in official records of late 19th-century complaints about the conditions and management of hajj landing and quarantine stations off the coast of Yemen in the southern end of the Red Sea—filed by pilgrims with the British consulate in Jidda in 1882 and mentioned in government conferences again in 1894—that refer to patterns of mistreatment of women among the pilgrims from India, demonstrating that ordinary women from India were going on hajj in significant numbers during this time period (Low 2007, 62 and 107). Supporting these are public health guidelines published by the British colonial administration in Singapore, which outlined how medical inspections for women should be carried out on pilgrimage ships and stipulated that only female health officers could carry out such inspections (Tagliacozzo 2013, 144 and 154).

Accounts of the well-known case of the abandonment of the SS *Jeddah*, a ship that had come from Singapore carrying pilgrims from Southeast Asia in 1880 that was the basis for the fictional narrative in *Lord Jim*, indicate that it involved 992 pilgrim passengers, with 778 men, 147 women, and 67 children (Gilsenan 2006, 3). In the aftermath of the SS *Jeddah* case there was a flurry of news in European newspapers about Indian Ocean pilgrimage ships, providing further documentation of a varied classes of women on these ships, such as a letter to the editor about a hajj-bound ship in 1880, in which the writer mentions that a baby was born on board a pilgrimage ship and ‘the mother was a deck passenger’ (Tagliacozzo 2013, 120). Shipping companies noted the names of many female passengers, demonstrating that late 19th-century hajj ships such as those operated by the British Thomas Cook company accommodated ‘respectable’ women *Hajjas* in private rooms, although they were accused of overbooking these non-elite but more wealthy female passengers (Low 2017, 67). Dutch colonial records documented both sides of the journey, making individuals’ mobility more easily apparent. We can see from the Dutch consulate’s entry records in Jeddah that in 1898 there were 753 female pilgrims that arrived from the Dutch East Indies (Ramadhini 2016, 4); at the same time colonial village administrators in Indonesia were recording the names of *Hajjis* (men who have completed the hajj) and *Hajjas* (women who have completed the hajj) who had successfully returned from their pilgrimages (Tagliacozzo 2013, 181–182).

A focus on mobility within the Indian Ocean helps us to understand women’s hajj journeys as part of broader histories of movement within the region, for, as a number of scholars have pointed out, commerce and piety were historically not separate endeavours in this arena (see for example Tagliacozzo 2013; Pearson 1996; Subrahmanyam 1988). While non-elite women are rarely mentioned in early hajj histories, studies of trade and commerce in the region suggest women were frequent travellers in pre-20th-century Indian Ocean accounts.

According to Michael Pearson, a majority of early modern period European ships travelling in the Indian Ocean did not carry women on board, with only a few notable exceptions (Pearson 2009, 695). Yet Asian ships—both Mughal and Chinese, both usually staffed with Muslim crews—frequently did carry women. Women travelled on these ships as individual passengers who paid for their own passage, as the wives of elite passengers, as servants, slaves, or as family members of the crew, whose households were on board (Pearson 2009, 696–697). Asian Muslim ships sailing in the Indian Ocean from the 16th century to the beginning of the 19th century were reportedly more stable social units than European ships of a similar size, fostering a generally egalitarian community where it was safer for women to be actively involved in ship life, unlike in European ships where rigid class hierarchies were used to both restrain and reproduce violence among crew members (Pearson 2009). It was on such ships that Muslim

women from both Arabia and Asia may have travelled through the Indian Ocean for trade, family reasons, and as pilgrims whose movements were tied to religious geographies.

Tolmacheva suggests that many of Pearson's points hold true for earlier histories, noting that a 10th-century sailor's accounts mention the presence of women passengers—some slaves and free women of status—and sailors' wives on Indian Ocean ships (Tolmacheva 2013, para. 15). Tolmacheva writes that in Muslim travel networks, including the Indian Ocean routes:

[women] were always a minority among the travellers, and not all travel was voluntary. Nevertheless, women's presence in caravans, hotels or on shipboard was not infrequent, and treated by others as unexceptional. This attitude is implicit in the narratives of medieval and early modern observers, including legal authorities on social norm.

(Tolmacheva 2013, para. 5)

As demonstrated earlier, Battuta's travel accounts do not address women's hajj mobility directly, but do contribute to this notion that women were regular participants in Indian Ocean trade and travel during the 14th century too. In a description of a Chinese ship, Battuta wrote:

Four decks are constructed on the ship which contains apartments, cabins and rooms for the use of the merchants; and a cabin in the ship contains apartments and lavatories and has a door which can be bolted by the occupant who may take with him his female slaves and women.¹³ Sometimes it so happens that a passenger is in the aforesaid residential quarters and nobody on board knows of him until he is met on arriving at a town. The sailors let their children live in these quarters and they sow greenery, vegetables and ginger in wooden tubs.

(Battuta 1976 [1355], 189)

Battuta's observations here—including noting the size of ships, the presence of women among paying customers, the availability of private quarters for women on board, and the family life of sailors aboard these ships—suggests that many of Pearson's points about the pervasive presence of women on ships in the Indian Ocean has a history that extends past the early modern period. Attention to the varied forms of recording female mobility in the Indian Ocean can also contribute to studies of late 18th and early 19th centuries through studies as different as those of refugee movements (Bradley 2014) and the religious architectural sites that commemorate Southeast Asian women who completed hajj (Skinner 1972, 51).

Our recognition of the incomplete nature of historical narratives and how hajj histories extend beyond the boundaries of written accounts necessitates an awareness of alternative sources on other forms of women's mobility, particularly through trade, in the region. The inclusion of diverse forms of

information challenges limited notions of women's historical journeys, as the expansion of hajj studies beyond the boundaries of the hajj narratives themselves allows for insight into a more varied—in terms of class and gender—environments of movement.

In conclusion: entanglement of historical mobilities and contemporary Indian Ocean spaces

As we have seen, well-known written accounts of hajj in the Indian Ocean are incomplete, sometimes omitting women altogether, while other times only focusing on the specific experiences of a few elite women and/or stories that are considered oddities or extraordinary. Individually these accounts do little to normalize the notion of historical women's mobility in the region, and expand understandings of the relationship between mobility, religion, and gender in the pre-20th-century Indian Ocean. Sources that provide additional details about women's hajj journeys in the region—ships' designs, illustrations/photographs from Mecca, broader regional histories, architecture, and colonial records—suggest that women were far more commonplace participants in Indian Ocean pilgrimage networks than previously understood. Through critical analysis of these historical accounts, with attention to silences in the narratives and inclusion of evidence from the other sources, I hope to demonstrate the potential for a more holistic and inclusive history of Indian Ocean mobility, allowing us to understand that many Muslim women from diverse cultural and socio-economic backgrounds engaged in religious pilgrimage in the Indian Ocean between the 14th and 19th centuries. Making the arduous journey aboard vessels from throughout Asia these women, like their male counterparts, faced a variety of challenges specific to the time periods, only some of which were linked to their gender identities; class, colonial power structures, and the material constraints of ocean voyages shaped the travel experiences of both women and men in this system.

The gaps between women's actual pilgrimage experiences in the past and limited historical facts about these practices not only impact our theories of the past, but influence interpretations of the present as well. To return to my initial interest in the subject (the relationship between historical women's mobilities and contemporary religious sites in the Indian Ocean), the long history of Muslim women's mobility in the Indian Ocean draws into question androcentric models of the movement of Muslims, and hence Islam, in the region. Although contemporary women's mosques and related prayer spaces are found in many areas historically linked by Indian Ocean trade—including China, India, Indonesia, the Maldives, the Lakshadweep Islands, the Kenyan coast, Yemen, and other areas—most scholars have assumed that histories of male travel in the region mean that women's spaces in each of these places are unique, culturally specific, and/or modern phenomenon that are peripheral to the history of the 'Muslim world' (Fewkes 2019, 180–183). This critical review of histories of women's mobility in the

region suggests potential new ways of considering women's mosques spaces in relation to the historical Indian Ocean; when the locations of contemporary women's prayer mirror the sites associated with the historical religious movement of Muslim women, we should ask how women's mosques might be examined as Islamic sites potentially linked to trans-regional religious mobility rather than marginalized as locally oriented places. Exploring the sources of silences associated with women's hajj journeys and types of narratives that have shaped women's representation in these historical discussions thus renders thinkable a reinterpretation of contemporary religious sites in the historical Indian Ocean that suggests how dominant narrative voices about religious practices may continue to shape notions of contemporary local communities.

Notes

- 1 Emperor Akbar, a Mughal ruler (1556 to 1605 CE), was discouraged by his advisors from making the dangerous voyage and never went on hajj (see Lambert-Hurley 2006). He instead sent his aunt Gulbadan Begum, as discussed later in this chapter.
- 2 For examples see Behrens-Abouseif 1997; Brack 2011; Johnson 2000; Lewis 2004; Tolmacheva 1998.
- 3 Mosques in the Maldives that were, until recently, separate buildings run by women as sites for women's Islamic worship and study.
- 4 For further examples see Beverly Mack's work that critiques how West African women are represented as being 'on the periphery of the periphery of the Muslim world' (Mack 2000, 91).
- 5 See Dunn (2004) for more biographical details about Ibn Battuta's life.
- 6 While the public/private dichotomy is commonly thought of as a spatial division, Battuta's works demonstrate the social dimensions of the public/private, through which some women were not considered a part of the private sphere, including slave women on one end of gendered social hierarchies and queens on the other.
- 7 This is discussed in more detail in Tolmacheva (2013).
- 8 Some historians date Gulbadan Begum's hajj as early as 1574, while others as late as 1578.
- 9 Pearson has suggested the Portuguese had secular—political and economic—reasons for their hostilities against hajj ships (1994); however Kooria argues that Portuguese aggression was to at least some extent religiously motivated (2017).
- 10 This is not an argument for limiting our understanding of hajj to physical travel; this 'journey of the mind' is an inclusive conceptualization that embraces and celebrates meaningful aspects of Muslim pilgrimage. This is simply a descriptive deconstruction, prescriptive at the most only as a reminder to also consider historical accounts with more literal readings of hajj.
- 11 Irving also notes that he confirmed this point with the British consul stationed at Jeddah (Manucci 1907, 300).
- 12 Tolmacheva has noted an Ottoman era custom in which women who traveled on hajj alone might marry a guide in Mecca temporarily to receive guidance during religious observances; the marriages were symbolic only and, like all activity while on hajj, excluded sexual relations (Tolmacheva 1998, 173). Such a custom might also have formed the misconceptions expressed in this anecdote about Khadija Sultana.

- 13 While in this translation Husain translated the term as ‘women’, Gibb translated this word as ‘wives’ (Gibb 1929, 235); the contrast highlights the role of class in shaping narrations of women’s mobility.

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8 Bosnian women on hajj

Dženita Karić

The hajj features annually on Bosnian TV and is a frequent topic of religious radio-shows. Despite devastating war and post-war economic precarity, the number of *Hajjis* is increasing. The increased visibility of the hajj and *Hajjis* might seem to be a recent phenomenon and could be taken to demonstrate how Bosnian Muslims have ‘rediscovered’ their religion in the post-war period. However, I would argue that the big interest in the pilgrimage actually indicates continuity and persistence of religiosity that was perhaps less visible, but still alive among Bosnian Muslims throughout the 20th and 21st centuries. Hajj – a practice that was less available to majority of Muslims, and especially female believers in earlier times – was often described or discussed in various textual sources, which can tell us more about the complex relations between religion, visibility, and writing in socialist Bosnia in the second half of the 20th century.

In relation to this, the social value of the honorific title *Hajji* is as great as ever. Significantly, the local female variant of the title *hadžinica* now refers more to a female person who has performed her pilgrimage than just a marital status of being a wife to a *Hajji* as it was used in the past.¹ Women’s hajj travelogues are available online on different social media, including blogs. The visibility of younger and older female pilgrims and representations of their pilgrimage experiences are strongly present in printed media and online. As with any historical phenomenon of greater social relevance, it is tempting to assume that this kind of visibility existed throughout the 20th century as well.

This paper will deal with ‘layered visibility’ of female pilgrimage in the socialist context of Bosnia and Herzegovina. It will show how women’s performance of pilgrimage is related to their bodily, discursive, narrative, and political visibility, and provoked reactions from different levels of authority: male and scholarly, societal and state-based. On the basis of close reading of several texts published between the 1960s and 1980s in several national Muslim journals such as *Glasnik* and *Preporod*, I want to point to ways in which the pilgrimage of women – whether as an object of theoretical debate or as a lived practice – reflected widespread social anxieties as well as individual believers’ motivations. In particular, I will pay attention

to the slowly increasing female perspectives on the hajj in textual sources, while having in mind that invisibility of female written traces does not equal women's absence from pilgrimage practice. On the contrary, while the visibility of female participation in pilgrimage can be retrieved from earlier available sources, the unmediated presence of women's perspectives on pilgrimage offers a more direct insight into how women experienced hajj in this particular period.

Theoretical framework

The last several decades have offered vibrant discussions – especially in the field of Islamic feminism – regarding the visibility of women in Islamic sources and the ways in which power and authority erase, stifle, or misinterpret female voices and agency. Recently, the focus of Islamic feminist works turned to explorations of the various ways that ethics in classical Islamic thought are gendered, and thus shaped by a hierarchical genealogy that did not favour women (Ayubi 2019). At the same time, numerous Muslim feminists have aimed to 'exhume a more woman-friendly version of history' (Afsaruddin 2010, 112), shifting the focus to possibilities of hermeneutics, especially in relation to foundational and early modern Islamic texts. As I aim to demonstrate here and as comes to the fore in the contribution to this volume by Jacqueline Fewkes, as a result of extensive anthropological and historical research on erasure and on the agency and voices of Muslim women, it transpires that visibility of women is almost a surpassed notion, especially when made a token and a tool of different ideological causes.

However, visibility itself is not a straightforward concept; it can contain multiple layers.² Contemporary discussions on the topic of women in historical sources admit the difficulties, if not impossibility, of extracting female voices to produce more adequate insights into how women truly went through different life experiences. Apart from the fact that gaining a 'true insight' into the female experience of pilgrimage in the first-person narratives, for instance, might prove to be problematic because of genre constraints and narrative limitations, we are also faced with the near lack of such sources in the pre-modern period. A significant increase in first-person narratives, usually in the shape of travelogues or diaries, is inevitably connected to the modern era (roughly defined as mid-19th century onwards) as one of the results of simultaneous developments in technology and literacy. However, such a progressivist historical narrative does not account for local variations. In the case of Bosnian female hajj writing, the starting date is more than a century later. If the key element of the concept of visibility in sources is the appearance of women's own voices, then resistances to it as well as conditions that led to its emergence are left out. In contrast to this, our definition of visibility has to include instances of the presence of female pilgrimage in various sources, even in the case when these sources offer only pure theoretical speculations aimed at a male readership. The visibility

of female pilgrims, in other words, has to be understood also as the discursive presence of female pilgrimage even when the narrative framework in which it appears is set up by male authors.

The visibility of female pilgrims has other connotations besides the discursive and textual. Women's bodily presence and various ways of their being bodily present in the texts range from abstract/ideal female performance of the hajj to their problematic bodily presence and women's own portrayals of the body-in-pilgrimage. As such, as I will demonstrate for Bosnian female pilgrims, their bodily visibility provoked responses from different levels of male authority. Observed in the particular context of socialist Yugoslav discouragement of religious practices, one might say that female pilgrimage assumed political visibility and thus functioned as a potential form of resistance to perceived oppression from the authorities.³

Similar to the regulation of visibility of female pilgrimage, discussions about the mobility of women in itself refers to more than the 'freedom' to move, and is 'mediated by the relation between the individual and the collective dimension' (Bougleux 2016, 13). More than other religious duties in Islam, such as prayer or almsgiving, the hajj bring the female body into the public sphere. Especially in the modern period starting from the mid-19th century, female (and male) movement became entangled in a wider set of relations that included new realities of borders, empires, and nation-states. Mobilities of bodies, similar to their visibility, are therefore not dependent exclusively on agency and freedom. However, as we will see later, both mobility and visibility can be used by women in unexpected ways.

Studying mobility and visibility we must reflect on a theoretical and analytical problem. The first one is primarily related to a discourse which assumes that visibility is by its nature a positive development: the idea that objects move from a position of being unknown to come into 'light' and gain recognition as subjects with implied agency.⁴ More problematic, however, is the question of mediation: who gets to present visibility, in this case of women, and who gets to interpret it?

These questions become more pertinent if we consider the previously mentioned lack of sources related to the mobility of women in the framework of authoritative Islamic texts. Since the first records of visibility of women on pilgrimage can be traced to sources written by male authors, one might be tempted to think that visibility of women was not regulated or controlled by women themselves, but that they simply 'emerge' into the history of pilgrimage at a certain point as male authors decided to insert them. I will demonstrate that, on the contrary, the visibility of female pilgrimage was not simply regulated by male authors or used to express societal anxieties but could also be claimed and disclaimed by women themselves. Invisibility, in other words, had a potential to subvert the existing relations of power and, through tactics of hiding or un-telling, gain more desired mobility.⁵

My account of hajj practices of Bosnian women in the socialist period will show the historical line of writing on pilgrimage of and by women: the ways and media in which women's pilgrimage was present and shifts that can be noted throughout the latter decades of the 20th century. Analytically, it points to pilgrimage as the ultimate type of mobility that provokes the ways we see invisibility of women in textual sources, public domain and private devotion.

Female pilgrims and blind spots of historiography

The history of female religiosity in the Yugoslav region and post-Second World War period remains largely understudied, representing a more general neglect of religiosity of non-elite members of Bosnian society. It is possible to argue that in terms of area studies, this neglect echoes a broader ignorance of pilgrimage of Muslim women in wider scholarship. To take only one example: the edited volume on pilgrimage of women in European context that came out in 2012 does not take into account Muslim pilgrimage at all, despite a huge interest in both the local *ziyāra* and hajj amongst indigenous Muslim populations in South-Eastern Europe and immigrant communities across Western Europe (cf. Jansen and Notermans 2012). However, recent initiatives dedicated to the exclusive research of hajj show a positive change in this regard, allocating place for the study of Muslim women in different contexts (cf. Mols and Buitelaar 2015).

The academic neglect of female religiosity in the Bosnian context may well be a direct result of the strong focus on state regulations of religiosity in the 20th century and reactions of the major Islamic institutions in the region, with little attention being paid to how people on the ground actually lived through these changes. The focus of local historiography has by and large been on the issue of female dress, especially how the socialist authorities banned the veil. This focus on the veil reflects a larger trend of scholarly neglect of other facets of female religiosity.⁶ Only recently has the focus shifted to the intricate connection between the religious life of Bosnian women, their commitment to Yugoslav patriotism, and their dedication to the idea of the umma (Rexhepi 2017). This shift in focus reflects a larger trend which aims to show how the Bosnian region remained closely connected to the rest of the Muslim world, even in the aftermath of the Second World War (Fichter 2017; Henig 2016; Miller 2016) and the end of the overt pan-Islamist aspirations and motivations (Aydin 2017). These new trends point to the necessity of overcoming the narrow focus on nation-state frameworks to study how transnational flows affected lives of common people. Moreover, recent scholarship has taken an interest in socialist ways of organizing women in the post-Second World War period, with all its complex relations to feminism and state power (Hadžiristić 2017; Funk 2014).

As for hajj studies over the last few decades, it is possible to notice that the overwhelming focus is on male actors who contributed to the political and intellectual visibility of Muslims in Europe or other strategically important geographical nodes, and whose pilgrimages clearly illustrated the 'dialectical relationship between religious practice and Muslim nationalism, and between global and local Islamic politics' (Tsai 2017, 193). While not neglecting the importance of local-global dynamics and its effects in the 20th century, the pertinent questions arise: What happened to the mobilities of those who are less present in textual sources? What about their international connections and, more importantly, their shared sensibilities with other Muslims?

In this regard, the importance of studying Bosnian Muslim connections with the wider Muslim World after the demise of the Ottoman Empire is important for multiple reasons. On the most basic level, it shows how Bosnian Muslims retained their spiritual, educational or family links with coreligionists in Turkey and the Middle East. Despite state pressure on severing these links which affected the way Islam in which the region was stereotypically portrayed,⁷ even a cursory glance at the highly censored print of the post-Second World War period shows an ongoing interest in affairs and state of Muslims in other parts of the world. Connectivity persisted beyond the public sphere throughout the 20th century: for example through family links of *muhājir*⁸ communities with their country of descent. More visibly, the links with other parts of the Muslim world not only persisted but also developed in new directions with an increase in the number of Bosnian students in Cairo, Baghdad, Kuwait, and other cities as at least partly a result of the non-aligned movement.⁹

Researching Muslim connections can help in understanding how religious sentiments persisted among a great number of Bosnian Muslims throughout the second half of the 20th century. Their communication, correspondence, and interaction with other Muslims across the world, using shared religious discourses and reflecting on common feelings of perceived unity, bore a direct relation to their religious practices. Furthermore, while educational links of Bosnian Muslims with other parts of the Muslim world are also related to the privilege and prominence of certain actors and sections in society such as the *ulama*, the hajj offered an opportunity for larger numbers of other social groups to attain various forms of visibility during the performance of a religious ritual. The process, however, was not straightforward. State regulation of the hajj varied throughout the socialist period which lasted more than four decades. The politicization of hajj and its utilization for Yugoslav foreign policy fluctuated (Bećirović 2012, 406–410). The immediate post-Second World War period, for example, is characterized by a low number of *Hajjis*.¹⁰ The scant information available from the records shows that several women participated in the hajj between 1945 and 1950, with a slight rise in the years to come (Bećirović 2012, 410).

Thus, although the state controlled hajj performance, as a result of which the number of pilgrims was significantly reduced, it did not completely cease in the first decades of the socialist rule. Since going on hajj in the second half of the 20th century depended on different factors that regulated who could travel and under what conditions, the visibility of women also varied. Still, as I will demonstrate below, more than other types of mobilities, the hajj had the potential to bring out an array of different concerns of and about women from the second half of the 20th century.

Opposition to female mobility

Historiographies of the post-Second World War period in Yugoslavia have mostly focused on top-down changes as a direct result of suppression of religious organizing and activities. In 1946, sharia courts were abolished, religious education was gradually suppressed until it was completely banned in 1952, and a ban on the full-face veil was enacted in 1950¹¹ and on the Sufi orders in 1952.¹² All these bans led to decreased visibility of Muslims, or at least of Islamic practices, in the public sphere.

However, while the visibility of Muslims was being suppressed by the state, another type of invisibilization was taking place in a different context a mere decade after the bans were enforced. While the public sphere was narrowing options for Muslim scholars and educators, some of the ulama were still active in the educational field. They shared their work in private correspondences, although in special cases – such as disagreements or debates – some of it reached the *Glasnik (Herald)*, the official journal of the Supreme Islamic Authority in Yugoslavia.¹³ One of the issues that provoked a debate in the early 1960s was the question of women's hajj performance. The debate was between two Islam scholars who presented two polarizing attitudes concerning the issue of female mobility. Derviš efendija Spahić (1893–1978) was one of them. Being traditionally educated through the Islamic school or madrasa system in Bosnia, in 1934 he established a school himself and was acting as its sole teacher (Mekić 2017, 150). Having returned from his pilgrimage in 1962, he wrote a treatise about women and their participation in hajj. He concluded the following:

During my hajj journey, I noticed that the presence of women in the Holy places and their hajj practice contradict Islamic prescriptions. After returning from hajj I took an interest and wanted to know which conditions have to be fulfilled so that women can go on hajj (and fulfil the duty) themselves.

(Šošić 2015, 221) [my translation, DK]¹⁴

The major point of contestation of the author regarding the performance of female pilgrimage was the issue of clothing and seclusion. Spahić tried to prove his point with a discussion of sources. His main arguments were

derived from a specific reading of a hadith taken from the al-Bukhari collection which emphasized that women should perform pilgrimage rites at night, when they could not be seen by men or interact with them. While explaining the context of the prophetic injunctions, Spahić contrasted them to modern times where, according to him, certain conditions were not met. He specifically listed four situations in which women's hajj performance produces more damage than good: they cannot be covered decently there, which is why they should avoid such situations; they cannot guard their eyes during travel, and guardianship of the gaze is a duty for both men and women; they must not come in contact with men, which is unavoidable during such a journey; and they corrupt the prayer for men if they mix with them during the ritual. He concluded by saying that one woman can corrupt a prayer for three men (Šošić 2015, 224–225).

Spahić's strong reaction to female mobility and the increased visibility of women, particularly their exposure to the male gaze, is surprising if we take into account that the number of women who went on hajj was small anyway. So what could trigger his response in such a way to express general intense dissatisfaction with the idea of women going on hajj? I surmise that the answer lies in Spahić's preoccupation with clothing and visibility during the hajj, emphasizing that he did not consider modern conditions of travel suitable enough for the desired invisibility of women during pilgrimage. The imperative of invisibility, thus, overtakes the necessity of religious duty in his view. I would argue that Spahić's focus on the corrupting visibility of women may well reflect insecurities produced by sharp transformations in socialist Yugoslavia. The specific period in which Spahić wrote his critique of female mobility did not offer much to men of religion in terms of power and authority in the public sphere. His extraordinary criticism of female religious mobility can therefore be interpreted as a symptom of diminished male dominance, affecting, in turn, conceptions of masculinity in socialist realities.¹⁵

The treatise produced a sharp rejoinder by another Muslim scholar, Hasan Ljevaković (1913–1986), whose response was published in the same journal, together with Derviš Spahić's protest. While trying to refute Spahić's claims, Ljevaković used an array of Islamic sources such as the Qur'an, hadiths and opinions of classical fiqh scholars. The same sources were used by Spahić, but the two authors interpreted them differently: Spahić found arguments in them to limit the mobility of women, while Ljevaković complied with the majority opinion in favour of women going on hajj (Ljevaković 1969, 454). In his answer, however, Ljevaković's also referred to local religious authorities by saying that 'none of the ulama in Yugoslavia (...) tried to prevent Muslim women from going on a hajj' (Ljevaković 1969, 454). Female mobility as such is the focus of his response, and going on hajj is subsumed under the general rubric of travel. Ljevaković continues by differentiating between different types of female mobility in the modern world. According to him, the hajj is a strict religious obligation and women

should not be prevented from performing it. However, he emphasizes unspecified other travels that Muslim women engage in, pointing out how they behave ‘unislamically’ by going where they should not be going, using various ways of transportation and mixing with men. Ljevaković adds that neither he nor Spahić had ever publicly criticized that type of travel (Ljevaković 1969, 454).

What appears to be underlying the issue of female pilgrimage journey here is the question of authority: Who can speak for Muslim women and who can authorize their mobility? In the course of their debate, both Spahić and Ljevaković tried to define authority and find a textual precedent for their own respective opinions. At the same time, they felt the anxieties of the age: Spahić because his vision of Islamic social ethics was endangered by socialist and secular modernity. For him, the mobility of women was directly related to their unlawful visibility, which in his view affects men in two ways: it is sexually disruptive and it challenges their masculine status in the public sphere. Ljevaković, however, stressed the need to differentiate between different types of female mobility, of which some, like hajj, are religious obligations and women’s religious right, whereas others are opening ways to unlawful behaviour and mixing with men. What Ljevaković stressed, however, is the general silence of Muslim ulama regarding the latter, which might be connected to the loss of their authority in the public sphere.

Regardless of the outcome of this debate, women were going on hajj in increasing numbers, evidenced through the annual *Hajji* lists in *Glasnik* and as a result of changes in transport and general loosening of the state grip on the regulation of religious practices. Articles published in *Glasnik* also urge potential pilgrims – men and women alike – to go on hajj if they fulfil the necessary requirements instead of sending a replacement (*bedel*).¹⁶ While debates such as the one between Spahić and Ljevaković no longer appeared, hajj pilgrimage in general and female pilgrimage specifically came under scrutiny for potential accompanying dangers it might entail. The fact that women were moving was not disturbing in itself; it was their increased visibility and new ways of socializing during the travel (mixing with men on new means of transportation) that particularly frightened the ulama. If the two perspectives given by Spahić and Ljevaković are observed in parallel, we can see that the religious urgency of the hajj obligation is valued differently. However, what both authors have in common is the underlying juxtaposition of mobility and visibility, on the one hand, and the connection of hajj with other types of travel, most notably travel for leisure, on the other hand. The next section will deal with negative assumptions of Muslim journalists and readership towards variants of female hajj performance which was perceived as coming dangerously close to tourism. As in this section, the problematic juxtaposition is directly related to undesired forms of female visibility.

Pilgrimage, tourism, or something else

In 1972, some readers of the newly established biweekly journal *Preporod (Revival)*¹⁷ were embroiled in a heated discussion about an article that had recently appeared in a Belgrade journal. The journal had published an interview with Vahida, a young Bosnian Muslim woman, who owned a discotheque and was married to an Orthodox Christian. Those two things were already controversial for a Bosnian audience, but specifically the fact that the interview revolved around the recent hajj experience of Vahida stirred strong emotions. According to the rendering of the interview, she claimed to have gone on hajj for touristic reasons, on a road trip to see the countries of cultural significance to the Muslim tradition. During the hajj performance, she was allegedly attacked for being white and different from other pilgrims. The photograph that was taken to accompany the interview showed her in a miniskirt.

The reactions to the interview came from several readers of *Preporod*, including a letter from Vahida's father, who was an imam (other letters alluded to her connection to the imam as well). While other letters questioned her motivations for performing the pilgrimage (Kadić 1972, 6), her father tried to elicit her response to the attacks. He claimed that her behaviour, as he had heard, was in line with what is expected of a pilgrim; she had helped other pilgrims and had performed the rites as stipulated. What the strong reaction of readership to Vahida's hajj experience showed is how she did not fit the standard image of a *Hajja* because of her clothes and behaviour as well as her exposure in the Serbian media (the newspapers did claim that Vahida does not bother about 'religious customs'). This also implied strong suspicion as to her travelling motive: if it was tourism, then it brought her hajj performance into question. Her behaviour as a tourist, in other words, would imply that she was an ignorant pilgrim at best, and a traveller who looks for sensation at worst.

Vahida's perceived touristic behaviour was deemed even worse by the *Preporod* readership because her experiences were published in a sensationalist journal, thus not only demeaning the hajj, but also exposing her to unregulated gaze of unknown and hostile readership. As for her Belgrade readership, her own specific personal history of being both an insider to the Muslim community in terms of her origin and upbringing and outsider to it by her marriage and lifestyle placed her in a position to be exposed to the outsiders. This sensationalism ascribed to hajj has deeper connections with an Orientalist view of the female body as an object that is simultaneously hidden from the view, but with the ability to entice foreign male gaze. In this context, the response of the *Preporod* readership can be interpreted as a reaction to the intruding gaze and a desire to limit the unwanted visibility,¹⁸ as well as the implication that such provocations harm the religious freedom of Muslims in socialist Yugoslavia (Tokmaković 1972, 6).

This is why the polemics about Vahida's pilgrimage is doubly important: it reveals conflicting discourses inscribed on the visible female body, and it also points to the perceived limits of her religious mobility. In contrast to Spahić-Ljevaković debate, which revolved around the issue of absolute visibility of women during hajj, debates in the journal from the 1970s onwards do not question the visibility of women during hajj in itself, but the manner and representation of that mobility. However, similar to the earlier debate, female mobility and consequently women's visibility exacerbated already existing societal anxieties. Controversies surrounding atypical female mobilities as well as Orientalizing discourses that reduced female religiosity to a set of exoticized stereotype still did not stifle the expression of hajj experience by women themselves. The following section will present what women themselves wrote about hajj and how they negotiated visibility on their own terms.

Kaleidoscopes of female piety

While the second half of the 20th century witnessed a huge increase in the number of female pilgrims across the world, including in socialist Bosnia, the sources for investigating women's personal impressions remain limited to a few occasional travelogues and memoirs, thus constraining the scope and depth of the research that can be undertaken regarding female experiences of pilgrimage. Moreover, the existing research that deals with female hajj travelogues often stops with those that depict pilgrimage of prominent, elite women or European converts (Sayeed 2016; Mahallati 2011). A focus on oral accounts on hajj is another extreme (Cooper 1999). What we need, in addition to the existing research, is to focus on the textual production of non-elite women. For Bosnian female pilgrims, new developments in the printing enterprise offered new possibilities to publish their stories, enhancing their visibility as female pilgrims as well as giving them the opportunity to control their personal pilgrimage narrative. On a wider scale, the study of self-narratives or ego-documents of 'ordinary' people provides space for researchers to gain insight into how non-privileged and socially less prominent pilgrims experienced the ritual and the journey, thus heeding Abdellah Hammoudi's call for the research of hajj of 'men and women actually undertaking pilgrimage' and not just of writings by Muslim elites (Hammoudi 2009, 51).

Despite an overwhelming emphasis on male hajj pilgrimage, in the course of 1970s and 1980s Bosnian women who went on hajj or used the motive of the pilgrimage in devotional expressions were visible on the pages of the previously mentioned journals *Glasnik* and *Preporod*. This visibility increased as transport and liberalization of travel policy in Yugoslavia improved, enabling women to express their relationship to the hajj, Mecca, and Medina in a variety of original ways.

In this sense, print in the several decades of socialist rule enhanced not only the stereotypes about Muslim women, but also gave women the opportunity to describe their own experiences and share them with a wider audience. While print opened new gateways for depictions of hajj, it also provided a wider framework for the discussion of various issues related to Muslim women. In the case of *Preporod*, a rather straightforward approach allowed readers and authors to discuss issues such as women's lack of access to mosques (*Preporod* 1 May 1972), the necessity of female emancipation through education (*Preporod* 15 October 1974), historical perspectives on female participation in public life (*Preporod* 1 April 1974), Islam and female education (*Preporod* 15 December 1972), and the need for the print media to speak directly to women who are a significant part of the readership (*Preporod* 1 November 1974).

While it is difficult to ascertain the full scope of female religious writing, it is evident that some of it was reserved for close family circles, and that hajj travel accounts reached wider audiences only rarely.¹⁹ However, expressing religious experience was not limited to travelogues and travel literature in general. What follows next are examples of several modes of expression of devotion to the pilgrimage and hajj related practices among Bosnian women.

Female presence in dominantly male journalistic spaces was marked in a range of ways. In its early period the biweekly newspaper *Preporod* contained a section devoted to questions related to women and family. The section was devoted to didactic essays regarding sexual ethics, but also to questions related to domesticity, such as food and fashion. However, the section disappeared after the first several issues, to the dismay of some of its readers. There is a steady presence of women in hajj travelogues written by men, which were published in newspapers and journals in a serialized form and sometimes reprinted as books (Ljubunčić 1955; 1950). Women were listed as fellow travellers, often by name which indicated a level of familiarity. In the context of journalistic coverage of the pilgrimage, women often featured in hajj experiences of men, but not necessarily as pilgrims. In 1971, Devlethanuma Čatić sent a notice to *Preporod* in which she wished her son and his friend a happy journey (*Preporod* 1 January 1971, no 8). In another place, a 12-year-old girl, Aida Omerbegović, wrote a short impression of a farewell ceremony she attended with her grandfather, emphasizing that while she did not know much about the hajj beforehand, the ceremony itself instilled various emotions in her (*Preporod* 1 May 1972). Sometimes women did not leave any written trace of their religious experience, but their unique devotional practices were nonetheless reflected in the pages of the journal. In 1973, two older women were mentioned in relation to that year's hajj: one was mentioned as having paid the costs of the hajj journey for the other, which was applauded by *Preporod* as an act of piety which was socially beneficial (*Preporod* 15 December 1973).

Travelogue writing on the pages of *Preporod* was not reserved for hajj travels only. The newspapers offered ample space for reports about different kinds of journeys, mostly related to official visits to other Muslim communities in the Middle East and Russia. As for female travel writing, several travelogues appeared written by younger women who described their touristic visits to the Middle East and North Africa. The appearance of the first hajj travelogues in Bosnian print thus does not seem to be an aberration or an exception. The first hajj travelogue written by a woman appeared in 1970 in the official gazette *Glasnik*, and was written by Razija Hegić. The travelogue was quite short and described the hajj itinerary and Hegić's personal impressions of the ritual (Hegić 1970, 305–308). The travelogue was also edited and prefaced by the journal, with a short remark which emphasized the necessity for hajj reportages or travelogues to be original and interesting. Razija Hegić went on hajj two years prior to sending her travelogue to the journal and the editors commented heavily on the content of her travelogue. The themes that Hegić addressed in her travelogue revolved around the common topics of devotion and amazement at the diversity of Muslims encountered during the hajj.

The author herself appeared several times in the journal *Glasnik* (Mekić 2017, 145), suggesting that readers felt the need to engage with different topics related to their religiosity. In that context, Razija Hegić also appeared as one of the people sending questions to Husein Đozo (1912–1982), a prominent Bosnian *‘ālim* (Muslim scholar) from the socialist period, asking him for a fatwa. On this occasion, she sent a question about permissibility of praying with nail polish. This detail illustrates a transformation of the form and use of fatwa in the socialist Yugoslavia. By identifying themselves as fatwa seekers, women entered the public sphere to ask for interpretations of questions related to their own daily religious practices. Besides presenting themselves as seekers of religious interpretations, religiously educated women also started to offer interpretations of rules related to female performance of hajj. In 1983, Subhija Skenderović published an article on the religious rules and practices regarding hajj of women. That *Islamska misao* thought it wise to pay attention to these regulations indicates that a rising number of women went on hajj towards the end of the socialist period (Skenderović 1983, 28–30).

Still, the number of contributions by women in journals was significantly lower than that of their male coreligionists. A special issue dedicated to hajj, which was published in the journal *Islamska misao* (Islamic Thought)²⁰ in 1980, showed no contributions by female authors, although they clearly existed (Fajić 1980, 21–22). Thus, what appears from this negligence of women's writings on hajj in male-authored surveys and bibliographies is another invisibilization of female pilgrimage experience, whether as a result of ignorance or disregard for their production. However, as the next and final section of this paper will show, women had their own unique ways to negotiate visibility of their writing and, even more importantly, their hajj.

Driving all the way to Mecca

During the summer of 2014, family members of a Sarajevan housewife, the late Hidajeta Mirojević, published her hajj diary. They circulated the copies only amongst trusted members of family and friends. Although their mother and grandmother had died some time ago, they wanted to share her hajj experience and show its uniqueness to a Bosnian readership. The introduction to the travelogue was written by Hidajeta's close friend and hajj companion Safija Šiljak. The main part of the travelogue was written by Hidajeta, but her children interpolated the text with shorter and longer comments with information on various mosques or places of religious significance. These interpolations seem to permeate female hajj travelogues, revealing the perceived need for clarification. The information was taken from different webpages, including an online travelogue published earlier.²¹ Photographs of Hidajeta and Safija were also added, as were their driving licences and scans of letters sent to Hidajeta by her children. All this material can be interpreted to serve multiple purposes: while it documents Hidajeta's journey in detail and confirms her itinerary, the information is also supposed to guide future pilgrims, a common motive in hajj travelogues.

What emerges from this is a snippet of Hidajeta's life. As a young girl during the Second World War she helped Bosnian refugees who had escaped the horrors in Eastern Bosnia. After the war, she got married, became a housewife who raised her children and went on holidays to different places outside Yugoslavia with her husband. Her friend and hajj companion Safija suffered a more turbulent fate. After the Second World War, she was imprisoned for more than two years for her political activism stemming from her involvement with the Bosnian Young Muslims organization. This reformist Islamic organization that was founded in 1939 was suppressed several times throughout the 20th century. Because of Safija's membership and activism, and subsequent imprisonment by the socialist authorities, she suffered being socially ostracized for at least several years. In the early 1980s, she was working as an accountant for Energoinvest, an energy company which was at the time a symbol of socialist industrialist progress.

In 1981, Hidajeta and Safija decided to go on hajj by car, and since their husbands were unable to drive, they undertook the task themselves. For Hidajeta, travelling by car seemed cheaper, but Safija also had a more urgent reason. Because of her political past, and in order not to upset her employers, Safija preferred to plan her hajj journey outside the control of the Islamic Community of the SFRY that regulated the number of pilgrims and way of transport. The historical climate at the time was tense; socialist authorities were alert because of the potential effect of the Iranian Revolution, which eventually ended in a widely publicized trial of Bosniak intellectuals in 1983.²²

An important factor in realizing the hajj journey was the use of international driving license, especially since it allowed Hidajeta and Safija to drive through the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The travelogue shows photos of both Safija and Hidajeta's licences as well as their photo in front of the small car. From the travelogue it transpires that their driving all the way through the Hijaz could have been interpreted as curiosity at the time of their hajj journey; it certainly inspired amazement when the travelogue of the Hidajeta's appeared in 2014, when comparisons to contemporary status of women who want to drive in Saudi Arabia elicited near disbelief.

In any case, Hidajeta and Safija imagined the hajj as a wholesome project which also included seeing numerous places of Islamic culture apart from performance of the rites. Embarking on such a journey by car instead of plane or a bus offered more opportunities for combining different travellers' motives, and went against the predominant dynamics of hajj journey in the age of jet travel. Safija and Hidajeta, for instance, also visited Bosnian friends who had migrated earlier and now lived in Istanbul. Here, the importance of female friendships across borders becomes visible. The maintenance of female connections across the Middle East is part of a wider connectivity of Balkan Muslims with *muhājir* communities. In an emotional passage, Hidajeta describes Bosnian *muhājirs* she and Safija met in Bursa who wanted to talk to them as being moved to tears and treating them as their relatives. The hajj was also the opportunity for Hidajeta and her companion to meet Bosnians who live in other parts of the world, such as the USA. About the differential treatment of the American *Hajjis*, Hidajeta commented: 'They [the Saudi authorities, DK] treat them like gentlemen, because they have an American passport'.

Hidajeta stresses in her travelogue that solidarity was not reserved only for people of Bosnian or Yugoslav origin. In line with the inner dynamics of the travelogue genre, there was a visible tendency not only to *present* others, but to see how oneself is *represented*. While elsewhere the Yugoslavian identity was not particularly stressed, while meeting other Muslims Hidajeta stresses that other *Hajjis* were amazed when meeting Yugoslav fellow pilgrims.

What comes to the fore in Hidajeta's hajj travelogue is that her experience was inextricably bound to her impressions of the wider umma and its rich variety, which she was probably witnessing for the first time in her life. However, her travelogue also gives an intimate portrayal of her own emotional experience of hajj:

We slept outside, got into our sleeping bags and thus spent our first night in the desert. It is a special experience, the sky is full of stars and is close, the desert makes you think only of Allah, and I had a feeling that the whole *dunyā*²³ was left behind us, and that I am here with my life account in front of Allah. I could not sleep for a long time and that is when I realized the purpose of hajj.

(Mirojević, 39)

For Hidajeta and many of her coreligionists, the hajj had a dual purpose: unity with ‘brethren and sisters in faith’²⁴ and purification of all sins should one’s pilgrimage be complete and accepted by God. In that sense, for Hidajeta hajj performance was not just about acquiring spiritual capital, but, in adopting the words of Cooper, ‘a powerful and broadly held metaphor for both the individual spiritual quest and the collective emulation of an ideal Islamic community’ (Cooper 1999, 93).

The story of the hajj experiences of Hidajeta and Safija sheds light on what Tanja Petrović describes as ‘ordinary people’ responding to control and regulation by the socialist Yugoslav and Saudi state and how they ‘acted politically within the realm of social participation’ (Petrović 2016, 509). However, what I would like to stress here is the interplay of different invisibilities which allowed Hidajeta and Safija to undertake the journey of their lifetime. Safija knew that her visibility as a pilgrim might have unwanted consequences when it came to her work, so she readily accepted Hidajeta’s offer to use the car as a less noticeable means of transport. On the way to Mecca, however, precisely this type of travel put them into the spotlight of Saudi authorities, and they became visible in a way that presented them as an object of curiosity, but not endangering them. Finally, their authorial visibility was negotiated as well: the hajj diary was not published soon after the pilgrimage, when it might have raised the suspicion of the socialist authorities and put them in a predicament, but several decades later, under radically different historical conditions.

Conclusion

The visibility of women’s hajj performance in Bosnian media today is present and uncontroversial – at least when it comes to women whose mobility is secured by having a *mahram* or male guardian who accompanies her on the journey. The mobility of a large number of women who do not have a *mahram* is contested and a subject matter of frequent questions posed to religious authorities. Once again, the religious mobility of women is a matter of scholarly explanations and regulations.

This article dealt with visibility of pilgrimage of Bosnian Muslim women over the course of several decades of the socialist rule (1960s–1980s). As a term with a variety of meanings and applications, the visibility of Bosnian women ranged from narrative and textual and bodily to political. I have demonstrated that the visibility of women in pilgrimage progressed over time: while it was a matter of debate among scholars in 1960s, without much say from concrete female pilgrims, it transformed into a reflection of different social anxieties in the 1970s to reach women’s own expressions in the 1980s.

What the historical developments of female pilgrimage in this time period show is how visibility – and our understanding of it – depends on the availability of sources. The imperative of revealing a ‘woman-friendly version of history’ has to reckon with a lack of sources authored by women

even in the 20th century. The invisibility of women should not be interpreted as meaning that they are passive. As I have demonstrated, close reading of debates penned by men reveals an ongoing anxiety with female mobility not only in relation to hajj, but also travelling options that were not available for previous generations. The later sources show a similar agitation, but this time directed at the manner in which a female pilgrim should be visible – and how she should not be. As time progressed, the appearance of female travelogues and notices on the pilgrimage shifted and enlarged the visibility of women, while at the same time raising questions related to the nature of visibility.

It is through the examination of female writings about hajj that we can observe how both visibility and invisibility play a part in understanding women's mobility. Hidajeta and Safija's hajj narratives present to us with a telling case study of this multifaceted regulations and negotiations of invisibility to avoid state or societal pressures. These women's choice to be visible as narrators at their own time and pace also shows us how, as for most pilgrims, hajj as a spiritual journey and a religious duty is a pivotal moment in their lives as believers.

Notes

- 1 That hajj gives a certain visibility in the shape of title conferred to women by husband's status of a *Hajji* is not an exclusive Bosnian occurrence; see Cooper (1999).
- 2 The image of visibility as layered has been noted in some earlier studies on the presence of women in historical sources. For example, in her article on women's presence in clothing industry in the US in the late 19th/early 20th centuries, Margaret Walsh analyses layers of visibility of women in labour force; see Walsh 2010.
- 3 In his recent article, Piro Rexhepi points to the value of writings such as hajj travelogues in their capacity to show the transnational links of Balkan Muslims with other parts of the Muslim World as well as undermining the notion of the isolated 'Balkan Islam'.
- 4 The emancipatory and liberating aura of visibility was problematized in a short article by Ilya Parkins and Eva Karpinski; see Parkins and Karpinski (2014).
- 5 The tactics of un-telling can also be related to the oral media in which female experience of hajj was conveyed before widespread literacy and access to printed media took over.
- 6 Although much has changed since Laura Deeb's assessment of the field in 2006, the heavy focus on the issues of veil and female clothing is still predominant in research of gender and piety in Bosnia. In many ways, it seems that Tone Brinča's valuable study from 1995 still remains unsurpassed regarding the study of Bosnian women's everyday lives.
- 7 In most studies on Islam in Bosnia in the 20th century, persistent links of Bosnian Muslims with their non-Bosnian coreligionists is overlooked or underplayed.
- 8 The term *muhājir* refers to Muslim refugees and their descendants who moved from the Balkans in several waves: after the Austro-Hungarian occupation of Bosnia in 1878, Balkan wars (1912–1913) and during different social and economic crises of the 20th century. The *muhājirs* settled not only in modern-day Turkey, but also across wider Middle East and northern Africa. Their descendants can be found in Syria, Palestine, and Jordan as well as in Tunis, Algeria, and elsewhere.

- 9 The numbers are not easy to ascertain since there has not been a systematic study of the question yet.
- 10 In 1953, for example, only one pilgrim – a woman – went on a hajj.
- 11 As documented by various historians, the ban caused deep trauma amongst many Bosnian Muslim women, up to the point that some were not willing to leave their houses afterwards; more on the ban and how it affected women in Milišić (1999).
- 12 Different Sufi orders were active in Bosnia before the ban. The only existing detailed survey of these orders is brought by Čehajić (1986).
- 13 The Supreme Islamic Authority was one of the organs of the Islamic Community, an institution established in 1882 to regulate matters related to Muslim believers in Bosnia (although in different historical periods, such as socialism, the authority of the institution spread over whole Yugoslavia). *Glasnik* was its official journal from 1933, and it is still being published, although its continuity was interrupted several times throughout the 20th century because of the wars.
- 14 Original text: *Prilikom mog putovanja na hadž zapazio sam da je prisustvo žena na svetim mjestima i njihovo obavljanje hadža u suprotnosti sa islamskim propisima. Po povratku sa hadža sam se zainteresirao i želio saznati pod kakvim su uslovima žene zadužene da sobom obave hadž.*
- 15 Regulation of women in situations of perceived endangered masculinity has recently been explored in the domain of Islamic ethics by Zahra Ayubi.
- 16 See Sokolović (1971).
- 17 Official biweekly journal of the Islamic Community.
- 18 The figure of the insider-outsider is frequent in contemporary Orientalist literature. The perceived liminality of this figure and its ability to ‘reveal’ and ‘expose’ Muslim realities explains the popularity of first-person narratives of (ex-)Muslim women such as Ayaan Hirsi Ali, Irshad Manji, and others.
- 19 This was not reserved only for female writing about hajj. During the course of my research, I have encountered certain difficulties in obtaining travelogues written by men for close family circles as well.
- 20 The journal was established in 1979 by the Council of the Islamic Community with the aim to provide more information regarding Islamic studies, theology and general religious knowledge.
- 21 On Bosniak online travelogues written after the war 1992–1995, see Karić (2018).
- 22 In 1983, the authorities tried and indicted several Bosniak intellectuals, including the first Bosnian president Alija Izetbegović, on the charge of Islamic fundamentalism. The Sarajevo Process, as it was called, caused a deep trauma to Muslims who sought wider freedoms of expression in the 1980s.
- 23 This world, as opposed to *ākhirā*, or the Next World.
- 24 Hidajeta uses the expression *bratstvo i jedinstvo* ‘brotherhood and unity’ which was a common slogan during the socialist times, but gives it a twist by making it refer to the umma.

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9 In the ‘Land of Wonders’: Bint al-Shāṭi’'s pilgrimage

The hajj and the construction of reformist religiosity

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The intellectual debates in Egypt, and the Middle East more generally, in the 20th century have been shaped largely by the period that is usually indicated as the *nahḍa*, or ‘renaissance’, which began halfway through the 19th century. The *nahḍa* can perhaps best be characterized as a phase of discussion and re-orientation to harmonize culture, politics and society with the intensifying processes of globalization and modernization. Administrative, legal, economic and social reform measures in the Ottoman Empire and its Arabic provinces were accompanied by debates about cultural and political orientation, ‘modern’ scientific world-views, the significance of the cultural tradition and the tension between authenticity and renewal. This far-reaching self-reflection and cultural re-orientation was facilitated by new media and means of communication in the form of the printed press, translations and transnational contacts, and in the form of transport, enlarging the possibilities for interaction with the non-Arab world. Evidently, the debates were partly inspired by the necessity to confront the growing pressures of Western influence and dominance in all relevant fields and to formulate strategies for emancipation from Western hegemony. More generally, they were intended to regulate the incorporation of the Arab/Muslim world into the globalized system of Western capitalism.

The period of the *nahḍa* provided the framework for the life and work of the prominent Egyptian scholar and intellectual Bint al-Shāṭi’ (1913–1998), who dedicated her life to scholarly and socio-political issues, such as the development of modern methods of Qur’anic interpretation, the emancipation of women and new literary forms to explore the religious tradition. Bint al-Shāṭi’ profited from the results of educational reform during the *nahḍa*, which enabled her, as a woman, to pursue advanced studies in the fields of literature and religion, and to be accepted as a learned publicist in the Egyptian press and as an academic at several universities, both within and outside Egypt. It was the increasing participation of women in the field of publishing and intellectual debates at the close of the 19th century, and the emergence of the feminist movement in Egypt, which paved the way for her intellectual pursuits, while the work of reformist thinkers such as

Muhammad 'Abduh (1849–1905), who looked for 'modern' views of religion and its relation to society, enabled her to develop her methodology of Qur'anic interpretation. Still, within these intellectual strands – religious reformism and feminism – Bint al-Shāṭi' marked out her own very specific position, which, as we will see, defines her in a rather paradoxical way, in the words of Mervat Hatem, as a 'traditionalist modernist' or a 'conservative feminist' (Hatem 2011, 2–3).

In this contribution, we will focus our attention on a specific work published by Bint al-Shāṭi' in 1952 and in a second augmented edition in 1972, in which her various interests converge. The book contains an account of two journeys to the Arabian Peninsula undertaken by Bint al-Shāṭi' to perform the umra (the informal, short pilgrimage to Mecca) and the hajj (the formal, extended and obligatory pilgrimage to Mecca) in, respectively, 1951 and 1972. For citizens of rural lower-class backgrounds like Bint al-Shāṭi', it was quite extraordinary to perform the pilgrimage to Mecca, particularly for women. Therefore, the text, which has only appeared in Arabic, represents a unique document within the field of female writing in Egypt in the 20th century. Below, the Arabic text will be analyzed, focusing on the main issues in Bint al-Shāṭi''s thought. But before turning to a discussion of the text of her travel account, it is convenient to give a brief overview of Bint al-Shāṭi''s life and work as a framework for analyzing the ideas and attitudes expressed in the book.

Bint al-Shāṭi''s life and work

'Ā'isha 'Abd al-Raḥmān, who later adopted the pseudonym Bint al-Shāṭi', was born in 1913 into a lower-class family in a village in the Egyptian Nile Delta. As a girl from a non-privileged social background, she encountered some difficulty to continue her education, but in 1936 she succeeded as one of the first women in enrolling in the Arabic Department of the Fouad University in Cairo, later transformed into the Cairo University. During her studies, she not only immersed herself in her main passion, Arabic language and literature; she also met the prominent scholar and intellectual Amīn al-Khūlī (1895–1966), who became her husband and her great intellectual inspiration. She also met the important modernist thinker Ṭaha Ḥusayn (1889–1973), who was her supervisor; the reformist thinker 'Abbās Maḥmūd al-'Aqqād (1889–1964); and the Islamist political ideologue Sayyid Quṭb (1906–1966). In 1952 she graduated on a doctoral thesis about the important text *Risālat al-ghufrān* (*Epistle of Forgiveness*) by the classical poet 'Abd al-'Alā al-Ma'arrī (d. 1057). She became Professor of Arabic at 'Ayn Shams University in Cairo (1962–1970) and the Qarawiyyīn University in Morocco. She was the first woman to be invited to give a lecture at the prestigious al-Azhar University, which, as a traditional religious academy, had always been a male patriarchal institution. Bint al-Shāṭi' has thus gone through an enormous social mobility which enabled her to move

freely in circles and places that remained shut for most women, particularly those of her own rural background.

Before and during her academic studies, Bint al-Shāṭi' began publishing articles and short stories in such general mainstream newspapers and cultural/political journals as *al-Hilāl* and *al-Ahrām*. However, her main outlet was the periodical *al-Majallat al-nahḍa al-nisā'iyya al-Miṣriyya* (*Journal of the renaissance of Egyptian women*) founded by the formidable religious publicist and advocate of women's rights Labība Aḥmad (1870s–1951),² who became one of Bint al-Shāṭi'’s mentors. In 1934 Bint al-Shāṭi' became editor-in-chief of the journal, which advocated the emancipation of women within the confines of Islamic doctrines, following the emancipatory discourses of the *nahḍa*. In this period, Bint al-Shāṭi'’s publications – which included short stories and novels – were intended to ventilate her social criticism, initially about the condition of the Egyptian peasants and later about the position of women, moral corruption and social hypocrisy. In 1952 her shorter pieces were collected under the title *Sirr al-Shāṭi'* (McLarney 2015, 42; Naguib 2015, 49–50; Hatem 2011, 5, 6, 9).

After her graduation from the university in 1951, Bint al-Shāṭi' dedicated herself more to synthesizing her main scholarly fields of interest, language, literature and religion. In the period between 1956 and 1961 she wrote a series of biographies of the Prophet's family, that is, the daughters of the Prophet, his mother and Zaynab and his other wives. These works fitted into a trend which had become popular in the 1930s and 1940s, which produced several 'literary' or 'humanist' descriptions of the life of Muhammad, mainly inspired by Ernest Renan's biography of Jesus. In these texts a revisualization of the religious tradition was combined with new, modern, views of life and religion. For Bint al-Shāṭi', this genre provided her with the opportunity to reflect on her main fields of interest, the position of women, religion and politics. Her rendition of the lives of the female members of the Prophet's family – based on a free interpretation of religious-historical sources and orientalist biographies of Muhammad – enabled her to formulate her thoughts about the human aspects of prophecy, the dignity and rights of women, the manifestations of religion in the family sphere and the Prophet's family as a 'model of idealized domesticity'. It also enabled her to reflect upon the duties, rights and virtues of women more generally within the domain of religious doctrine, but beyond the restricted framework of Islamic law (McLarney 2015, 40, 43–52; Naguib 2015, 51 ff; Hatem 2011, 15–20).

In the 1960s Bint al-Shāṭi' published her most important works in the field of Qur'anic exegesis, or *tafsīr*. The discipline of *tafsīr* was opened up to new ideas and methods mainly by the aforementioned reformist scholar Muhammad 'Abduh, who aimed at a revitalization of Islam and a redefinition of the relationship between religion and society. To achieve this, Islamic thought should be reconciled with a modern view of the world based on the recent progress in the fields of science and technology.

This was possible, according to 'Abduh, because Islam was inherently rational and therefore naturally compatible with scientific principles. This rationality would also apply to the domain of textual interpretation. 'Abduh advocated, on the one hand, a thorough inspection of the basic sources of the faith, as interpreted by the early generations of Muslims (*salaf*), and, on the other hand, to create space for a reinterpretation of the sources to make the faith relevant for the modern conditions of the believers (Naguib 2015, 46, 49, 51, 64).³

This combination of reformism and fundamentalism in the sense of going back to the sources in order to mobilize the potential of the religious tradition for the sake of transforming society was adopted by later scholars, intellectuals and political activists. Among them was Amīn al-Khūlī, whose 'literary' approach to the Qur'an, in which the text was not only studied for its linguistic and aesthetic properties, but also in its historical and social contexts, became the foundation of Bint al-Shāṭi's methodology in her books on *tafsīr* (Naguib 2015, 46–47, 50).

According to Bint al-Shāṭi, the hermeneutical enquiry of the Qur'an should be firmly rooted not only in the exegetical tradition but also in the lexicographical tradition, preserving the Qur'an itself as the highest authoritative instance. She stressed the importance of searching for coherence in the different uses of words throughout the text, to find meanings that were less connected to specific situations, but rather revealed some deeper essence. More than al-Khūlī, Bint al-Shāṭi emphasized the predominance of the linguistic component of Qur'anic interpretation which should provide an 'objective', 'general' understanding of the text in harmony with its overall intentions (*maqāṣid*). Therefore, she systematically built her procedures on the traditions of *tafsīr* and linguistics, to produce potentially new, more objective interpretations, which were relevant for the Muslims of her time. Her *tafsīr* should not yield conclusive interpretations, but rather serve as a guidance with regard to contemporary issues (Naguib 2015, 51ff.).

Bint al-Shāṭi founded her exegetic methodology on the inherited traditions to make her interpretations more convincing, but also as a strategy to be more authoritative as a woman in a field of male-dominated studies. In the domain of scholarship she struggled for the acceptance of female authority, being the first modern female exegete of the Qur'an. Conversely, her expertise in religious studies was also used to support her views on the emancipation of women. Bint al-Shāṭi argued that the Qur'an allows men and women the same freedom of will and the same religious and moral responsibilities. Before God only piety is a measure to distinguish between people. Still, she does not adopt the Western conception of equality between the sexes, but rather emphasized equity within the framework of the religious doctrines, laws and morality. Men and women have different tasks in life and concomitant virtues, which harmonize with 'natural' and 'social' differences. Moreover, on the social and political level, the form of emancipation of women that she advocated should also be related to

the nationalist cause, linking the position of women more generally for the struggle for national emancipation, political independence and the construction of a modern society (McLarney 2015, 63, 69; Naguib 2015, 60; Hatem 2011, 14; Marcotte 2001; Bint al-Shāṭi' 1999).

This brief overview of Bint al-Shāṭi's main ideas and pursuits shows how her fields of interest – literature, language, women, religion – were intertwined and mutually reinforcing. They reveal a strong personality who succeeds in constructing a coherent vision of life from various components, which are integrated through the mechanisms provided by the faith and scholarship. However, it is less easy to coherently categorize her ideas in one of the different domains, that is, her views on women's rights and the emancipation of women. Bint al-Shāṭi' advocated social equality between women and men, retaining the conventional roles for women prescribed by religion as spouse and mother. The main concerns in Bint al-Shāṭi's work, mentioned above, are reflected in the book *Arḍ al-Mu'jizāt; riḥla fī jazīrat al-'Arab*, which will be analyzed below, and which appeared shortly after her graduation in 1952, before she published her major works on the lives of the Prophet's family and Qur'anic exegesis. A later edition (1973) contained an account of her second visit to the Arabian Peninsula in 1972 to perform the hajj (McLarney 2015, 42–43; Bint al-Shāṭi' 1973).

In the Land of Wonders: Bint al-Shāṭi's pilgrimages

The book *Arḍ al-mu'jizāt* is dedicated first to the unique history and geographical peculiarities of the Arabian Peninsula. It is the 'holy ground which through God's will has written a new history for the world' (Bint al-Shāṭi' 1973, 5, 7). It is here that the Arabic language 'emerged from the night of the Jāhiliyya [the pre-Islamic period of 'ignorance'] to impose its vitality on time and took care that the Qur'an was revealed in it' (Bint al-Shāṭi' 1973, 7). Thus broke 'the truthful dawn, by the miracle of prophecy and the book of the Shari'a, which by its light liberated mankind from the darkness of the Jāhiliyya, to bring truth, goodness, beauty' (Bint al-Shāṭi' 1973, 7). The revelation disclosed the secrets of life in a barren wadi. The two journeys to the Arabian Peninsula recounted in the book, in 1951 and 1972, represent an encounter between this ancient history and the present; the journeys were saturated with 'goodness and emotions', and 'pureness of heart and conscience' (Bint al-Shāṭi' 1973, 8). The account is dedicated to this land that has presented us with the language that gives expression to the 'distinct essence' of humanity, the mission of the Prophet, the direction of prayer (*qibla*) of the community (umma), the destination of the hajj, the object of our heart's desire (Bint al-Shāṭi' 1973, 8).

Of course, this dedication, combining history and religion to construct powerful sacred space, defines the discursive framework of Bint al-Shāṭi's pilgrimage accounts. Although this predominantly religious framework is preserved throughout the text, mainly through quotations from the Qur'an,

the first journey is to a large extent of a secular nature. The Egyptian delegation, consisting of teachers and students, was hosted by the Saudi family, which at that time was eager to exhibit their commitment to modernization and economic development. The delegation visited the main Arabian towns, oilfields and harbours, and was invited to dinner parties and literary *soirées*, attended by Saudi intellectuals and poets. Apart from religious references, the text is strewn with quotations from well-known ancient Arabian poets, which convey the *genius loci* of the relentless desert. Within this packed programme, the actual umra occupies only a small place. The combination of secular and sacred components of the journey provides Bint al-Shāṭi' with the opportunity to focus on her main concern, the confrontation between tradition and modernity, or, in her words, between 'history' and the 'present', between 'rootedness' (*iṣāla*; *irāqa*) and the 'new' (hadith) (Bint al-Shāṭi' 1973, 12–15, 21, 41, 166).

In the first chapter, Bint al-Shāṭi' reflects upon the mysterious nature of the desert, which, as an intimidating, empty space, has self-evidently produced myths and legends, illusions and visions of apparitions, jinns and demons throughout the ages. These myths and legends were recorded in poetry and stories, such as the accounts of the tribes of 'Ād and Thāmūd, who rejected the call to subject to God's authority and were subsequently punished. In this way, the desert imposed its explanations for all strange phenomena upon the nomad population and determined their view of life and the universe. Their imagination and emotions were filled with its secrets, in the form of illusions, visions, poetic inspiration and dreams, and tales of many kinds of fabulous creatures, which were transmitted from one generation to another by storytellers and poets. Within this inhospitable realm, Mecca became the centre of heathen pilgrimage for the Bedouin tribes, who protected it as their sacred domain (Bint al-Shāṭi' 1973, 18–25).

Bint al-Shāṭi' continues to explain that the budding literary imagination of the Arabs contributed to the development and gradual refinement of the Arabic language. Rules for grammar and style were shaped and the language adapted itself, both in structure and aesthetics, to the requirements of life in the desert, by defining symbolical and metaphorical uses, metonymy, poetic formulation, rhythm, clarity of expression and internal consistency. It became the common language of the Arabian tribes and – partly because of the pilgrimage – of the Quraysh and Mecca. When the Arabic language was sufficiently developed, it made possible the revelation of the Qur'an as a miracle of linguistic clarity, ending the 'night' of the Jahiliyya and the interference of polytheist beliefs. In this way, the mechanism of language served to liberate mankind from obscurity and ignorance. Arabic became the common language of Islam as a religious community, but also of a scholarly and scientific tradition based on rationality and the essential harmony between faith and reason. Especially the natural sciences were studied, achieving a transition from observational to experimental scientific

methods, which laid the basis for the era of modern European science from the Renaissance onwards (Bint al-Shāṭi' 1973, 28–45).

This last observation touches upon another issue discussed in the text, the confrontation between the Arabs of the Arabian Peninsula and Western modernity. Bint al-Shāṭi' explains that, for a long time, the peninsula succeeded in remaining isolated from historical developments in spite of its central role in the Islamic tradition. The Bedouin were able to sustain their age-old customs and values. The hundreds of thousands of pilgrims who travelled to Arabia on ships or in trains continued their journey to the Ḥijāz on camels and donkeys. Bint al-Shāṭi' describes how, inevitably, the new technologies that were gradually introduced met with fierce resistance from the Arabian ulama, who considered the telegraph a work of the devil. She also notes that in the beginning of the 20th century the first monumental clock was destroyed as *bid'a* by what she characterizes as 'fanatical Ikhwān', the Wahhābī core troops of the Sa'ūds:

The Bedouin of the peninsula live with their mentalities and opinions in strongholds behind walls, brandishing their weapons against every new development and protecting protesters against its innovations with the sword.

(Bint al-Shāṭi' 1973, 57)

And:

They called automobiles and bicycles "Satan's wagon" and "devil's horse". Until recently cars were considered sinful, because it is *bid'a* to move by magical power and the help of the devil, which is proven by the fact that cars continue moving after the driver has descended.

(Bint al-Shāṭi' 1973, 56)

For years the royal family struggled against the conservative ulama and the rebellious Ikhwān, who obstructed all technological innovations. In 1927 a conference was organized to discuss these matters, but the controversies almost ended in a civil war, until in 1930 resistance was subdued, and King 'Abd al-'Azīz could announce the beginning of a new era (Bint al-Shāṭi' 1973, 53, 56–57, 59, 62).

Bint al-Shāṭi' points out that the 'new life' in the modern Saudi kingdom was built on the premise that science and technology belonged to the 'wondrous gifts of God' (*āyāt al-khāliq*) (Bint al-Shāṭi' 1973, 59) to the service of mankind. In education, this implied the establishment of new schools and colleges, presenting a partly Western curriculum. She dwells on the opposition in 1930 by Najdī ulama to the foundation of colleges whose curriculum included drawing ('forbidden in Islam'), foreign languages ('introducing unbelievers' ideas') and geography ('claiming that the world is a globe') (Bint al-Shāṭi' 1973, 63). A more visible innovation was the rapid introduction

of modern means of transport and communication (telegraph, telephone, automobiles, aeroplanes). It is these latter tokens of modernity which particularly fascinate Bint al-Shāṭi'. She is astonished by the compression of distances from camel journeys of several days or weeks through burning deserts to comfortable aeroplane flights of a few hours. She observes the fear among Saudi women for the new means of transport, which are seen as the miraculous acts of jinns. She compares the modern lifestyle with the traditional Arabian world of hardship, myths, poverty and isolation:

Like that, from a camel to an aeroplane; from a palanquin to the salon of a Dakota or a Bristol aeroplane; from water from wells and pits to pineapple juice and Coca Cola. What a rapid transition across a deep chasm.

(Bint al-Shāṭi' 1973, 75–77, 164)

The spread of modernity naturally evokes the issue of Western penetration of the Arabian Peninsula, which had been warded off for many centuries and which was the main worry of the Wahhābī ulama. The Western intervention is linked to the development of the oil industry set up by the American Standard Oil company in co-operation with the Royal Saudi family. Bint al-Shāṭi' presents the search for oil, from 1930 onwards, as an epic story of the struggle between two giants, the refractory nature of the desert and modern science. After much effort, sacrifice and determination, the struggle was finally won by science, resulting in the expanding exploitation of oil fields in various parts of Arabia. This is the basis of the 'new life' declared by King 'Abd al-'Azīz, and it is justified by Bint al-Shāṭi' by referring to the Qur'anic verse stating that God put all things on earth to the disposal of mankind as His miraculous signs (Bint al-Shāṭi' 1973, 65–72). The foreign workers live in compounds and are not allowed to have priests or churches, alcohol or pork. No penetration of thought is admitted which might affect traditions and the faith. This attitude clearly appeals to Bint al-Shāṭi', who on the one hand welcomes modern science but is anxious to preserve cultural authenticity on the other (Bint al-Shāṭi' 1973, 73–74).

Bint al-Shāṭi' supplements her reflections on the presence of Western companies and workers on Arabia with a brief account of foreign women, who have accompanied their husbands from all parts of the world. She is impressed by the fact that they left their comfortable lives behind to follow their husbands who toil in the heat of the desert and the noise of enormous machines:

'I met them in al-Dahnā': American, European and Asian women, modern and well-educated, satisfied with life in the isolated desert and with their lean fingers wiping the sweat from the foreheads of their men, who work in the blazing heat' (Bint al-Shāṭi' 1973, 83).

They live in beautiful modern houses, equipped with electricity, air-conditioning, telephone, radio and refrigerator, but even this luxury cannot

compensate for the loneliness they suffer far away from their homes. It is remarkable that these women came from all parts of the world, but not from Egypt, says Bint al-Shāṭi'. She attributes this to the reluctance of Egyptian women to move even from a house in Cairo to another in Giza (Bint al-Shāṭi' 1973, 83–86).

The account of the first journey is concluded by two remarkable life stories of Arabian women. First, during her visit to the tomb of the Prophet in Medina, Bint al-Shāṭi', steeped in the presence of 'spirits and apparitions' of the Prophet's companions (Bint al-Shāṭi' 1973, 89), has a conversation with a weeping young lady sitting next to her, who tells the story of her life. She was born in North Africa but, because of her extraordinary beauty was shunned by her tribe, who suspected her of having a jinn (demon)-lover. After the death of her first husband – an old *shaykh* – a passing pilgrim took her with him to Mecca and married her. Now, living in exile in Medina, she is neglected by her husband, but unable to return to her tribe (Bint al-Shāṭi' 1973, 90–98). On another occasion, Bint al-Shāṭi' has the opportunity to talk to a concubine in a harem, who tells her of her tragic life behind the confines of several women's compounds, to end up free, but lonely and divorced, in the household of a rich Arab. It was the first time Bint al-Shāṭi', to her amazement, heard that women were actually bought and sold (Bint al-Shāṭi' 1973, 112–125).

These stories clearly appeal to Bint al-Shāṭi's sense of injustice with regard to women in traditional Muslim societies. Although she refrains from commenting, it is obvious that Bint al-Shāṭi' inserted the stories with the intention of criticizing the social treatment of women. In contrast, during her *umra*, she envisions the figure of Hagar (Hājar in the Qur'an, RvL), after whose search for water for her infant Ismā'īl the ritual of *sa'y* (the running between Safā and Marwa) is modelled (Bint al-Shāṭi' 1973, 101–107, 148–150). Bint al-Shāṭi' stresses the significance of the fact that Hagar – originally a female slave – has come to serve as the epitome of a courageous, free and persevering woman in the history of Mecca and Islam.

Bint al-Shāṭi's second journey: encounters with history

In 1972, Bint al-Shāṭi' was attached to the Qarawiyyīn University in Morocco when she suddenly had the opportunity to go on hajj as a guest of the poet-prince 'Abdallāh Fayṣal. This time her journey was not a 'tour' of the Saudi kingdom, to inspect its version of modernity, but exclusively dedicated to the hajj and a visit to the Prophet's tomb in Medina. She promises herself to observe asceticism, piety and contemplation, avoiding profane matters and limiting her excursions to the holy places, absorbed by the millions of pilgrims. Consequently, the religious dimension of the account is much more prominent than in the account of the 1951 journey. To her, the hajj represents the unity of the *umma* and values such as humility, tranquility, non-materialism and the absence of hierarchical differentiation among

mankind It is connected with a natural passion (*hayām fītrī*) in man, spurring him on to experience justice, goodness and beauty. All distinctions are erased and only the measure of piety (*taqwā*) differentiates between the believers (Bint al-Shāṭi' 1973, 145–146, 166–167).

As during her first journey, Bint al-Shāṭi' is again struck by the convergence of ancient history and modernity. Cars, aeroplanes and buses have replaced camels as means of transport; electricity, marble pavements and modern buildings have 'transformed the exterior aspect of the city, but the spirit of the place remains unaffected' (Bint al-Shāṭi' 1973, 146). However, she considers these changes to be superficial only; the essence and identity of the place, radiating the light of its sanctity and shining with authenticity and deep-rootedness, have been preserved according to Bint al-Shāṭi' (Bint al-Shāṭi' 1973, 146). She notes that although people change generation after generation, the ritual ceremonies of the hajj remain the same, allowing us to experience them just like our forefathers. Therefore, besides being a religious obligation, she presents the hajj above all as an historical experience, affording the pilgrim to experience the presence of Muhammad and the way in which his life-story is impregnated in the landscape and the buildings. Bint al-Shāṭi''s excursions are, consequently, exclusively directed at ancient monuments and historical sites evoking the proximity of the Prophet. However, rather than elaborating on her feelings and experiences during these visits, in her text she presents episodes from the life of Muhammad connected to the various sites (Bint al-Shāṭi' 1973, 166–167).

Apart from the religious ruminations in the account, Bint al-Shāṭi' addresses two more issues. The first is, characteristically, the issue of women's education. During her first trip she had been invited to visit the Mālik 'Abd al-'Azīz University in Riyadh, which did not allow female students. When she asked her guide about it, she was told that 'the shaykhs' feared that education for women would lead to moral corruption. Bint al-Shāṭi' embarks upon an appeal for women's education, arguing that 'moral decency' (*iffa*) is in the hands of women themselves and cannot be imposed from outside. Moreover, she asserts that women are as accountable for their acts as men are and carry their own freedom and responsibility. Thus, she considers it a mistake to deprive women of education with a reference to *fiqh* or *jihad*, or the struggle against innovation (*bid'a*) and for the purity of doctrine. Fortunately, on her second trip she finds out that in the meantime girls and women have been admitted to schools and universities, thanks to the efforts of King Fayṣal. Some of the women have even acquired the degree of *shaykha* in Arabic and Islamic disciplines (Bint al-Shāṭi' 1973, 178–181).

The second issue is of an even more political nature: the lamented appropriation of Palestine and the al-Aqṣā mosque by Israel. During her first journey Bint al-Shāṭi' had already mentioned Israel as a 'disgrace' for the umma, because of its incursions against 'one of our most holy places' (Bint al-Shāṭi' 1973, 15). Shedding a mournful tear, she calls for the unity of the umma and the sacrifice of lives to save the honour of the Muslim

community. During her second trip, she again refers to the threats to the al-Aqṣā mosque and the call for jihad by the ruler of Arabia. She adds a militant poem centred around the hajj formula *Labbayka*, ('I present myself to You') pronounced by pilgrims when they enter the sacred precincts to declare their intention to perform the pilgrimage before God. Also the final circumambulation of the Ka'ba (*tawāf al-wadā'*) is accompanied by a poem inciting to the struggle: 'We are the soldiers of God, the generation of the struggle' (Bint al-Shāṭi' 1973, 185, 193). It is clear that for Bint al-Shāṭi' the emotional experience of the hajj is mingled with political fervour, and that the emancipation of women covers the field of social relationships, religion and politics.

Conclusion

Bint al-Shāṭi''s book *Arḍ al-mu'jizāt* is not a conventional account of a pilgrimage to Mecca but a unique testimony of the trajectory of an Egyptian woman who ventures into the intellectual and religious domains of her time. The text is not so much focused on the experience of the hajj or even on the devout and religious aspects of the pilgrimage. It is rather an attempt to incorporate the idea and experience of pilgrimage into a discursive framework that reflects not only her particular intellectual concerns, but also the main cultural-political issues of her time. The rituals of the hajj are only casually referred to; the occasion of the hajj is, rather, used to shape an intellectual notion of the Holy Land as a privileged space, the territory in which religion and culture are firmly rooted. The hajj is the core not so much of a religious experience, but rather of a process of signification, which brings together Bint al-Shāṭi''s efforts to mark off a cultural and intellectual domain for herself.

The summary above reflects Bint al-Shāṭi''s scholarly and intellectual concerns at the stage of her life and career when the journey took place, just after her graduation from the university. First, it shows the importance she attached to the Arabic language, as an instrument to construct a tradition and a religion, but also to determine the main specificities of this tradition, by enabling the formulation of refined concepts and rational ideas in an exquisite style. The Arabic language is also the source of an identity, since it not only represents the strong material from which the tradition is crafted, it also protects this tradition from outside interference and thus preserves a sense of authenticity:

The Muslim world, in the East and in the West, was exposed to various waves of invasions, doctrinal, intellectual, linguistic, military, and economic, but the Arabic language survived all the efforts to repress or obliterate it, and imposed its vital existence on the world.

(Bint al-Shāṭi' 1973, 45)

In this way, language becomes the repository of a past which has to be rearticulated in the present, and a mechanism to preserve, develop and

renew ideas, doctrines and concepts. Finally, it is also the main vehicle to convey a sense of beauty, an aestheticism linked to the past, to identity and to the particular 'secrets' of the Arabian Peninsula in the form of poetry and narrative imagination.

Second, the book heralds Bint al-Shāṭi's future preoccupation with the family of the Prophet, which found expression in several biographies in which historical and religious evidence were combined. In *Arḍ al-mu'jizāt* the reader gets a foretaste of this interest, since she takes the opportunity of her visits to several holy sites to commemorate the early life of Muhammad in a predominantly literary way. It is remarkable that the book reveals little of what became Bint al-Shāṭi's main interest, that is, Qur'anic exegesis. Although the text is framed in a large number of Qur'anic quotations, these are only inserted as a general religious framework and are not subjected to scrutiny. There is no effort, for example, to link the Qur'anic verses (or hadiths) to the phenomenon of the hajj. They are not linked to the rituals of the hajj nor discussed for their relevance for the spiritual dimension of the pilgrimage as a whole. Apparently, at this stage Bint al-Shāṭi' was not yet prepared to take such a significant step into the realm of religious scholarship.

In spite of the prominent place of history, language and poetry in the text, the book is an unambiguously religious work. All components have been vital for the shaping of a tradition which enabled man to come out of darkness into the light of the revelation, and to acquire insight in the secrets of existence. They represent what connects contemporary man with the historical event of the Prophet's life. Here we encounter another fundamental concern of Bint al-Shāṭi': the effort to connect this historical heritage with modern circumstances, or even 'modernity' as a vision of life and society. Bint al-Shāṭi' clearly admires and advocates modern reforms, the implementation of new technology and the pursuit of modern science as a means to uncover the 'secrets' of God's creation and put them at the service of mankind. Both emotionally and politically, she seems to relish the blessings of modern life, at the same time warning against the danger of too much foreign interference and the loss of identity. Conversely, religious conservatism should never obstruct the employment of useful new scientific discoveries, which are, after all, a gift from God. These ideas clearly echo the debates of the *nahḍa*, both in its notion of historical progress and social development, and in its call for religious reform. Although Muhammad 'Abduh is not mentioned explicitly, his ideas resonate throughout the text.

As far as its interest in the affairs of women is concerned, the book is a unique document for its interesting glimpses of women in the Arabian Peninsula. This is not only because it contains two accounts of women's lives, which could only have been collected by a fellow woman, but also because of the systematic references to the advantages of education for women and the harm of religiously motivated obstacles to achieve it. Still, the apparent paradox with regard to the relationship between feminism

and conservatism is visible here as well. Whereas religious and social conservatism is criticized as harmful for the emancipation of women, in her description of the foreign colony of workers in the oil industry, she praises the women who are prepared to sacrifice themselves to support their husbands who bravely toil in the merciless heat of the desert. Here, religion is referred to not only for a doctrinal purpose, but rather for an ethical purpose: it should not serve as a pretext for repressing women in any way; it should provide women with a moral code for her conduct in her specific role as support for her husband. Symbolically, the ideal role of women is personified by Hagar, the quintessential ‘mother’ of the Muslim tradition.

To conclude, it is of course significant that all these strands in Bint al-Shāṭi’s thought and work are associated with the phenomenon of the hajj. It is the hajj in which all the different components meet; the particularity of the Arabian Peninsula as a desert-space and a sacred space; the predominance of language as an instrument to preserve the past and shape the future; the doctrinal, historical, textual and moral aspects of religion; and, finally, the pilgrimage as the symbol of Muslim unity, the solidarity within the Muslim community worldwide, which is needed to protect its integrity against all kinds of encroachments from outside. As often in pilgrimage accounts, the hajj is presented as the cornerstone and the integrative element in the religious tradition, the ritual securing historical continuity. It is also the concept engendering and structuring the author’s discursive exploration of her world-view and intellectual efforts. The journey is, ultimately, an opportunity to formulate and express a coherent vision of the author’s relationship to culture and society.

Notes

- 1 The research on which this chapter is based was funded by the Netherlands Organization for Scientific Research (grant number: 360-25-150).
- 2 See about Labība Aḥmad: Baron (2005); she also performed the hajj, but I was unable to find her account.
- 3 About ‘Abduh, see: Hourani (1983).

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10 Stepping in the footsteps of Hajar to bring home the hajj

Dialogical positioning in Asra Nomani's memoir *Standing Alone*¹

Marjo Buitelaar

Introduction

Being American, I have freedom of movement, thought, and voice. Democracy and these freedoms bring me closer to my faith. I didn't know these realizations would come to me as a result of my pilgrimage, but they did.

(Nomani 2006, 279)

This is how the Indian-American journalist Asra Nomani summarizes the outcome of the pilgrimage to Mecca in 2003 in her hajj memoir *Standing Alone: An American Woman's Struggle for the Soul of Islam*. In this chapter I analyze Nomani's memoir to explore the negotiations in her hajj stories between her voice as a Muslim and voices representing several of her other social positions as a daughter of Indian migrants to the US. Nomani is one of a small number of Western female pilgrims who have recently published their hajj stories; Zarqa Nawaz (2014), Qanta Ahmed (2008), Jane Straitwell (2006), and Rayda Jacobs (2005), are the others I could find. Jacobs and Straitwell are converts to Islam. Like Nomani, Ahmed and Nawaz are the daughters of migrants to North America from the Indian subcontinent. Unlike Nomani, who wrote an elaborate hajj memoir, Ahmed and Nawaz have included their hajj stories as chapters in memoirs covering other topics as well.

The hajj stories of women like Ahmed, Nawaz and Nomani are particularly informative to study religious and gendered dimensions of the interplay between the mobilities of diasporic Muslim women in the West and the diverse social networks and power structures that they are embedded in. Living in countries where holiday travel is virtually considered a basic human need, weighing travel options confronts people with migration backgrounds in general with dilemmas. Besides popular mainstream tourist destinations, visiting the country of origin is an obvious option. Indeed, many migrant families pay regular return visits to the places they originate from. Since going on hajj is a religious duty that all Muslims who are able

should carry out once in their life, Mecca can be considered as yet another likely travel destination. The social, moral and aesthetic dimensions in the stories of diasporic Muslim pilgrims about the process of weighing travel options and the meanings they attach to their actual hajj experiences therefore provide rich insights into their 'geographies of belonging'; the emotional attachments to various physical, imagined or symbolic places and communities simultaneously that result from positioning oneself and being positioned by others as belonging or not belonging (cf. Salih 2003).

The experience of translocal belongings not only differs across generations and classes, but is also strongly gendered (Yuval-Davis 2006; Glick Schiller 2004; Anthias 2002; Brah 1996). Migrant parents often stimulate their offspring to make the best of what the country of settlement has to offer. In order to realize the family-project of social mobility, the descendants of migrants need to spread their wings and insert themselves in the society of settlement. Since women are often conceived of as the transmitters of cultural rules, however, their specific comportment carries much weight. In many migrant communities the sexuality of female members is strongly controlled to preserve the cultural 'purity' of the group. Similarly, migrant women tend to face more restrictions in their movements than their male counterparts (Dion & Dion 2001; Espín 1999; Das Gupta 1997). In the case of Muslim diaspora communities, such restrictions are often explained in terms of Islamic regulations of gender-segregation (cf. Lutz 1991, 13).

Over the last two decades, a worldwide trend can be perceived among Muslim women to explore what other stories may be told about Islam than what they view as oppressive 'traditional', 'archaic' or 'patriarchal' interpretations. Particularly among women who have experienced or aspire towards upward social mobility, an increased interest in more progressive interpretations of the authoritative texts can be observed (cf. Ennaji, Sadiqi and Vintges 2016; Badran 2009; Nouraie-Simone 2005). Daughters of Muslim migrants to the West who want to expand their freedom of movement find themselves in a particular predicament: the same religiously motivated restrictive gender conceptions that they wish to transform is one of the spearheads in anti-Islam discourses that equally hampers their participation as full citizens in the countries where they live. Case studies in various Western countries have documented how women who are thus located at the intersection of two systems of domination resist being muted by embracing a form of liberal Islam. Formulating female-friendly reinterpretations of Islamic sources and practices, these women simultaneously challenge restrictive Muslim conceptions of gender relations as well as the views of dominant groups in society according to whom they would have to give up their religious identity in order to fully liberate themselves as women (cf. Noor 2018; Jouili 2015; Barlas 2013; Karlsson Minganti 2007; Buitelaar 2006).

Ahmed, Nawaz and Nomani all take on this challenge in their hajj stories, albeit in different ways. Ahmed performed the pilgrimage whilst

working as a physician in Saudi Arabia. Her memoir is first and foremost a critique on women's oppression in the strict Wahhabi Saudi system. Nawaz spontaneously accepted the invitation by her in-laws to join them on their pilgrimage to Mecca. The chapter on her hajj experience is one in a collection of hilarious sketches of cultural clashes in her everyday life. I have chosen to focus on Nomani's memoir for the purpose of this chapter because in contrast to Ahmed and Nawaz, Nomani explicitly characterizes her pilgrimage as 'a journey into the sacred roots of Islam to try to discover the role of a Muslim woman in the modern global community' (Nomani 2006, ix). In this sense, her reflections on the meanings of the hajj fit in with the trend among Muslim women who seek to 'reclaim' women's equal rights in Islam. Although her memoir contains only few references to scholarly literature on Islam, in passing Nomani does, for example, refer to the works of feminist Muslim scholars like Asma Barlas (2002), Amina Wadud (1999), and Fatima Mernissi and Mary Jo Lakeland (1992).

What makes Nomani's memoir particularly interesting is that in various passages she states that she was uncertain about the outcome of her journey: 'I was a postmodern woman in a religious culture with many premodern dispositions. Could I find a place for myself within my religion?' [3].² Rather than an act of obedience or uncritical fulfilment of a religious duty, her pilgrimage took the form of a spiritual quest that she hoped would help her make sense of her multiple belongings.

Many valuable studies into 'lived religion' focus on religion in 'unexpected places' or in seemingly mundane daily activities (cf. Forbes and Mahan 2017; Dessing et al. 2013; McGuire 2008). I would argue that paradoxically, precisely because it takes people *out* of their daily life-worlds, pilgrimage can also be a productive entry point to study everyday life religion. Physical movement entails mental movement; the very practice of mobility inherent to pilgrimage stimulates pilgrims to establish meaningful links between their extraordinary experiences during their journey and their everyday lives (cf. Coleman and Eade 2004, 13).

Exactly because Mecca symbolizes perfection and since hajj counts as the ultimate devotional act, for many Muslims the pilgrimage to Mecca is posited above and outside the imperfections of everyday life where its 'magic' and 'authenticity' can be evoked to seek guidance and strength when dealing with ambiguities, fears and struggles in one's quotidian life-world. Therefore, while pilgrims may be moving out of their daily environment, they never leave it fully behind on their journey; they are in constant dialogue with the internalized voices of people who travel with them in their minds. As will come to the fore in sections to follow, to interpret the meaning to Nomani of the various rites that make up the hajj ritual, for example, in her memoir she moves back and forth between various collective voices that inform her daily life.

I will analyze the real and imagined dialogues Nomani engages in during her pilgrimage by unravelling the 'voices' in her stories that speak to and

within her as she moves between the various positions she inhabits in the social networks she belongs to. I will do so by applying Dialogical Self Theory (henceforth DST). DST is a positioning theory that was initiated in the field of personality and clinical psychology by the psychologist Hubert Hermans (cf. Hermans 2001; Hermans and Kempen 1993). Over time, DST has also been taken up by social scientists, cultural theorists and scholars from the humanities (cf. Hermans and Gieser 2012a). DST builds on William James's distinction between 'I' as self-knower and 'me' as self-known; on George Herbert Mead's concept of 'significant others' or influential people in our lives whose stance we can take to look at ourselves; and on concepts from Mikhail Bakhtin's theorization concerning the 'polyphonic novel', such as 'multivoicedness', and 'dialogues' between 'external and internal voices' (Zock 2013,16).

In terms of DST, the self 'inhabits' different positions in different social contexts. The term 'inhabits' here refers to the idea that positioning is more than 'role-taking'; it concerns a creative and embodied act of appropriating social roles in a certain way to make them one's own. Positions are thus always time and space specific. In DST such positions are called 'I-positions', referring to the position of the 'I' as self-knower, who can look at their different self-known 'me's' in other positions. The self can thus be conceived of as a 'dynamic multiplicity of I-positions' (Hermans and Gieser 2012b, 2). The self is dialogical in the sense that there are dialogical exchanges between voices speaking to and from different I-positions, each voice telling a story about its experiences from its own perspective. These dialogues can be internal, consisting of exchanges between one's own voices in different I-positions, or external, as in exchanges between the self and others. Besides exchanges with the voices of significant others in one's personal network, dialogues can also occur with collective voices that represent the dominant views of groups with whom one interacts. In this exchange of knowledge, the voices co-construct a complex, narratively structured self (cf. Hermans and Gieser 2012b).

DST is a particularly adequate tool to study intersectionality in pilgrimage accounts, since the pilgrim as narrator moves back and forth between numerous real and imagined, personal and collective voices that accompany them on their journey. From this analytical perspective, the self-narratives in Nomani's hajj memoir can be studied as a multi-vocal account of the narrator's response to the power dynamics that inform her location in the different socio-cultural domains she participates in simultaneously.

In the remainder of my paper, I will use DST to analyze how by engaging in dialogues with various moral discourses that inform her daily life, Nomani reinterprets the meanings of the hajj in her memoir in order to negotiate her position in the different networks that she belongs to. I will first reflect on the motivations she forwards to undertake hajj. Second, I will ask how she interprets her pilgrimage experiences in terms of providing answers to

existential questions related to her in everyday life as an American single mother with an Indian and Muslim heritage.

It should be noted that the 2006 memoir *Standing Alone* is not the last time that Nomani published about the hajj. She is among a growing body of Muslims who, in recent years, have been calling for a boycott of the hajj as long as its management is in the hands of the current Saudi regime. These voices have become louder since Saudi Arabia's involvement in the civil war in Yemen and the murder of the Saudi dissident writer Jamal Ahmad Kashoggi. Nomani called for a boycott of the hajj in 2015, blaming Saudi mismanagement for the hundreds of pilgrims who lost their lives in a stampede during the hajj that year.³ Also, following the years after the publication of her hajj memoir, Nomani has become a controversial figure in Muslim circles. More conservative Muslims oppose her activism to create a more inclusive atmosphere in mosques. Liberal Muslim critics disagree with the kind of reform of Islam that Nomani calls for as co-founder of the Muslim Reform Movement that was launched in 2015. They claim that her call for banning the headscarf, for instance, confirms existing Islamophobic views in the West.⁴ Nomani's public announcement in 2016 that she had voted for Donald Trump did not help much to increase her popularity among those who critiqued president Trump for having a xenophobic stance. While it would be interesting to reread *Standing Alone* and trace how the 'voices' representing her various positions in American society have been developing through dialogues with others since then, this falls beyond the scope of the current chapter, which is restricted to analyzing the memoir itself.

Motivations to perform hajj

Since it is incumbent on every Muslim who is capable to do so to perform hajj at least once in their life, an informative first step to study the meaning of the hajj in the everyday lives of Muslims is to scrutinize how people account for their motivation to perform or 'postpone' the pilgrimage and analyze how this relates to their life-stories and life-worlds (cf. Debevec 2012). In her memoir, Nomani subsequently mentions a number of different reasons for wishing to perform hajj. Each of these refers to dialogues between voices speaking to and from different I-positions.

The first I-position she presents is that of Nomani the journalist, who initially became interested in 'doing' the pilgrimage to Mecca when writing a series of articles for the *Wall Street Journal* about the 'business of pilgrimage' [15]. Attending a speech of the Dalai Lama during a Hindu pilgrimage in January 2001, Nomani was struck by the Buddhist leader's encouragement to enrich oneself by learning about each other's religions, but also to keep one's own tradition. She reports about this moment as follows:

At that moment, a light went on in me. I had done the Buddhist pilgrimage, I was doing the Hindu pilgrimage. I had never done my own

pilgrimage – the pilgrimage to Mecca (...) - I formed an intention, at that moment, to do my pilgrimage [6].

Before she had heard the Dalai Lama speak, Nomani had never thought about going on hajj. In terms of DST that ‘a light went on in me’ means that Nomani starts to reflect on the one-sidedness of her voices as a journalist and ‘postmodern’ woman and realizes that she has not been paying enough attention to how these I-positions relate to the voices related to her I-position as a Muslim. In this first phase of considering a visit to Mecca, her motivation to find out more about Islam by performing hajj is a very open one; she views it as an opportunity to enrich the voice of her I-position as a ‘postmodern woman’ who moves freely and frequently around the world [32].

Planning to perform the pilgrimage on her way home to the US Nomani visits a travel agency in Lucknow, India, to buy a ticket to New York with a stopover in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. She is shocked when the travel agent informs her that as a woman, she can only get a hajj visa if accompanied by an approved *mahram*, a male escort who takes responsibility for her:

For all that is written in the Qur’an about the hajj, no mention is made of chaperones being required.(...) I was thirty-five years old. I had been independent and self-sufficient (...) I’d driven a motorcycle through the Himalayas. I’d interviewed President Bill Clinton (...) Surely I could take care of myself [12–13].

In this excerpt, Nomani expresses how her own experiences as a Muslim woman intersect with her I-position as an independent female journalist who travels the world. It is her experience of unproblematic intersectionality that clashes with a dominant collective Muslim voice according to which women should operate under the guardianship of men. By stating that her independent lifestyle does not contravene Qur’anic guidelines concerning women’s mobility, she claims the right to interpret the Qur’an herself.

As we will see, the excerpt is indicative of the kind of internal dialogues Nomani engages in in her memoir to reflect on her ambivalent feelings about Islam. On the one hand, performing hajj allows her to connect in a very concrete way to the values she embraces, thus reinforcing her faith and identification as a Muslim. On the other hand, she is very critical of ‘man-made’ [78] interpretations and exclusive regulations that deny the equality of all people. She explicitly questions whether she wants to belong to a religious tradition that takes this stance.

Nomani does not succeed in finding a suitable *mahram* before the hajj season and travels straight back to the US. A year later, in 2002, while based in Karachi for her job, she explores the opportunities to go on hajj once again. This time she has a potential assignment for a story about the hajj from the American outdoor adventure travel magazine *Outside*. After some deliberation, she decides not to apply for a journalist visa but to go

as ‘an ordinary pilgrim’ [15]. Her father offers to join her as her *māḥram*. Again, gender restrictions complicate the situation: she cannot submit her passport at the Saudi consulate in Karachi but will have to apply together with her father, who plans to travel to Mecca from the US and meet his daughter there.

While she is trying to resolve these complications, two events happen that feature as so-called ‘nuclear episodes’ in Nomani’s self-narrative. Nuclear episodes or ‘key events’ are high, low or turning points in the life-story selected by the narrator to reconstruct scenes from their past that constitute climaxes of different chains of acts in the life story. Such past episodes represent subjective memories of particular events at specific times and places which have assumed especially prominent positions in the narrator’s understanding of how they have become who they are at the time of narrating their life-story (McAdams 1993).

The first of these nuclear episodes is the kidnapping by Muslim extremists of the Jewish American journalist Daniel Pearl, a friend of Nomani who also lives in Karachi. When Pearl is kidnapped, Nomani puts her efforts to organize her hajj on hold to help Pearl’s wife find her husband. By the time it becomes clear that Pearl has been decapitated by his kidnappers, the hajj season has begun and Mecca is far removed from Nomani’s mind. A second crucial nuclear episode in Nomani’s life-story almost coincides with the murder of Pearl. During the weeks of the desperate search for Pearl, Nomani discovers that she is pregnant. Despite earlier promises to marry her, her Pakistani partner breaks off the relationship when Nomani decides to keep the baby.

As a result of the pain and desperation that the murder of Pearl and her partner’s desertion cause her, the issue how to relate to her Muslim heritage gains an enormous sense of urgency for Nomani. In a particular passage in which she describes her ambivalent feelings about her decision to get a child out of wedlock, a dialogue between the two collective voices speaking from and to different I-positions that inform her sense of self most saliently comes to the fore explicitly; the collective American voice of free will and the collective Muslim voice of sharia rulings:

Despite my intellectual confidence in myself, I felt completely illegitimate. Within me was an American woman who believed in free will and thus knew that I had the right to keep my baby and raise him with my head held high. But the voices of my religion’s tradition also spoke strongly inside of me. I was consumed by the shame of ignoring the rulings of sharia, the “divine Islamic law” [20].

Nomani’s I-position as an American woman is reinforced when she realizes that had she been a Pakistani citizen, according to laws based on Pakistani interpretation of the Islamic code of moral conduct, she might have been imprisoned for being pregnant out of wedlock. Worse still, had she been a

citizen of Saudi Arabia, whose regime prides itself for being the custodian of the holy city of Mecca that she considers visiting, she would even have faced the death penalty. As the following excerpt expresses, the idea of killing a person in the name of Islam for being a single mother, as in her case, or for being a Jew, as in Pearl's case, raises great doubts and feelings of revulsion in her:

Could I remain in a religion from which so many people sprang spewing hate? Could I find space in my religion for my kind of woman? Could I remain a Muslim? [22]

The birth of her son Shibli a few months later adds a new position to Nomani's position repertoire: I as a mother. This I-position gives her spiritual quest a new direction:

When I gazed at my son, I knew divine love, I knew heaven, and I knew God. I had been blessed with life springing forth from the midst of death [24].

In terms of DST, at this stage Nomani's new I-position as a mother functions as a 'promotor position', that is, a position that steers her inner dialogues about her worthiness as a Muslim woman in a new direction. Once her belief in divine love is reinforced, the desire to find a place in Islam for 'her kind of woman' becomes Nomani's principal motivation to resume planning her pilgrimage to Mecca.⁵

Although a spiritual quest is not necessarily absent in hajj accounts dating from earlier times, until recently the majority of pilgrims consisted of elderly Muslims who expressed their motivation to go on hajj in terms of an act of repentance, or the need to fulfil their last duty to God (Haq & Jackson 2009; Metcalf 1990). The notions of obedience and repentance are absent in Nomani's story about her desire to perform the pilgrimage. They do not correspond to her conception of God and the spirit of Islam:

I didn't pretend to be a model Muslim according to Islamic standards for rituals and external appearances. I didn't pray the requisite five prayers a day. I didn't cover my hair. And, yes, with my baby as evidence, I had sex outside marriage. Although I had a firm faith in a divine force, I didn't invoke the name of a God who judges, punishes and rewards. I tried simply to live as a good Muslim with humanitarian values, in the same spirit as a good Christian, Jew, Hindu or Buddhist. I didn't lie, I didn't cheat, I tried not to hurt others [23].

Nomani's lack of interest in living up to dominant Muslim standards about 'external appearances' and her emphasis on humanitarian values shared with people of other religious backgrounds point to religious style that fits

in well with her experiences of constantly moving between networks of people of different backgrounds and different cultural modes of conduct and communication. Her spiritual quest is directed towards exploring how her religious heritage can provide her with anchor points to do so.

At first sight, there seems to be a tension in Nomani's stated lack of interest in rituals and her desire to perform the hajj, by far the most elaborate and demanding Islamic ritual of all. Considering her emphasis on inclusive humanitarian values, for instance, one might wonder what to her is the appeal of visiting Mecca; the iconic picture of millions of Muslims circumambulating the Ka'ba, the cuboid building in the courtyard of Mecca's Grand Mosque, is a strong symbol of the unity of the Muslim community. At the same time, however, it is an exclusive symbol; non-Muslims are prohibited from entering Mecca.

DST reminds us that we can only develop ourselves in dialogical exchanges with others to explore how to appropriate the collective voices of the various groups we belong to or identify with and make them our own. As I will demonstrate in the next section, appropriating the voices that speak to her as she performs the various rites that make up the hajj is exactly what Nomani's spiritual quest consists of.

Stepping in the footsteps of Hajar

Once Nomani has decided to keep her child, she does a Google search for 'Islam and single mother'. One of the few hits she gets is the story about a woman she had not heard of before: Hajar. Moreover, she discovers that Hajar's story is 'somehow (...) intertwined with the hajj' [26]. As in the Judeo-Christian tradition, where she is known as Hagar, Hajar in the Islamic tradition is the concubine of Ibrahim (Abraham). When she bears him Ishmael, Ibrahim's childless first wife Sarah becomes jealous. As tensions rise in the household, God commands Ibrahim to take Hajar and her baby Ishmael to Mecca. Putting all her trust in God, Hajar agrees and accepts her fate when Ibrahim leaves her and Ishmael behind in the desert and returns home to Sara (Stowasser 1994, 45–49).

Once she learns about Hajar's plight Nomani becomes even more eager to go on the hajj. In 2003, a few months after Shibli is born, Nomani performs her pilgrimage in the company of her baby son, her parents and her niece and nephew. As coming to the fore in the following passages from her memoir, rather than 'stepping in the footsteps' of the prophet Muhammad or Ibrahim, for Nomani it is stepping in the footsteps of Hajar that is of utmost significance:

The devotion to the physical structure of the Ka'bah struck me as contradictory to Islam's teachings prohibiting idolatry. (...) There is a place in this sacred city that is even more important to me than the Ka'bah. It is a path between two hills where the most remarkable woman once ran in desperation, searching for water for her son. She is Hajar (...) one

of the forgotten heroines of Islam. Her life is overshadowed by the story of a man, Abraham [59–60].

Clinging to faith in both God and herself, Hajar was the image of strength. Four thousand years ago, she was standing alone in Mecca. (...) [She, MB] struggled, like every mother, to give her child a good life. She was subjected to one of the most difficult trials God sent down to earth [63].

It's a vital point of the pilgrimage to go the one and a quarter miles between Safa and Marwah in the footsteps of Hajar. The run is called *sa'y* and represents the struggle we all endure over faith and life [65].

The rite of *sa'y* that Nomani mentions here immediately follows the sevenfold circumambulation of the Ka'ba in the centre of the courtyard of the Grand Mosque of Mecca. It is performed in a corridor alongside the mosque square that connects the hillocks Safa and Marwa. By running, as in the case of men, or walking, as women do, pilgrims commemorate Hajar's ordeal and her trust that God would save her and her baby Ishmael as they wandered through the desert after having been abandoned by Ibrahim. Hajar is believed to have discovered the well Zamzam upon returning to the spot where she had left Ishmael after a seventh round of searching for water and saw water welling up under her son's heel (Peters 1994, 5). The source of Zamzam is also known as 'The Well of Ishmael', much to the indignation of Nomani, who remarks: 'The source of Zamzam is even called the Well of Ishmael, with no mention of Hajar' [63].

Referencing to Ishmael rather than to Hajar is in line with a focus on male Muslim role models in authoritative interpretations of religious texts. Most scholarly commentaries on the hajj prioritize the stories of the prophets Ibrahim and Muhammad over those relating of Hajar (Bianchi 2004, 29). An exception is the modernist thinker Ali Shari'ati (2014), who highlights Hajar's position as 'promotor of Ibrahim's tradition' and presents her as the model of hope and of trust in God (Shari'ati 2014, 47). While Nomani does not mention Shari'ati in her reflections on Hajar, she does refer to him later in her memoir when discussing Fatima, the daughter of the prophet Muhammad [183]. It therefore is likely that she is familiar with the picture that Shari'ati's draws of Hajar. Indeed, she seems to build on it, adding her own touch. Although Shari'ati mentions Hajar's character as a mother, rather than singling out her femininity, he discusses her virtues predominantly in terms of her being an exemplary human being. While Nomani also points out the universal virtues that Hajar represents, in her description the strong bond of motherhood and Hajar's position as a single mother in the Muslim community dominate. Similarly, Nomani's emphasis on Hajar as a single mother is in variation with what Pnina Werbner (2003, 107) notes about the members of the global Sufi Naqsbandi with whom she worked; like Nomani, they also highlighted Hajar as one of the two most important identification

figures, the other being Ibrahim. Their key identification with Hajar, however, concentrates on the ordeal she faced in wandering through the desert with her son, not on her being a single mother, as Nomani highlights.

It is not difficult to understand why Nomani reinterprets the story of Hajar thus; her image of Hajar helps her to muster strength for dealing with the sudden change of course her own life has taken since Shibli was born. In the following excerpt we see her deriving courage to raise her son alone by identifying with Hajar as she performs the *sa'y*:

It was past 3.00 A.M. as we ascended the stairs to the third story, marking the path where Hajar ran. I stared as Shibli and felt a profound empathy toward Hajar as I stepped into the space where she had run. (...) I was in the place where the mother of Islam once ran between the two hills of Safa and Marwah, desperately trying to find water for her crying baby. Of all the stories in in the Qur'an, this one is the most significant to women in Islam. (...) What is so important to me about her story is that this woman didn't crumble when the father of her baby took her to the desert to leave her there alone with her son. She had the courage to decide to raise her son by herself and to experience the wonderful love between a mother and a child. Her life story had special meaning to me, abandoned by my baby's father. She gave me courage in my decision to raise my son alone. She didn't even have water, I had Wal-Mart. Her story is timeless and universal and gives strength to all women and men who make lonely choices in life and who face alienation for those choices [63].

From an etic point of view, stepping in the footsteps of Hajar for the *sa'y* and re-enacting her search for water is a 'bodily technique' (Mahmood 2005) that gives Nomani a sense of direct access to the life-world of this female Islamic role model, providing her consolation and courage. Nomani's experience illustrates the power of the hajj as a 'sensational form' (Birgit Meyer 2015): it addresses all the senses simultaneously, triggering both 'scripted' emotions and meanings, that is, those that pilgrims expect to experience on the basis of the religious narrative that is enacted, and 'unscripted' emotions and meanings, those that are related to their personal issues and circumstances.

Stepping in the footsteps of Hajar also empowers Nomani in the sense of allowing her to locate herself in the authoritative narratives in Islam and claim space for women like herself, no matter what other Muslims might think of her:

Men and women don't define what it means to be a good Muslim. It is defined by the core universal values of what it means to be a good person. I went through that struggle. And that is how I became legitimate. The sincerity of Hajar's heart allowed her to find her Zamzam. She

had to tap the best of herself to find the water. She was alone. She was desperate. God knew her sincerity and answered her prayers. She didn't need any intermediaries. (...) I was far from the earth where Hajar ran in desperation, looking for water, but I felt close to her spirit. With the heavens above me, it was as if I could feel the pulse of not only Hajar but every mother since the beginning of time [68].

This is a particular interesting excerpt to zoom in on to gain insight in how religious beliefs and practices are informed by and, in turn, inform people's efforts to deal with the complexities and imperfections or 'messiness' of daily life. Through dialogical exchanges with various voices that inform her sense of self, Nomani's new I-position as a mother shifts from being a 'promotor' position that pushed the 'plot' of her life story in a certain direction, to a so-called 'third position', that is, a position that reconciles two or more conflicting I-positions (Hermans & Hermans-Konopka 2010, 154). As came to the fore in the question 'Could I find space in my religion for my kind of woman?' that guides her hajj journey, Nomani struggles how to combine her positions as an independent American woman with her position as a Muslim.

In the excerpt above she reconciles them in two steps: first, she actively 'orchestrates' the voices that address her at the intersection of her multiple positions – she denies the collective Muslim voice denouncing her as a single mother the right to speak. To her, it is not to fellow Muslims to judge whether one is a true Muslim. What does count is being a good person according to what she considers universal core values. The statement that no 'intermediaries' are needed suggests that in Nomani's view, whether one is a good Muslim is a matter between a (non-judgemental) God and one's own good intentions as a human being rather than specifically as a Muslim [129]. Others have no power over one's actions; the self is accountable only to God. Second, by detour of God's support of the single mother Hajar, Nomani concludes that having accepted 'the divine gift of life' that grew within her, like Hajar she has also become a legitimate single mother.

Nomani's identification with Hajar comes to the fore quite literally in a specific episode in her memoir where she models her own embodied experiences in Mecca as a mother on the story of Hajar's search for water for Ishmael. She describes how for a moment she panics when her baby son Shibli is crying from hunger while she is circumambulating the Ka'ba:

I cut the top of my chemise and ripped it open with my bare hands. I drew Shibli to me. His desperate lips found the milk within me, flowing to him like holy water onto his parched lips. I felt as if I was connected to Shibli with the eternal bond that linked Hajar to Ishmael. It was the life force of creation that touched everyone and everything around us, before us, and after us. To me, it was what we call God. (...) I was nursing my son at the holy mosque of Mecca, overlooking the sacred

Ka'bah. This was nature's law expressing itself, more powerfully than man's law. I drank the sacred water called Zamzam. From me, it flowed into Shibli. I recognized then the great lineage I had in Islam. I was a daughter of Hajar. I looked up to the sky with one thought: blessed are the daughters of Hajar [70].

This excerpt illustrates how positioning herself first and foremost as a mother helps Nomani to resolve the tension between her I-position as an independent woman and her I-position as a Muslim. On a more general level, the excerpt demonstrates how, in narratives about intersecting identifications, narrators draw on role models that represent the collective voices of the various groups they belong to. The words and images they use to describe their experiences are thus embedded in field-specific repertoires of practices, social capital, characters and discourses that characterize the various modalities of the identity categories through which they are constituted (De Peuter 1998). Simultaneously, they actively co-construct these collective voices by innovating rules and conventions as they apply them. Using collective voices within her own specific context, Nomani intones them and places them in relation to other voices, thus reshaping them as she uses them (cf. Shotter and Billig 1998, 24).

There are, however, limitations to the freedom to improvise upon discourses and add new interpretations to the already existing meanings of words. If a person's self-representations are to be understood by others, they must be oriented towards the specific conceptual horizon of those addressed. In turn, the anticipated 'answers' of those one identifies with are significant to one's experience of self (Bakhtin 1981, 280). In order to be able to conceive of herself as a good Muslim, Nomani therefore needs to be accepted by other Muslims as a legitimate interlocutor.

Despite her view that it is God and not men and women who defines what it is that makes a good Muslim, seeking recognition from other Muslims is not absent from Nomani's hajj memoir. Her spiritual quest concerns both an exploration of her connection to God and an exploration of her connection to the umma, the community of Muslims. This comes to the fore, for instance, in an episode that describes the arrival of Nomani and her family at Jeddah Airport, from which they will travel to Mecca by bus. In the arrival's hall they find themselves immersed in a white sea of pilgrims wearing special hajj clothes that indicate their state of *ihrām* or consecration. Overlooking the crowd, her father remarks: 'This is ummah'. Nomani then contemplates: 'I had long wondered if I could find a sense of community in my Muslim ummah' [36].

Throughout the memoir, positive and negative evaluations of Nomani's sense of belonging to the umma can be found. Positive evaluations are often related to personal encounters with other pilgrims that made her feel respected and valued. Almost without exception, these stories concern people's warm response to her baby Shibli. Nomani is touched, for example,

by the kindness of a woman who offers to hold Shibli so that Nomani can do her prayers:

(...) the Turkish woman purred with a sound that Shibli appreciated. I was struck by the friendliness with which pilgrims, even male pilgrims greeted us. There were few formalities and barriers. As I left I had a warm feeling of acceptance and freedom [81].

Nomani also elaborates on an encounter with a Nigerian woman when visiting the grave of Khadija, the first wife of the prophet Muhammad:

“Bebe! Bebe!” A woman with the air of nobility shouted to Shibli (...) She sat on a bench and reached out, enfolding Shibli’s delicate fingers into her dark hands. (...) She took Shibli into her arms and nuzzled him against her bosom. Laying him back into my arms, she ran to catch her bus. (...) We had an ordinary encounter that lasted only a few minutes, but meeting her was meaningful to me. In embracing Shibli and me, she epitomized, like Khadijah and Mary and Muhammad and Jesus, the true spirit of religion: love and kindness without preconceptions and judgments [86].

The focus in Nomani’s negative evaluations about the umma concerns issues where it becomes exclusive and denies the equality of all people. In an anecdote about the bus that takes her hajj group from Jeddah to Mecca, for example, noting the sign ‘MUSLIMS ONLY’ over the lane that the bus takes she comments: ‘This made me sick to my stomach. (...) I didn’t believe in closing the doors of any community to others’ [48]. She also questions the atmosphere of Western consumerism that appears to characterize the Meccan cityscape and its divergent effects on rich and poor pilgrims. Reflecting, for instance, on the fate of poor pilgrims who cannot afford to stay in a hotel and sleep on the floor of the Grand Mosque in Mecca, she writes: ‘Part of me wanted to be one of them. I wanted to sleep in the Ka’bah rather than in room 708 of the Mecca Sheraton. I wanted to know this level of surrender’ [77].

Nomani’s reflections on the umma pertain first and foremost to instances in which gender equality is being denied or reinforced. Questioning the rule that unlike men, women are prohibited from running when performing the *sa’y*, for example, she remarks that what might have started as an allowance to give women a physical break, had turned into a rigid rule. To her this illustrates how women’s roles have been redefined by men throughout history [65]. She also criticizes the Saudi regime for imposing its Wahhabi interpretation of Islam by prohibiting women access to the space where the Prophet’s tomb can be seen in the mosque in Medina: ‘Shutting out women from the place of the prophet’s burial seemed to be a betrayal of the presence of the feminine up until the last moment of the prophet’s life’ [107].

However, observing that women and men are not segregated when circumambulating the Ka'ba or performing their prayers there has a profound positive impact on Nomani:

There were no formal boundaries between men and women, between boys and girls. Families prayed together. Men and women who happened to pray beside a stranger, as many of us did, tried to pray beside someone of the same gender, but it didn't always work out that way and nobody ruled mixed-gender prayer lines indecent. (...) There were no curtains, walls, or partitions dividing men and women from each other, just common sense. In contrast to my mosque in Morgantown, this arrangement made me feel respected and valued [71].

It is this practice of praying in mixed-gender lines that ultimately 'plants the seed for actions' [71] in Nomani to bring back home the lessons learned from the pilgrimage:

Surely, it seemed, if gender equality was good enough for Mecca it was good enough for far-flung places like my hometown of Morgantown [91].

Encouraged by what she has learned during her pilgrimage about the strength of Muslim women in the formative years of Islam and their rights as full citizens in the early umma, soon after her return to the US, Nomani begins to attend Friday mosque sermons at the local mosque in her hometown and launches a campaign 'reclaiming women's rights in Muslim communities' [71]. Together with her mother she refuses to perform the prayers in the women's section of the mosque, demanding a place in the main prayer hall instead. She then rallies fellow female mosque supporters for her cause by distributing a brochure with the title 'The Daughters of Hajar: American Muslim Women Speak' [244]. Mobilizing several prominent other US Muslim feminists and receiving support letters from numerous others, she organizes a march to the Morgan mosque for a mixed 'pray-in' [209].

She also starts taking notes during Friday lectures by lay preachers who advocate hatred against non-Muslims and she begins to study the work of Muslim scholars who offer alternative interpretations of texts that the lay preachers refer to in order to legitimize hatred and discriminatory behaviour towards fellow human beings. Her newly acquired knowledge encourages her to speak out during the Friday prayer sessions and challenge the preachers' views. Eventually she is denied access to the mosque on account of what is qualified as speaking shamelessly about her having a child outside marriage and violating Islamic rules by demanding a place for women in the same space where men pray. In the eyes of the all-male mosque board, this is proof that she is not a true Muslim. She then files a complaint against her expulsion and wins the case. This victory, together with the

fast growing network of Muslims who share her views and support her campaigns to advocate for women's rights in Islam, strengthens her sense of belonging to at least a specific community of Muslims. Ultimately, then, she can answer the question whether there is room in the Islamic tradition for women like her in the affirmative:

I went to the holiest cities of my religion a broken woman. Through the process of transformation that was my hajj, I was now a woman with a deep sense of place and purpose [266].

In conclusion: bringing home the pilgrimage by stepping in Hajar's footsteps

In this chapter I have discussed how Asra Nomani 'orchestrates' the voices that speak to and from her various I-positions in the memoir about her pilgrimage to Mecca. Nomani's memoir demonstrates that although pilgrimage takes people away from their quotidian life-worlds, the views and practices of pilgrims can only be understood against the background of their everyday lives. This comes to the fore most cogently in Nomani's decision to visit Mecca to tackle existential questions that had gained enormous urgency as a result of two key events that upset her life: the murder of her friend and fellow journalist Daniel Pearl and her unplanned, extra-marital pregnancy. Upon return home, she feels empowered by her hajj experiences to liberate herself from fear of reprisal by fellow Muslims for getting a baby out of wedlock. 'Bringing home the pilgrimage' as part five of her memoir is called, she starts a campaign to 'reclaim' women's rights in Islam. Most literally this takes the form of rallying other female members of the mosque in her home town to claim women's access to the main prayer hall and of openly challenging the oppressive views of the mosque preachers.

Nomani's hajj self-narratives illustrate in a very direct way that religious beliefs and practices are shaped by and, in turn, inform people's efforts to deal with the complexities and imperfections of daily life. Despite Saudi strategies to control the religious activities of pilgrims at the various sites that make up the hajj, for instance, Nomani's strong identification with Hajar's ordeal and trust in God that is commemorated in the *sa'y* illustrates that, in their 'tactical use' or appropriation of Meccan space, pilgrims themselves invest it with their own embodied memories (cf. de Certeau 1984). In this way, normative conceptions of Islamic values are reconstituted through hajj-performance, resulting in plurality and creativity.

Nomani establishes direct dialogical links in the stories of her hajj experiences between Mecca and her quotidian life-world. Her personal interpretations of the rites that make up the hajj indicate that the specific 'quest for valued ideals' that pilgrimage embodies for different pilgrims (cf. Morinis 1992, 4) is geared towards the particular modalities of empowerment they

strive for in their everyday lives. Being raised in the US by Indian migrant parents who encouraged their daughter's social mobility, Nomani experiences a tension between the independence and freedom of movement she enjoys as a female journalist, and restrictive Muslim conceptions on gender relations that prohibit her to perform the hajj without a male guardian and that condemn her for raising a child on her own. Enacting the story of Hajar in the hajj ritual presents Nomani with a role model to claim full membership of the umma as a single mother. Bringing the pilgrimage home in her subsequent endeavours to claim the right of women to perform the prayers in the same space as men in her home town mosque demonstrates that pilgrims adapt the normative meanings of religious beliefs and practices to their own life-world and, vice versa, employ their understanding of these normative interpretations to create order and meaning in the complexities of everyday existence.

My aim in this chapter was to demonstrate that since pilgrims move back and forth in dialogues with different, real and imagined, personal and collective voices that accompany them on their journey, pilgrimage accounts provide rich insights in how their multiple identifications intersect and co-constitute each other. Using DST I have studied intersectionality in Nomani's stories by analyzing her memoir as a multi-vocal account of the narrator's responses to the power dynamics that inform her location in the different socio-cultural domains she participates in simultaneously. Zooming in on dialogical exchanges between the various collective voices that inform her sense of self I have mapped how Nomani improvises upon and moves between different 'moral registers' (Schielke and Debevec 2012) that inform her different I-positions as she seeks to claim freedom of movement, thought and voice as a Muslim woman. The focus in DST on the temporal and spatial situatedness of the various voices in self-narratives thus brings to the fore the struggles, negotiations and ambivalences that lie at the heart of living at the crossroads of different sets of power relations which determine one's position in society.

Notes

- 1 I would like to thank the Netherlands Organization for Scientific Research (NWO) for their generous grant (360-25-150) for the research project 'Modern Articulations of Pilgrimage to Mecca' on which this chapter is based.
- 2 Henceforth numbers in square brackets refer to page numbers in Nomani's memoir *Standing Alone*.
- 3 cf. <https://edition.cnn.com/2015/09/29/opinions/nomani-hajj-stampede/index.html>, most recently accessed 04 05 2020. I'd like to thank the anonymous reviewer of this volume for drawing my attention to Nomani's call for a boycott.
- 4 cf. <https://bridge.georgetown.edu/research/factsheet-asra-nomani-2/>, most recently accessed 04 05 2020.
- 5 Nomani is not unique in her motivation to perform the hajj as part of a spiritual quest that results from absolute low or high moments in life. So far, results from

my current research concerning the hajj stories of Dutch Muslims of Moroccan and Turkish descent indicate that similar to Nomani, pilgrims in their 30s or 40s often mention a life crisis as the immediate cause for their desire to perform the hajj (cf. Buitelaar 2018a). Other reasons that often get mentioned concern spiritual development, an interest in religious heritage travel or the need for a time-out (Buitelaar 2018b).

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Glossary

abāya outer garment, usually black, worn by women in Saudi Arabia outside the private sphere

ajr religious merit earned by conducting good deeds

ākhirā the hereafter, afterlife

al-Ḥaram al-Sharīf the Noble Sanctuary in Jerusalem where the Dome of the Rock and the Aqsa Mosque are situated

‘ālim Islamic scholar

al-Masjid al-Ḥarām the Grand Mosque in Mecca

al-Masjid al-Nabawī the mosque in Medina where the prophet Muhammad is buried

awqāf General Authority of Islamic Affairs and Endowments (UAE)

āyāt al-khāliq the wondrous signs of God, that is, the verses of the Qur’an

bazin imported cotton fabric, favoured for West African ceremonial clothing

baraka blessings

bedel (Ar. badal) a person who performs the compulsory rites of Hajj for another person who was unable to do so

bid‘a innovation; new practices with no legitimation from the legal sources

cartaz a pass issued by the Portuguese East India Company during the 16th and early 17th centuries for ships to travel in the Indian Ocean and Bay of Bengal

chador a full-body garment that is worn in public spaces by many women in Iran, Iraq and some other Persianate contexts, specifically by Shi‘i women

chadori a woman who wears chador

Dār al-Islām territory where Islam reigns

du‘ā supplication prayer

dunyā this world (as opposed to the *ākhirā*, the hereafter)

fajr dawn, also dawn prayer

faqīh Qur’an teacher

fatwa legal opinion

fiqh jurisprudence; legal scholarship

- hadith** corpus of texts presenting the acts and sayings of the Prophet, or the Sunna; one of the sources of Islamic law
- hajj** compulsory pilgrimage to Mecca
- Ḥajja/Ḥajji (Ḥajj in Moroccan-Arabic)** (honorific title for) a woman/man who has performed hajj
- halal** permitted by Islamic law
- hayek** drape covering the entire body worn by women in North Africa in the public sphere
- hijab** headscarf/veil worn by women covering head and chest
- ḥujjāj** (plural) pilgrims to Mecca
- Īd al-Fiṭr** feast at the end of the fasting month of Ramadan
- iḥrām** state of consecration during hajj; also the clothes worn during that state
- Ikhwān** the Bedouin troops employed by Abd al-Aziz ibn Sa‘ud during his conquest of the Arabian Peninsula; they were uncompromising in matters of religion
- Imam** in the context of Shi‘a Islam, an Imam is the leader of the Shi‘i community; Twelver Shi‘a believe that 12 Imams were chosen by God to be infallible and lead all believers in all aspects of life
- Imami** Shiite school of religious law
- Imāmzādah** descendants of Imams
- Jāhiliyya** the pre-Islamic period; the period of ‘ignorance’
- jamarāt** three pillars representing the devil who tried three times to persuade Abraham not to obey God’s command to sacrifice his son; pilgrims ritually ‘pelt’ the pillars
- jihad** the juridical concept defining the legitimation of violence by Muslims; the struggle on behalf of the faith
- jinns** demon-spirits, mentioned in the Qur’an and in Arabic folklore.
- kafāla** Saudi Arabian state policy, requiring each immigrant to be sponsored by a Saudi citizen
- kain iḥram** Malay term for two white pieces of cloth, worn by male pilgrims
- labbayka** Litt. ‘I am at your service’; formula spoken when taking on the *iḥrām* for the Hajj or *umra* indicating the intention of the pilgrim
- madhhab** Islamic law school
- madrasa** religious (boarding) school
- maḥram** male companion for female pilgrims
- majles rowzeh** sometimes abbreviated to *majles* is a ritual of mourning for the saints and martyrs in the Iranian Shi‘i context
- mīqāt** stations at which pilgrims to Mecca enter the state of consecration
- muhājir** generally emigrant; specifically a person who accompanied the prophet Muhammad when he emigrated from Mecca to Medina
- muhrim** pilgrim while in a state of consecration (*iḥrām*)
- muhadžir** Muslim individuals and groups who migrated from the Balkans to the Middle East and North Africa during the late Ottoman Empire and afterwards for religious and economic reasons

- mujtahid* in Shi'i Islam, a *mujtahid* is a highly learned person who has the ability and the authority to deduce jurisprudential rulings out of Islamic resources
- muṭawwif* pilgrim's guide in Mecca
- nahḍa* 'Renaissance' or 'Re-awakening' used to indicate the period of cultural and societal reform in the Arab world in the second half of the 19th century
- nazr* a vow made to God or Islamic figures and saints in the form of either a sacred undertaking or abstinence from evil deeds
- niqab* garment covering the face and body worn by women in the public sphere
- nīya* intention to do an act, particularly acts for the sake of God
- nowheh* a mourning poem, often performed with lamentations as a part of mourning ceremonies for Shi'i saints and martyrs
- qibla* the direction of prayer, that is, oriented towards the Ka'ba
- qiyās* analogical reasoning, one of the sources of Islamic law
- qur'a* lottery (to distribute hajj visa)
- ramy al-jamarāt* the rite of pelting the *jamarāt*, the three pillars representing the devil
- rawḍa* area in the mosque of the Prophet in Medina, considered to be one of the gardens of Paradise
- riwāq* an element in Islamic architecture and design serving as the transition space between interior and exterior spaces
- ṣabr* patience, perseverance
- ṣadaqa* voluntary charity or offering
- sa'y* the 'running' rite between the hillocks of Safa and Marwa
- sahns* the courtyard in Islamic architecture and design
- salaf* the first generations of Muslims attributed with superior knowledge of the faith.
- shahadat* literally 'martyrdom', one of the highest spiritual positions in Islam achieved after dying in the path of God
- sharia* God's will for human kind; closely related to *fiqh*; the body of law produced by scholars trying to understand that will
- shaykh/shaykha* honorific title; 'old man/lady'; religious authority; Sufi master
- sohan* a Persian saffron brittle toffee made in Iran, most notably in the city of Qom
- suḵūd* prostration during prayer in the direction of the Ka'ba
- tafsīr* Qur'anic exegesis; corpus of exegetic texts
- talbiya* the formula that starts with 'labaykallah' that pilgrims chant upon approaching Mecca
- taqwā* piety, God consciousness
- tasbīḥ* a string of 33 or 99 smaller prayer beads and a bigger one often used by Muslims to keep track of counting in their prayers
- ṭawāf* sevenfold circumambulation of the Ka'ba
- ṭawāf al-wadā'* the circumambulation of farewell; final ritual of the hajj

ulama religious scholars (sing. in Arabic: *‘ālim*)

umma the global Muslim community

umra the ‘smaller’ or voluntary pilgrimage to Mecca that can be performed throughout the year

wuqūf the rite of ‘standing’ at the mount Arafat to beg God’s forgiveness for one’s sins

zakat compulsory giving of a set percentage of one’s wealth to charity

zarih an often ornate structure in a shrine that encloses a grave

ziaratnameh texts and prayers that are recited when on Islamic pilgrimage, often including tributes to the person buried in the shrine

ziyāra visitation to saint shrines or holy places

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